



Executive Committee

Tue 23 Oct
2018
7.00 pm

Committee Room Two
Town Hall
Redditch

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

*making
a
difference*

www.redditchbc.gov.uk

**If you have any queries on this Agenda please contact
Jess Bayley**

**Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square, Redditch, B98 8AH
Tel: (01527) 64252 Ext: 3268
e.mail: jess.bayley@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk**

Executive

Committee

Tuesday, 23rd October, 2018

7.00 pm

Committee Room 2 Town Hall

Agenda

Membership:

Cllrs:	Matthew Dormer (Chair)	Bill Hartnett Gareth Prosser
	David Bush (Vice- Chair)	Mike Rouse Craig Warhurst
	Tom Baker-Price	
	Greg Chance	
	Brandon Clayton	

1. Apologies

2. Declarations of Interest

To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and / or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.

3. Leader's Announcements

4. Minutes (Pages 1 - 28)

5. Housing Allocations Policy - Update (Pages 29 - 100)

6. Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Programme (Pages 101 - 112)

7. Shareholder Committee - Local Authority Trading Company (Pages 113 - 116)

8. Performance Report

This report will be published in a separate colour supplement.

9. Budget Framework and Medium Term Financial Plan 2019/20 to 2022/23 - Presentation

Please note that whilst the Budget Framework and Update on the Medium Term Financial Plan were listed as two separate items on the Executive Committee Work Programme they will be combined into one presentation for this meeting.

10. Corporate Peer Challenge - Action Plan (Pages 117 - 148)

11. Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Pages 149 - 184)

Executive

Committee

Tuesday, 23rd October, 2018

12. Minutes / Referrals - Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Executive Panels etc.

The Executive Committee is asked to note that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is due to pre-scrutinise the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan and the Council Housing Growth Programme – Proposed Development Sites report at a meeting on 18th October. There is therefore the possibility that the Committee will make recommendations for the consideration of the Executive Committee in relation to these two items.

13. Advisory Panels - update reports

Members are invited to provide verbal updates, if any, in respect of the following bodies:

- a) Constitutional Review Working Panel – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer;
- b) Corporate Parenting Steering Group – Council Representative, Councillor Gareth Prosser;
- c) Grants Panel – Chair, Councillor Greg Chance;
- d) Member Support Steering Group – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer; and
- e) Planning Advisory Panel – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer.

14. Exclusion of the press and public

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:

“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”.

These paragraphs are as follows:

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

- Para 3 – financial or business affairs; and may need to be considered as ‘exempt’.

15. Council Housing Growth Programme - Proposed Development Sites (Pages 185 - 206)



Executive Committee

Tuesday, 11 September
2018

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), Councillor David Bush (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Tom Baker-Price, Greg Chance, Brandon Clayton, Bill Hartnett, Gareth Prosser, Mike Rouse and Craig Warhurst

Also Present:

Roger Bennett, Michael Chalk and Anthony Lovell

Officers:

Kevin Dicks, Clare Flanagan, John Godwin, Sue Hanley, Mark Hanwell, Rachel Hines, Bev Houghton, Karen Jones, Jayne Pickering, Guy Revans, David Riley and Judith Willis

Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

25. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

27. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader circulated a list of his announcements for Members' consideration.

28. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday 14th August be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

.....
Chair

29. REDDITCH LOCAL LOTTERY

The ICT Transformation Manager presented the Redditch Local Lottery report together with Mr Nigel Ashton from Aylesbury Vale District Council. During the presentation of the report the following points were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- Aylesbury Vale District Council had been the first local authority to establish a local lottery scheme three years previously.
- The lottery scheme had been very successful in Aylesbury and the officers from that authority had provided support to Redditch Borough Council in developing the business case for a Redditch local lottery scheme.
- Under the proposed scheme anybody could buy a lottery ticket on the website.
- Lottery tickets would cost £1 and 50 per cent of that would be contributed to supporting good causes.
- The Council would need to spend £10,000 on set up costs and a further £2,500 per year on running costs.
- There was the potential that the Council could secure £60,000 per annum from the scheme.
- The odds of winning the £25,000 jackpot were one million to one.
- All lottery funds would be managed by an external company on behalf of the Council.
- There would be no roll over but if more than one person had the winning numbers they would all receive £25,000.
- There was a risk that people might choose not to participate in the lottery which would impact on income. The Council could then choose to end the service.

Following the presentation of the report Members discussed a number of points in detail:

- The Council lottery scheme could provide consistent funding to local charities on a monthly basis. This might help voluntary and community sector (VCS) groups to secure more sustainable funding.
- The potential to raise £60,000 for the Council from a local lottery could have a positive impact on the Council's finances.
- Local lottery schemes had been delivered successfully in other parts of the country when following the model of delivery detailed in the report.
- Concerns were raised about potential moral and ethical issues arising from the introduction of a local lottery scheme which could potentially encourage gambling. Officers suggested that as the scheme involved payments online of small sums

participants would not have the instant gratification that might come from playing on fruit machines.

- Members were advised that participants would be restricted to purchasing up to £5 of tickets only.
- Concerns were raised about funds raised from gambling being used to provide financial support to public services.
- Questions were raised about the number of people who would need to buy a ticket in order to generate £60,000 for the Council. Officers explained that 2,046 players would need to participate per week to achieve this figure.
- Members also asked about the amount of local market testing that had been undertaken in Redditch to test demand for the service. Whilst there was little information available about this Members were advised that Redditch was not very different to the 57 other places in the country where a local lottery scheme had been introduced.
- There had been no complaints in Aylesbury in the three years that their lottery scheme had been in place.
- Concerns were raised about the potential for the local lottery to encourage young people to gamble. Members were advised that the lottery would not be open to those aged under 16 and participants would be required to have a bank account.
- Whilst some people would participate in the local lottery in order to make money many would be taking part to raise funding for local good causes and in other parts of the country some had returned their prize and asked for it to be given to charity.
- Participants could choose the charity that received the funding, though 30 per cent of participants did not make a selection.
- It would take time to raise awareness of the local lottery and this would require effective marketing.
- Local charities would need to promote the scheme to residents as this would be in their interests.
- Members noted that the Grants Panel already provided grants to local VCS organisations and this ensured that services were provided in the community that the Council might not otherwise be in a position to support.
- Concerns were raised that vulnerable people on low incomes might spend their limited resources on lottery tickets. Members were advised that the company managing the lottery would do their best to make sure that people in this position did not use up their finances on the lottery.
- Members questioned how the management company had been selected and whether this had involved a proper procurement process. Members were advised that there were very few suppliers of this service and this was the most frequently used company across the country.

- The arrangements in place at local authorities in other parts of the country, in terms of management of these schemes, were briefly discussed. Members were informed that the schemes tended to fail where Councils opted to manage the lottery.
- Questions were also raised about what happened to funds when there was no jackpot winner as there was no rollover. Members were advised that over the past three years the jackpot had only been won twice. There was the potential to offer bonus prizes where funds built up.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the associated business case and the establishment of a local lottery be approved;**
- 2) **the preferred option to appoint an External Lottery Management (ELM) is approved and the appointment of Gatherwell Ltd is progressed;**
- 3) **two officers are appointed to be responsible for holding the license and submit the necessary application to the Gambling commission.**

30. ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR CRIME AND POLICING ACT 2014 - IMPLEMENTATION OF PROVISIONS

The Community Safety Manager presented a report in respect of implementing the provisions of the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014. The guidance in relation to this legislation had been issued in 2017 and the report detailed the implications for the Council, including a requirement to change the list of officer delegations for anti-social behaviour.

One of the key issues that had been addressed in both the legislation and the guidance was the previously inconsistent approach that had been adopted by Councils across the country to establishing protection orders against anti-social behaviour. The government had concluded that there needed to be a similar approach in all areas and the Government guidance recommended that the Executive Committee and Council to consider and agree any future requests for Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs). Members were advised that there were five PSPOs in Redditch on the date of the meeting which mainly related to alcohol consumption and anti-social behaviour. All of these would need to be reviewed.

Following the presentation of the report Members discussed the proposals in detail. Questions were raised about the new Closure Power in the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 and Officers confirmed that Closure Notices could only be request

by a police officer in the position of an Inspector or in a higher position and any follow up action could be only be undertaken by a Chief Inspector or someone more senior.

Members noted that many of the powers detailed in the report would be delegated to Officers and they suggested that the use of these powers needed to be monitored. An additional proposal was therefore brought forward for a monitoring update to be undertaken which would be reported to the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel. Some discussion was held about how frequently this monitoring should take with some suggesting that this could occur on an annual basis. However, Members concluded that this should instead take place every six months.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the powers available to the Council under the Anti Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, as amended in December 2017 be noted;**

RECOMMENDED that

- 2) **the Council's Scheme of Delegation is amended, in accordance with the recommendations outlined in Section 3.6 of this report, to allow relevant officers to apply these tools and powers; and**
- 3) **a monitoring update report, detailing action taken in relation to the powers provided in the scheme of delegations to officers (as outlined in recommendation 2 above), should be delivered to the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel on a biannual basis.**

31. DRAFT COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME AND WIDER SUPPORT FRAMEWORK

The Financial Support Manager presented the draft Council Tax Support Scheme and Wider Support Framework for Members' consideration. Members were advised that there were a number of drivers for change including the proposed changes to the scheme that had been made following the Care Leavers Scrutiny Task Group's review of arrangements. The roll out of Universal Credit across the Borough had also been taken into account. People in receipt of Universal Credit were entitled to receive a review of their finances on a monthly basis which had implications for Council Tax. The existing scheme required significant administration to enable staff to manage the demand arising through Universal Credit. The new arrangements proposed in the draft Council Tax Support scheme would place a less onerous administrative burden on staff.

Members noted that the introduction of Universal Credit had impacted on both residents and Council Services. Universal Credit could be quite complex, with some recipients receiving different assessments multiple times in a year. The proposed changes to the scheme could help to address these problems. Members also praised the Council's Hardship Fund, noting that this could provide a lifeline for residents experiencing difficult circumstances.

During consideration of this item the Chair noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had pre-scrutinised the report and had supported the proposal detailed in the report from officers.

RESOLVED that

to undertake a formal consultation with the major preceptors and the public on the proposed design of a revised scheme to take place for 8 weeks from 1st October. The results of the consultation will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny and Executive in January when it will consider any recommendations that will go to full Council in February.

32. WRITE OFFS APRIL 2017 TO MARCH 2018 - ANNUAL REPORT

The Financial Support Manager presented the annual report in respect of write offs in the period 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018. Members were advised that the main reason for writing off debts was insolvency.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

33. FINANCE MONITORING QUARTER 1 2018/19

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented the financial monitoring update for the first quarter of 2018/19. In preparing the report Officers had attempted to link figures to strategic purposes. The figures recorded for Enabling Services listed a shortfall of £169,000. This related to the unidentified savings that had been built into the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for the year.

The Budget Scrutiny Working Group had an important role to play in monitoring the authority's financial position and would be informed about any variances over £25,000. Further monitoring update reports would also be reported to the Executive Committee and officers would aim to provide assurance that the Council would deliver the unidentified savings.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was listed as having a surplus of £171,000. However, there were a number of areas where expenditure would be required from the HRA and therefore this continued to be in a financially challenging position.

Heads of Service were in the process of reviewing reserves listed in the budget. Where these were found to no longer be required they would be drawn down into balances.

Members noted that the Council needed to achieve £1.6 in savings over the course of the MTFP's four-year plan. Difficult decisions would be required to ensure that the authority's budget continued to be balanced moving forward.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) Council approve an increase in the 2018-19 Capital Programme of £10k, to be funded from reserves, towards the existing capital scheme for the new Haven online booking system; and**
- 2) Council approve an increase in the 2018-19 Capital Programme of £25k s106 monies for various public realm improvements in the vicinity of Elvington Close, Matchborough.**

34. PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the performance report which focussed on the strategic purpose 'help me live my life independently'. A number of measures had been included in the report for Members' consideration, both those relating to the strategic purpose and some corporate measures.

Members were advised that the Council was doing a lot of work with partner organisations to tackle low to medium mental health problems within the community. Reference was also made to sickness absence levels at the Council which in some cases were considered to be concerning. A new sickness absence policy was in the process of being developed to address some of these issues.

During consideration of this item the need for training to be provided to Members in respect of the dashboard was discussed. This had been requested at a meeting of the Executive Committee in the previous municipal year. In response to that a session focusing on the dashboard had been built into the new Member induction programme, a copy of which had been sent to every Member, and that training had been delivered in June. However, the Member

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 11 September 2018

Support Steering Group would be asked at their next meeting to consider holding another training session.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

35. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Officers confirmed that there were no outstanding recommendations from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9th August 2018.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 9th August be noted.

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

The Chair noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had pre-scrutinised the draft Council Tax Support Scheme, the Leisure Business Plan, the Leisure Services Restructure and the Housing / HRA Overview and Recovery Plan during a meeting on 6th September. The recommendations in respect of each of these would be considered accordingly when discussing the relevant items. Members were asked to note that in each case the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had endorsed the proposals in the reports that had been produced by Officers.

37. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORTS

Members provided verbal updates in respect of the following bodies:

- a) Constitutional Review Working Party – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

Councillor Dormer advised that the Constitutional Review Working Party had met in August and had proposed a number of recommendations. These would be considered by Council on 17th September 2018.

- b) Corporate Parenting Board – Council Representative, Councillor Gareth Prosser

Councillor Prosser advised that a training session for members of the board would be taking place shortly.

c) Grants Panel – Chair, Councillor Greg Chance

Members were advised that there was no update.

d) Member Support Steering Group – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

Councillor Dormer advised that the following meeting of the group would take place in October.

e) Planning Advisory Panel (PAP) – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

Councillor Dormer advised that the latest meeting of PAP had been cancelled due to lack of business.

38. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**RESOLVED that**

under S.100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following matters on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act, as amended:

- a) **Leisure Services Business Plan**
- b) **Leisure and Cultural Services – Proposed Service Restructure**
- c) **Housing / HRA Overview and Recovery Plan**

39. LEISURE SERVICES BUSINESS PLAN

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented the Leisure Services Business Plan for Members' consideration.

The Committee was advised that the business plan provided further detail about the arrangements for the Local Authority Trading Company (LATC) that would be established to provide a number of leisure services on behalf of the Council. The same services had been included in the business plan, as they had in March, with the exception of the allotments service, and the Council wanted the company to operate on a not-for-profit basis. A number of new activities, to be provided at locations such as Forge Mill Needle Museum, had been identified and included within the Business Plan which were designed to attract more customers and to enhance

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 11 September 2018

services. The company would be expected to maintain an effective working relationship with the Council and a suite of strategic measures had been developed to enable the authority to monitor performance.

The Council had already placed an advert in the national press inviting people to apply to become the Managing Director of the company. Formal consultation with existing staff affected by TUPE arrangements was due to begin on 24th October 2018, though the Council would aim to start informal engagement in respect of this matter at an earlier stage. Relevant staff would subsequently be transferred to the company in December.

Members were advised that the Council was considering naming the company Forge Leisure. There were some legal implications in relation to naming the organisation and therefore Officers were keen to alter one of the proposals in the report to provide the Head of Leisure and Cultural Services, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources and the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism with the power to name the company after investigating these issues further.

After the report had been presented Members raised the following matters:

- The hard work that had been undertaken in relation to the LATC over the last 18 months. Councillor Mike Rouse thanked his predecessors as Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism, Councillors Roger Bennett and Pat Witherspoon, for their work.
- The key assumptions and the changes that had been made to these. Officers advised that these were largely the same as they had been in March 2018.
- The identity of the project sponsors. Members were advised that this was the Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources.
- The potential for redundancies to occur following the introduction of the LATC and how the redundancy payments would be funded. Officer explained that any redundancy payments would be provided from balances.
- The potential for the LATC to charge people to attend events and the implications for Morton Stanley Festival. The Committee was informed that there were no plans to charge for attending the festival.
- The need for the LATC to report any changes in respect of charging for to the Shareholders Committee for approval.
- The potential for ticket sales to generate more income that could be reinvested in services.

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 11 September 2018

- The foreword to the business plan and who would sign it. Officers explained that the Council would expect the Managing Director to sign this once s/he had been appointed.
- The potential to include a measure that demonstrated the Council's commitment to work with people who volunteered to help with providing services at venues like the Palace Theatre. Members were advised that an operational measure focusing on volunteers could be developed.
- The need for the Council to provide the company with the flexibility it required to deliver good quality services that met the needs of residents whilst operating as an effective business.

During consideration of this item Councillor Bill Hartnett proposed an amendment to the proposals detailed in the report. This amendment was seconded by Councillor Greg Chance.

The amendment proposed that the final recommendation listed in the report should be changed to the following:

“The Council arrange a local competition with a normal prize asking the public to suggest a company name and logo for the proposed new company”.

In proposing the amendment Councillor Hartnett suggested that it would be good to engage with the public as part of the introduction of the company. The competition could last for two to three weeks and might be appreciated by local residents.

Members subsequently discussed the proposed amendment and concerns were raised that this type of competition could follow the national campaign in 2016 to name a polar research ship, where the most popular name had been Boaty McBoatface. Concerns were also raised about the timeframes available and it was suggested that there may not be sufficient time available to run a competition.

On being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

During consideration of this matter a further amendment was proposed by Councillor Tom Baker-Price. This was seconded by Councillor David Bush.

The amendment proposed that the final recommendation listed in the report should be changed to the following:

“The naming of the company is delegated to the Executive Director Finance and Resources after consultation with the Portfolio Holder

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 11 September 2018

for Leisure and Tourism and the Head of Service for Leisure and Cultural Services.”

During consideration of the amendment Members questioned whether the choice of name for the company should be postponed until the Managing Director of the LATC had been recruited. However, Officers noted that this could delay progress with the introduction of the company. As an alternative the potential for the Managing Director to rename the company once s/he had been appointed was discussed. However, Officers advised that the company could be renamed various times at Companies House after it had been registered but there would be a need for consistency in terms of the trading name and branding of the LATC communicated to the public, in order to build awareness amongst potential customers.

On being put to the vote the amendment was agreed.

RECOMMENDED

- 1) **approval of the Business Plan at Appendix 5 to include the key assumptions at Section 8 and confirmation of a date of transfer as from 1st December 2018 for the following services:**
 - **Abbey Stadium Sports Centre**
 - **Palace Theatre and Palace Youth Theatre**
 - **Forge Mill Needle Museum and Bordesley Abbey Visitors Centre Inc. access to Bordesley Abbey Ruins**
 - **Community Centres at Windmill Drive, Oakenshaw, Batchley and Winyates Green.**
 - **Pitcheroak Golf Course**
- 2) **approval of the establishment of a member panel to undertake the recruitment of the Managing Director and Non Executive Directors. It is proposed that this panel comprises the Leader, relevant Portfolio Holder and the leader of the opposition, or their nominees. This panel will be supported by 2 senior officers of the Council;**
- 3) **approval of, in principle, the investment opportunities as detailed in Appendix 6 and request officers bring detailed business cases to the Board of Directors for final approval;**
- 4) **approval of the funding of £55k from balances to fund an Electronic Point of Sale (EPOS) system to ensure the NewCo has the functionality to enable marketing,**

income generation and customer insight to be at its most effective

- 5) approval of a transfer from balances of £74k to cover the period of the initially agreed transfer date of 1st September 2018 to the revised date of 1st December 2018;**
- 6) approval of the measures framework as included in Appendix 3 of the report; and**
- 7) the naming of the company is delegated to the Executive Director Finance and Resources after consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism and the Head of Service for Leisure and Cultural Services.**

[During consideration of this item Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to exclude the press and public during the course of the debate on the grounds that information would be revealed which relates to the financial and business affairs of the local authority and information relating to consultations or negotiations, including contemplated consultations or negotiations in relation to labour relations matters].

40. LEISURE AND CULTURAL SERVICES - PROPOSED SERVICE RESTRUCTURE

The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services presented the Leisure and Cultural Services Proposed Restructure and explained that this report focussed on the staff who would not be joining the new leisure company. These staff would be working in shared services across Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District Councils. The restructure would follow similar timelines to the leisure company to ensure a smooth transition. Should Members approve the restructure it would result in a small financial saving for both Councils.

The restructure of the remaining posts had impacted on the grades of some positions due to a change to responsibilities. Some posts would be made redundant, though staff would have an opportunity to apply for the new posts and this would help to reduce potential redundancies. The costs of any redundancies would be met from reserves.

During consideration of this item questions were raised about why this report had not been considered by the Shared Services Board. Officers advised that the report did not need to be considered by Shared Services Board as the proposals did not result in any

changes for Bromsgrove District Council. The report would however bring the two Councils closer together in terms of the ways in which they delivered Leisure and Cultural services as Bromsgrove District Council commissioned many of their services.

The Chair highlighted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had pre-scrutinised the item and had supported the recommendation in the report.

Members were advised that an additional recommendation had been tabled for the Committee's consideration. This was endorsed.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the proposed management structure, timeline and associated costs contained within this report are approved; and**
- 2) if there is a redeployment from Newco back into Leisure & Cultural Services within Redditch Borough Council within the 3 month period that employee's continuity of service and pension rights will be protected.**

[During consideration of this item Members noted that there were appendices to the report that, if discussed, necessitated the disclosure of exempt information that could reveal the identity of an individual and information relating to consultations or negotiations, including contemplated consultations or negotiations in relation to labour relations matters. However, Members did not discuss any exempt matters during consideration of this item and there is nothing exempt in this minute].

41. HOUSING / HRA - OVERVIEW AND RECOVERY PLAN

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the Housing / HRA Overview and Recovery Plan. Whilst presenting the report she highlighted the following matters for Members' consideration:

- As a result of audits carried out in 2016/17, which had identified issues with non-compliance with contractual matters, a Contracts Manager had been appointed by the Council.
- A number of problems with compliance had subsequently been identified within Housing Capital and eight members of staff had been suspended and had then left the organisation.
- The Council had undertaken a wholesale review of the Housing Department and during this time all work had been suspended except in relation to essential health and safety matters.

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 11 September 2018

- The Chief Executive had delegated the task of reviewing and managing Housing Services to the Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Environmental Services and Head of Community Services.
- All contractual issues and how these had been addressed would be the subject of a report to the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee in October 2018.
- Nationally there were challenges in relation to housing and the proposals in the report also aimed to address these. The government had described the national housing market as being broken.
- Key issues nationally with housing included a lack of available social housing, limited affordable housing and the need for the right advice to be provided.
- The requirements within the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 also created challenges for all Councils.
- There continued to be pressures on the HRA. This was largely due to the reduction in rents for Council housing of one per cent per annum that had been imposed by the government over a four year period since 2016/17. This had led to a loss of £130 million from the HRA compared to the income that had been envisaged.
- There had also been an issue with delays in turning around voids which had had a negative impact on the Council's finances as well as causing delays in terms of housing people in need.
- The Council had published a business plan in 2012 which had been based on previous assumptions regarding the HRA.
- In February 2018 the Council had agreed a one year budget for the HRA and funding had had to be drawn down from balances to achieve a balanced budget for 2018/19.
- Officers had started a five year review of the budget for Housing Services and there were various options available to the Council moving forward.
- There were cultural issues within Housing Services that needed to be addressed. This had been one of the most controversial issues that had been raised but it was felt that honesty in relation to this matter was needed.
- Problems had been identified in relation to the performance management of staff which needed to be addressed.
- Senior officers recognised the need to take staff with them in changing the service's culture and working practices. There was also a need to enable staff to feel confident and comfortable enough to report any concerns about services to senior officers.
- To date there had been issues with staff taking a lack of ownership of the issues.
- Some staff had a lack of understanding of the legal issues relevant to Housing.

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 11 September 2018

- Health, safety and welfare issues needed to be given greater priority than had been the case in the past.
- Tenants needed to be placed at the centre of service delivery.
- Housing management needed to be refocused.
- Locality working was important but services needed to be delivered to all tenants, not to a small number.
- The Housing department was using the oldest IT system in the country which was not fit for purpose and this needed to be replaced.
- The problems that had been identified in the Housing department had built up over many years and would take time to change.
- Over the next two years there were a number of policies that would need to be reviewed including the Housing Allocations Policy and the Tenancy Engagement Strategy and then staff needed to act on those policies.
- A data suite needed to be developed for Housing Services and better governance needed to be introduced to provide Members and tenants with assurance.

During consideration of this matter Members were advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had pre-scrutinised this matter at a meeting on 6th September 2018. The Committee had debated the matter in detail and had concluded by supporting the recommendations detailed in the report.

Following the presentation of the report Members discuss a number of issues in detail:

- The need to be positive and to look forward by making constructive changes to Housing Services.
- The safety of residents was paramount and this needed to be recognised in service delivery.
- The complex legal issues that had had to be addressed during the investigation in relation to the compliance issues within housing and the hard work of the Investigating Committee and Employment Appeals Committee.
- The need to learn lessons from the issues that had been identified to ensure that services met the needs of residents.
- The potential to use the situation as an opportunity to review the strategic purposes that applied to Housing Services. This would involve staff reframing what they did.
- The progress that had been made recently in terms of managing voids and the current number of void properties. Officers advised that there were 130 void properties at the time of the suspensions and now that number had fallen to approximately 70.
- The need to bring the whole of the Housing Service together so that staff and services operated in a holistic manner.

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 11 September 2018

- The need to review why many void properties were returned to the Council in a poor condition.
- The potential to increase the speed of bringing void properties back into a habitable state so that they could be leased to tenants.
- The impact of the backlog in the turnaround of voids on the Council's finances; over the past five years. Members were informed that this had cost the Council £300,000.
- The need for practical measures in the action plan.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the strategic action plan detailed at Appendix A be endorse;**
- 2) the Executive Committee support the financial actions undertaken in respect of the Housing Revenue Account and note the proposed actions subject to formal budget and rent setting processes as detailed in the strategic improvement/action plan.**
- 3) the Executive Committee support the Director / Heads of Service service remits and authorise the Chief Executive/Corporate Management Team Officers to proceed to recruit to the proposed senior managers for the service (subject to service review) with support for phased service reviews for the whole of the services detailed, over the following 12 – 18 months;**
- 4) the Executive Committee endorse that the governance and reporting of progress on the strategic action plan be through Executive Committee.**

RECOMMENDED that

- 5) a sum of £350,000 (capital staffing costs) be built into the capital budget (HRA) for 2018/19 to resource the immediate review of Housing Capital/Property and Compliance team(s).**

[During consideration of this item Members agreed an exempt recommendation which could not be revealed on the grounds that information would be revealed which relates to the financial and business affairs of the local authority].

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 2, 3, 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**23rd October 2018****HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY 2019**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Craig Warhurst
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Judith Willis
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor Consulted	Not Applicable
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The Council's Allocations Policy has been extensively reviewed in order to consider the freedoms and flexibilities of the Localism Act 2011 and to consider how to better prioritise those in housing need and make best use of the limited supply of social housing in the Borough.
- 1.2 This report seeks approval from members to consult residents, housing applicants, partners and other stakeholders on this draft policy for a period of six weeks.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that

- 2.1 **the draft Housing Allocations Policy 2019 (appendix 1) be consulted upon for a six week period and;**
- 2.2 **approve the consultation questions (appendix 2)**

3. KEY ISSUES**Financial Implications**

- 3.1 The current allocations computer system (Civica/Abritas) is old and outdated and the software provider is unable to make any alterations to the system due to its age. The revised policy will require a new computer system and a budget and resourcing this was approved by the Executive Committee on the 17th September 2018.

Legal Implications

- 3.2 Housing Act 1996 Part 6 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Localism Act 2011) governs the allocation of social housing stock in England. In addition the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places a new Prevention and Relief Duty upon local authorities and

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE **23rd October 2018**

these households are now included in the Reasonable Preference categories for the purposes of allocating social housing.

- 3.3 The Council also had regard to the Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England produced by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government.
- 3.4 The Council has sought advice from Anthony Collins Solicitors and an independent housing consultant to ensure that this policy is legally compliant.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.5 **Qualification Criteria** - Redditch is an area of high levels of housing need and demand for social housing. It is proposed that a Qualification Criteria is adopted that prioritises households with a local connection to the Borough where the applicant does not fall into a reasonable preference category as defined by the Housing Act 1996 as amended. In determining whether the household has a local connection the Council will agree a connection exists in the following circumstances;
- Where the local connection arises due to residency - applicant(s) must have lived in Redditch Borough for a minimum period of two years or has resided in the Borough for three out of the last five years at the point of application.
 - Where the local connection arises due to employment and the applicant(s) has been in permanent, paid employment for a minimum period in the Borough immediately prior to the application or the applicant(s) has a certified offer of employment in the Borough.
 - Where the applicant(s) has a close family member living in the Borough for a minimum period of three years, immediately prior to the application.
 - Has a local connection as a result of special circumstances.
- 3.6 Local connection for homeless applicants will be assessed having regard to the definition of local connection contained in s.199 Housing Act 1996 as amended and the code of guidance.
- 3.7 In determining permanent employment the Council will give consideration to the Local Government Association guidelines which state that this is employment other than that of a casual nature and will include zero hours contracts.
- 3.8 **Housing Need** - All applicants wishing join the housing register must have a housing need. This will include those applicant(s) with

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**23rd October 2018**

Reasonable Preference, those who are under occupying social housing and those covered by the categories outlined under the section relating to the Banding Structure. Applicant(s) not satisfying at least one of these criteria will not be registered and will be offered alternative housing options. Applicant(s) will also be offered the right to request a review of this decision.

Households considered to be in some housing need are:

- In social housing and seeking a transfer.
- Households with low level medical or welfare issues.
- Households who are suffering financial hardship.
- Households in privately rented accommodation that do not have a reasonable preference
- Households who are sharing facilities with other non-related households.
- Households residing in an institution or supported housing scheme e.g. hospital with no access to settled accommodation.
- Households who have insecurity of tenure (those in tied accommodation or lodging).
- Households that are living with family but want to live independently.
- Two separate households wanting to live as one household.
- Households eligible and interested in older peoples accommodation will not need to demonstrate a local connection or a housing need.
- Households eligible and interested in shared ownership properties only.

- 3.9 **Removing Points within Bands** - The current policy has three bands (Gold, Silver and Bronze) and then points within these bands. It is difficult for applicants and our partners to understand the prospects of applicants being housed. When points are applied it has the effect of producing 22 bands. For example a snap shot of the list in April showed that 1,482 applicants occupied the Silver band of which there were 606 households with only 30 residency points but no identified housing need effectively in band 18.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**23rd October 2018**

- 3.10 The Allocations Policy removes the points in bands and applies six bandings numbering 1 to 6. Band 1 for those in the most urgent housing need who will be directly matched to a property and those in Bands 2 – 6 will be able to express an interest in a property by placing a bid on those that are advertised through the Choice Based Lettings property shop.

**Band 1 - Applicant will be Direct Matched to a suitable property–
(Bidding blocked)**

- Applicants whom this Council has accepted are statutorily homeless and have accepted a duty to re-house under s.193 of Housing Act 1996 (eligible, homeless, priority need, not intentional and with a local connection and the relief duty has come to an end).
- A verified high medical need / disability where the current property has a direct adverse effect on the health of the applicant or a member of their household and when it is unreasonable or uneconomical to adapt the current property to improve the housing situation.
- Accepted on to the supported accommodation 'Move on Scheme'.
- Living in exceptional circumstances.
- Applicants whom are homeless and the Council has a Relief Duty to assist them, have a priority need and would be unintentionally homeless.

Band 2 - High Housing Need – Applicants will be able to bid on properties that they are eligible for

- Homeless cases where no statutory duty to re-house (excluding those deemed intentionally homeless).
- Applicants who are likely to be homeless within 56 days and the Council owes them a 'Prevention Duty' or have become homeless and the Council owes them a 'Relief Duty', but will not be eligible for the full re-housing duty.
- Occupying private rented property in a serious state of disrepair; where a Category 1 hazard exists and enforcement action is being carried out (but not for overcrowding and space).
- Social Housing tenants who are under-occupying social rent or affordable rent housing in the Borough.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**23rd October 2018**

- Social Housing tenants who are occupying a social housing property in the Borough with major adaptations that they do not need.
- Households suffering with serious overcrowding (2 or more bedrooms lacking) unless deemed to be deliberately overcrowded.
- Households meeting two or more criteria from band 3.

Band 3 - Medium Housing Need

- Overcrowding or lacking one bedroom, unless deemed to have deliberately overcrowded.
- Households suffering with some minor disrepair in their privately rented property where an improvement notice has been served for a Category 2 hazard.

Band 4 - Reduced Banding (with Reasonable Preference)(12 month review)

- Applicants with a Reasonable Preference as defined by legislation but no Local Connection with the exception of those who are exempt due to their armed forces or care leaver status.
- Households with financial resources above defined limits.
- Households who have deliberately worsened their circumstances to qualify for a higher banding – eg. deliberate overcrowding.
- Households with housing-related debts and debts owed to Redditch Borough Council.
- Households who have committed acts of anti-social or abusive behaviour (including towards Council staff) and other tenancy breaches but not severe enough to have obtained outright possession.
- Households where the Prevention or Relief Duty has ended due to the unreasonable failure to co-operate.
- Households who are deemed to have become homeless intentionally.
- Households who are not bidding for properties that are available and suitable for their needs or successfully bid but then refuse a property that is suitable for their needs.

Band 5 - Households who do not meet any of the above Reasonable Preference criteria, have a Local Connection under the qualification

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**23rd October 2018****criteria or are an exempt group, and have a low housing need including;**

- Households with low level medical or welfare issues.
- Households that are newly forming.
- Households in privately rented accommodation that do not have a reasonable preference
- Households who are suffering financial hardship.
- Households who are sharing facilities with other non-related households.
- Households residing in an institution or supported housing scheme.
- Households who have insecurity of tenure (those in tied accommodation or lodging with family members).
- In social housing and seeking a transfer.
- Eligible and interested in older peoples accommodation will be eligible to apply even where they do not have a local connection.
- Households eligible and interested in shared ownership

Band 6 – Reduced Preference for those not in a Reasonable Preference category

- Households with financial resources above defined limits.
- Households with housing-related debts and debts owed to Redditch Borough Council.
- Households who have committed acts of anti-social or abusive behaviour (including towards Council staff) and other tenancy breaches but not severe enough to have obtained outright possession.

3.11 Reduced Priority

Households with a reasonable preference will have their banding reduced because of their behaviour or circumstances, at any time. For example tenants who have not paid their rent, or have breached other tenancy conditions, applicants who have sufficient equity or income to resolve their own housing situation or those who have a reasonable preference for housing (as defined in legislation) but do not meet the local connection requirements.

3.12 Households without a reasonable preference will have their banding reduced if they have breached their tenancy conditions by committing acts of anti-social behaviour, not paying their rent or are deemed to have sufficient financial resources to resolve their own housing need.

3.13 Sufficient financial resources are defined as having a household income above £45,000 (excluding those in receipt of means tested benefits), or those households with equity of more than £95,000.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**23rd October 2018**

- 3.14 **Bedroom Standard** - Currently applicants are assessed as every child should have their own bedroom and given overcrowding status if two children share a room. We propose that household members are not considered to be overcrowded until the oldest child turns 10 where two children are of the opposite sex. Children of the same sex will be expected to share a bedroom until one of them reaches their 16th birthday. This will ensure that the Council is prioritising families in greatest need for larger accommodation, which is in very short supply, and will also bring the policy in line with housing benefit rules which will also prevent applicants being affected by the spare room subsidy.
- 3.15 A senior officer within the Council may exercise discretion in deviating from the Bedroom Standard to increase the number of rooms an applicant requires in exceptional circumstances, for example a disabled child that requires their own room.
- 3.16 **Community Contribution for Key Workers and Volunteers** - The Council wants to recognise the many people who provide key worker services and volunteer in the Borough, for example nurses, social workers and police officers and will award an additional waiting time of six months for those deemed as key workers and volunteers.
- This award will be extended to those who are prevented from taking up key worker or volunteering positions due to disability or those with caring responsibilities.
- 3.17 **Minimum age of applicant raised to 18 years** - Currently anyone aged 16 years or over can apply to register subject to them meeting other eligibility criteria.
- 3.18 The Council proposes to raise the age of registration to 18 years and over with an exception for those leaving care or where there are very exceptional circumstances. Care leavers are given special consideration in order that properties can be identified in time for their 18th birthday when they would ordinarily be expected to leave accommodation provided for them by children's services.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.19 The proposed policy will, within legislative constraints, give priority to households with a local connection to the Borough. It will also be a closed list in that not everyone will qualify to join.
- 3.20 The proposed policy will be more transparent and easier to understand and aligns with welfare reforms so that households are not accommodated in properties where they would be affected by the housing benefit rules and deemed to have a spare room thereby

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE **23rd October 2018**

having their housing benefit reduced. Some households will no longer qualify for a reasonable preference as they will no longer be deemed to be overcrowded and they may be placed in a lower band than they currently occupy.

- 3.21 The policy will make better use of social housing stock and will result in more families being housed in appropriately sized accommodation.
- 3.22 Applicants will have a better understanding of their position on the register and their prospects of resolving their housing needs through the social rented sector.
- 3.23 Applicants who are key workers and volunteers will be recognised through the award of additional waiting time within their band. Those applicants who are not key workers or volunteers may be unhappy that key workers and volunteers are receiving additional waiting time within their bands and in effect are being accelerated six months in advance of them.
- 3.24 Applicants will have a clear understanding of the consequences of any tenancy breaches through being placed into a demoted band and will be clear about how this situation might be resolved.
- 3.25 Many older people who are not in a reasonable preference housing need are currently occupying a low band within Silver as they only have residency points. Under the new policy these applicants are likely to be placed into Band 5. They may consider this to be a demotion despite having been occupying a much lower position within the silver band.
- 3.26 The Council's housing stock consists of a significant number of two bedroom flats and therefore this accommodation is considered suitable for households with children. Under the new policy it is proposed that the additional preference for children in flats will be removed. This means that households with children in flats will no longer occupy a reasonable preference band should they apply for a transfer. However, the Council will advertise some properties for existing tenants who are not in reasonable preference so that households with children who occupy flats may have an opportunity to move on into houses when they become available. Case law suggests that it would be reasonable to allocate around 5% of properties in this way.
- 3.27 A plan for communications has been developed covering a wide variety of methods including press releases, social media and external and internal communications, relating to an on line consultation survey and an opportunity to take part in a focus group. An invitation to take part will be sent directly to members of Redditch Community Panel and

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 23rd October 2018**

Redditch Community Forum. The responses from the survey and focus group will be presented with the final report to members.

- 3.28 The Council has considered equalities legislation in relation to this policy. It is in the process of conducting an Equalities Impact Assessment. The consultation responses will also inform this assessment.
- 3.29 It is envisaged that this policy will be adopted alongside a new system which will encourage on line applications, self-certification and self-service, wherever possible. Checks will occur at application stage and again prior to offer. Whilst it is the applicant's responsibility to notify the authority of any changes in their circumstances, there may be occasions when an applicant has received a priority that they are not entitled to and will not be offered the property. This may lead to some frustration and consequently lead to more complaints.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 There are risks to not implementing the updated Allocations Policy 2019 which are in the table below:

Risk	Consequence	Mitigation
Not utilising limited social housing stock in an effective manner	More households in temporary accommodation	Implement the policy and introducing a qualification criteria and making changes to the overcrowding criteria
Increased demand	Resourcing administration of the system and work arounds.	Introduce a closed register that not everyone can access.

5. APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 – Draft Housing Allocations policy 2019
Appendix 2 – Consultation Questions

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Current Housing Allocations Policy 2018
Housing Act 1996
Localism Act 2011
Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England 2012
Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

7. AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Amanda Delahunty
E Mail: a.delahunty@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Tel: 01527 881269

This page is intentionally left blank

Redditch Borough Council Allocations Policy



Glossary of Terms	4
1. Introduction	6
- Priorities and Aims of the Council	
- What are allocations under this scheme	
- The purpose of this Allocations Policy	
- The Legal Framework	
2. Statement of Choice	10
- Choice and Constraints	
3. Qualification Criteria, Eligibility and Reasonable Preference	11
- Who is, and who is not, eligible to apply to register on Redditch Homes	
- Qualification Criteria	
- Residency of Choice	
- Housing Need	
- Persons from Abroad	
- Persons with no local connection to the Borough	
- Unacceptable Behaviour	
- Applicants who are not eligible to join the Housing Register	
- Armed Forces	
- Social Housing Tenants	
- Care Leavers	
- The Application of Reasonable Preference	
- Determining priority between applicants with Reasonable Preference	
4. Registration and Assessment Process	18
- How to Apply	
- Help with Registration	
- Definition of Household Types	
- Redditch Homes Process	
5. The Banding Structure	21
- Cumulative Preference in Band 1	
- The Bandings Explained	
- Band 1	
- Band 2	
- Band 3	
- Band 4	
- Band 5	
- Band 6	
- Time Limited Bands	
- Low Level Medical Need	
- Waiting Time	
- Removing Applicant from Reduced Band	
- Change of Circumstances	
- Additional Preference – Key workers	
- Members of the Armed Forces	

6. Applying For a Property and Lettings.....	40
- Looking for Available Properties	
- Advertising	
- Direct Matching for Band 1 Applicants	
- How to Bid	
- When to Bid for a Property	
- Number of Properties an Applicant can Bid For	
- Multiple Bidding	
- Applications from Employees and Elected Members	
- Statutory Homeless Households	
- Eligibility for Types of Dwelling	
- Selection Process	
- Reasons why an applicant may not be offered a Property	
- Refusing Offers of Accommodation	
- Exempt Allocations	
- Local Lettings Plans	
7. Administration of the Scheme	47
- Delegation of Authority	
- Reassessment of Bandings	
- Reduced Banding Process	
- Closing of Applications	
- Re-joining the Housing Register	
- Equality and Diversity	
- Confidentiality	
- Data Protection and Information Sharing	
- Information Sharing without Consent	
- False Statements or withheld Information	
- Monitoring Redditch Homes	
8. Review of Decisions.....	50
- Information on Decisions and Reviews	
- Complaints	

Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
Affordable housing	Housing let at a social or affordable rent, or a low cost home/shared ownership property sold, to a specified eligible household whose needs are not met in the open market. Also known as social housing and owned by a local authority or housing association.
Allocation	An offer of housing from a Local Authority or Housing Association either directly or via a nomination from a Local Authority
Allocations policy	The policy document that determines how housing is allocated to households
Band start date	The date the household is awarded the current banding applicable to their housing need
Banding/bands	The prioritisation of households on the Housing Register based on their housing need
Bid	Households' expression of interest in an available / vacant property
Close Family Member	Mother, father, sister, brother or adult child (aged 18 and over)
Data Protection Legislation	the UK Data Protection Legislation and any other European Union legislation relating to personal data and all other legislation and regulatory requirements in force from time to time which apply to a party relating to the use of Personal Data (including, without limitation, the privacy of electronic communications); [and the guidance and codes of practice issued by the relevant data protection or supervisory authority and applicable to a party].
UK Data Protection Legislation	all applicable data protection and privacy legislation in force from time to time in the UK including the General Data Protection Regulation ((EU) 2016/679); the Data Protection Act 2018; the Privacy and Electronic Communications Directive 2002/58/EC (as updated by Directive 2009/136/EC) and the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003 (SI 2003/2426) as amended.
Direct matching	An allocation for those in priority band of the Redditch Homes Scheme.
Homelessness	Under section 175, a person is homeless if they have no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere which is available for their occupation and which that person has a legal right to occupy. A person is also homeless if they have accommodation but cannot secure entry to it, or the accommodation is a moveable structure, vehicle or vessel designed or adapted for human habitation and there is nowhere it can lawfully be placed in order to provide accommodation. A person who has accommodation is to be treated as homeless where it would not be reasonable for them to continue to occupy that accommodation. Section 176 provides that

	<p>accommodation shall be treated as available for a person's occupation only if it is available for occupation by them together with:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. (a) any other person who normally resides with them as a member of the family; or, 2. (b) any other person who might reasonably be expected to reside with them.
Housing Application	The process of applying for Council and Social Housing through Redditch Homes either on line, by phone or in writing.
Housing Association	For the purposes of this Scheme this also includes Registered Providers and refers to Social Housing Providers regulated by the Homes and Communities Agency
Housing Need	Anyone applying to the Housing Register must have a housing need recognised by this Allocations Policy unless they are interested in accommodation designated for older people or are only interested in shared ownership properties.
Housing Register	A database/list of households who have applied for affordable housing
Key Worker	The definition of a key worker is taken from the HMRC employment manual: Nurses and other NHS staff, teachers in schools and in further education or sixth form colleges, police officer and civilian staff in police forces, prison service and probation service staff, social workers, education psychologist, planners and occupational therapists employed by local authorities, whole time junior fire officers and retained fire fighters.
Local connection	A household's connection to a local area or authority including residency, family connections and employment
Persons from abroad	People subject to immigration control and any other persons from abroad where the secretary of state makes regulations
Qualification Criteria	There are qualification criteria for the Housing Register. The applicant must meet the eligibility qualification criteria including local connection to Redditch Borough and be in Housing Need.
Reasonable preference	Categories of housing need defined by the Housing Act 1996, Part VI that are required to be included in an allocations policy to which reasonable preference will be given by the Council in accordance with section 166A(3).
Redditch Homes Scheme	The scheme including the software and the processes involved for allocating housing to households
Registration / Effective date	The date of registration of the Housing Application.

Version 1.812/10/2018

Senior Officer	A Tier 4 Officer of the Council or above.
Shared Ownership	Affordable housing option where the applicant part buys and part rents a property. The Registered Provider / housing association owns the remaining (rented) share of the property.
Statutory homeless	This term describes those households who have made a homeless application to Redditch Borough Council and where the full homeless duty has been accepted. This means the household has been determined to be eligible, homeless, in priority need, unintentionally homeless and have a local connection (or an exceptional reason not to have a local connection) and has been issued with a written decision confirming this and the 'relief' duty under S189B Housing Act 1996 has come to an end..
The Borough	Refers to the geographical area known as Redditch Borough
Threatened with Homelessness	Under section 175(4) a person is 'threatened with homelessness' if they are likely to become homeless within 56 days. Under section 175(5) a person is also threatened with homelessness if a valid notice under section 21 of the Housing Act 1988 has been issued in respect of the only accommodation available for their occupation, and the notice will expire within 56 days. Section 195 provides that where applicants are threatened with homelessness and eligible for assistance, housing authorities must take reasonable steps to help prevent their homelessness.
Weekly bidding cycle	The period of time available for eligible households to place bids on properties they are interested in

1. Introduction

Redditch Homes is a scheme used to advertise and/or allocate social rented, low cost home ownership and privately rented properties in Redditch Borough.

Within Redditch Homes allocation policy outlines how the Council will prioritise households for an allocation of social housing under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).

The Council works in partnership with a number of housing associations/registered providers to allocate social housing in a fair and transparent way.

Housing associations and registered providers will have their own allocations policies which they will apply when allocating their properties. This means applicants at the top of the Housing Register on banding and date may not be rehoused by the housing association (registered provider) if they do not also meet the requirements of their own Allocations Policy. The Council may also apply its own policies that relate to a specific dwelling or area in order to support its housing management function and develop sustainable communities.

1.1 Priorities and Aims of the Council

The Council Plan focuses on delivering services which meet the needs of residents through six strategic purposes of which three directly relate to its approach to the allocation of affordable housing as follows:

- **Help me find somewhere to live in my locality**
- **Help me to live my life independently**
- **Help me to be financially independent**

Redditch Borough Council has set a number of objectives for its Allocations Policy in order to provide good quality, well managed social housing in Redditch. The policy is transparent and easy to understand. Regular monitoring and reviewing will take place ensuring all targets are met, the best use is made of the available housing stock and applicants are kept updated of all their Housing options.

Objective 1 Ensure that anyone in housing need has advice on accessing affordable housing, and this advice is easily available to disadvantaged, vulnerable and ethnic groups.

Objective 2 Make Social Housing available to those who cannot afford to purchase property of their own, or to rent privately.

Objective 3 Ensure that there is equality of opportunity within the Allocations Policy and the allocations scheme is fair, consistent and accountable which reflects the values of the Council.

Objective 4 Incorporate the Council's Housing Strategy, Private Sector Renewal

Version 1.812/10/2018

Strategy and Homelessness Strategy.

Objective 5 To build and sustain diverse and balanced communities and promote social inclusion.

Objective 6 To work with other agencies and housing providers to make the best use of affordable housing to meet current and future needs.

Objective 7 To ensure customers are given an opportunity to make informed decisions about what tenure of properties are likely to be available to them in their locality of choice.

Objective 8 To create a safer & cleaner environment; reduce crime, disorder, substance misuse and anti-social behaviour, and to address the causes and fear of crime.

In addition the Council;

- is committed to understanding the housing needs of customers and works towards offering a sustainable housing solution from a range of housing options for those in housing need.
- will work to ensure that households are able to access the service we provide.
- will make effective use of all affordable housing stock.
- will ensure that local people will have an enhanced priority within the banding structure.
- wants to encourage and recognise households who make a positive contribution to their community.
- will enable a better understanding of the housing market.
- will ensure the scheme meets our equalities duties.
- will publish information that enables households to understand how we assist them through the allocations scheme.

Redditch Homes enables people with a housing need to look for a home in an area of preference within Redditch Borough. Households registered with Redditch Homes will be banded according to the suitability of their current accommodation in meeting their needs, their current situation and their local connection, however, not everyone will qualify to register for the scheme.

1.2 The Purpose of this Allocations Policy

This policy sets out in detail, who will or who will not be accepted under the policy and how this assessment is made. It also sets out how applicants can apply for and access social and affordable housing.

Version 1.812/10/2018

It describes how applicants qualify for the Redditch Homes scheme and how the Council identifies their housing need with regard to the legal definition of Reasonable Preference and other categories of housing need that the Council has recognised and how it prioritises housing applicants.

Whilst all applicants are assessed in accordance with the Policy, the allocation of Housing Association properties will also be subject to the allocation policies of those individual Housing Associations, where they have one and they will assess applicants on the Housing Register according to their own stated priorities eg: they may have different rules about the number of people who can live in a home of a particular size. This will be made clear when a property is advertised. For more information regarding the letting of properties please see the Redditch Homes website.

This Allocations Policy has been designed to meet current legal requirements and reflect local priorities.

1.3 What are Allocations under this Scheme?

Allocations under the scheme include where an applicant is nominated or where an existing tenant transfers to be a tenant of the Council or a Housing Association.

The allocation may be an 'Introductory Tenancy' with the Council or a 'Starter Tenancy' with a housing association which will be for a set period, usually 12 months. This may be subject to change/extension depending on how well the tenancy is conducted.

Provided the tenant successfully completes the probationary period the Council/Housing Association will grant a Secure/Assured Tenancy or a Fixed Term tenancy (please see individual housing association / registered provider's tenancy policies).

The Redditch Homes scheme may also be used to advertise intermediate market rent, shared ownership and private rented properties. Please contact the relevant landlord for their eligibility criteria and for more details regarding allocation of these types of properties.

1.4 The Legal Framework

This Allocations Policy complies with the requirements of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), including the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and takes into account the Allocation of Accommodation Code of Guidance 2012 which replaced all previous codes of guidance. All of these documents can be obtained through the gov.uk website. This Policy also complies with the Localism Act 2011, takes into account Welfare Reform legislation and the Equalities Act 2010, where applicable.

This section describes this legal framework.

The Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the 2002 Homelessness Act and the Localism Act 2011) requires local authorities to make all allocations and nominations in accordance with an Allocations Scheme. A summary of the Allocations Policy must be published and made available free of charge to any person who asks for a copy. A summary of the Allocations Scheme and general principles is available through the Redditch Homes website www.redditchhomes.org.uk and at the Council's offices.

The Housing Act 1996, (as amended) requires local authorities to give Reasonable Preference in their allocations policies to people with high levels of assessed housing need. This includes homeless people, those who need to move on welfare or medical grounds, people living in unsatisfactory housing and those who would face hardship unless they moved to a particular locality within the local authority's area.

The Allocations Policy is also drafted and framed to ensure that it meets the Council's equality duties which requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equalities Act; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. An Equality Impact Assessment in respect of these duties is held by the Council.

This Policy has considered:

- The Council's statutory obligations and discretion as to who is eligible for housing allocation
- The Council's statutory obligation to provide Reasonable Preference to certain categories of applicants set down by law i.e. those who must be given a greater priority under the Allocations Policy.
- The Council's statutory discretion to grant "additional preference" and/or to determine priority between applicants with Reasonable Preference.
- The general and specific statutory discretions the Council can exercise when allocating housing.

2. Statement on Choice

2.1 Choice and Constraints

Redditch Borough Council's allocations policy provides a sophisticated approach to those with higher housing needs so that these needs are fully understood. Applicants in higher housing need will be placed into the Band 1 with the approval by a Senior Officer and then directly matched with a home in a locality that provides a sustainable long term solution to meeting those needs.

Pressure on the Council's affordable housing stock means that a qualification criteria is in place covering who is and isn't eligible to join the waiting list.

Whilst keen to encourage and facilitate mobility within housing, Redditch Borough Council recognises that provision of choice has to be balanced along with local need and demand. Those without a connection to Redditch Borough will not be eligible to access the housing register unless they meet one of the exceptions criteria as set out under the heading 'Qualification Criteria'.

In determining priority for housing within the banding structure, a higher degree of preference will be awarded to applicants who have the greatest need and have a local connection to Redditch Borough.

Applicants, with the exception of Band 1, have the opportunity to view details of all properties that are advertised, but can only 'bid' for properties that they are eligible for. Band 1 applicants will be interviewed in order to fully understand their needs and will then be directly matched to properties,

The Council has identified a number of exceptional situations where bidding may not be possible for a particular property, for instance;

- Where the applicant is in Band 1 for re-housing
- Where the applicant does not meet the eligibility criteria for the scheme or the vacant property.
- Where a Local Lettings Plan has been agreed and the applicant does not meet the criteria.
- Where there is a legal agreement restricting who can be offered the property.

Exceptional circumstances will be made clear when the applicant receives their banding award, or when the property is advertised, unless the exceptional circumstance concerns the specific individual (who has bid for the property) in which case it will be discussed with the applicant at the point of allocation.

Applicants who bid on and subsequently refuse properties for no reason will be moved into Band 4 – the Reduced Priority Band – for further details please see section on the Banding Structure.

3. Qualification Criteria, Eligibility and Reasonable Preference

3.1 Who is, and who is not, eligible to apply to register on Redditch Homes

Any United Kingdom resident aged 18 years or over can apply to join the scheme by completing an application form. In very exceptional circumstances an applicant under 18 years of age may be accepted onto the register subject to senior officer approval. Redditch Homes policy has qualification criteria; therefore, not all applications will be accepted: e.g. where there is no close association to the area and/or where there is no housing need (please see the section on the banding structure). Children leaving local authority care (Care Leavers) may be registered prior to their 18th birthday.

Anybody can make joint applications including married couples, civil partners, cohabiting couples, same sex couples, and adult brothers and sisters. In such cases, it is usual for a joint tenancy to be granted in the event of an offer of accommodation being made. The eligibility of applicants to be on the Housing Register will also be checked at the point of allocation.

3.2 Qualification Criteria

Applicants do not qualify to join Redditch Homes housing register unless they meet the qualifying criteria of a reasonable preference or local connection as outlined below;

In determining whether the household has a local connection the Council will agree a connection exists in the following circumstances;

- Where the local connection arises due to residency - applicant(s) must have lived in Redditch Borough for a minimum period of two years or has resided in the Borough for three out of the last five years at the point of application.
- Where the Council accepts the applicant(s) meets any of the Reasonable Preference criteria as identified by the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).
- Where the local connection arises due to employment and the applicant(s) has been in permanent, paid employment in the Borough immediately prior to the application or the applicant(s) has a certified offer of employment in the Borough.
- Where the applicant(s) has a close family member living in the Borough for a minimum period of three years, immediately prior to the application.
- Has a local connection as a result of special circumstances.
- Has a housing need as described in this policy or are considered an exceptional household such as being interested in accommodation designated for older people or interested only in shared ownership properties.

Those who are owed duties under the homelessness legislation who are not intentionally homeless will qualify to register as having a reasonable preference. Local connection for the purposes of a homeless application is defined in S199 Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Code of Guidance for local authorities.

Version 1.812/10/2018

In determining permanent employment the Council will give consideration to the Local Government Association guidelines which state that this is employment other than that of a casual nature and will include zero hours contracts.

In determining close family member this applies to mean mother, father, sister, brother or adult child (aged 18 and over).

If an applicant(s) has no connection that meets the qualification criteria and claims a connection on the basis of special circumstances then the decision to allow them on the list must be made by a senior officer.

Where the applicant is a member of the armed forces, there are special arrangements – please see further details within this policy under the section relating to the banding structure.

All applicants whose housing need is defined as in a reasonable preference category will be eligible to join the list but will be placed into the reduced banding.

This qualification criteria and any other criteria within the policy will be validated before a property will be offered.

3.3 Residency of Choice

For the purposes of determining eligibility on residency grounds, living in the Borough will not include the following:

- Occupation of a mobile home, caravan or motor caravan where it is not the only or principal home.
- Occupation of a holiday letting (which includes a permanent building, hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation) for the purposes of a holiday.
- Resident of a prison, bail hostel or other such accommodation.
- In-Patient of hospitals/specialist centres where they have a connection elsewhere.

3.4 Housing Need

Applicant(s) wishing to join Redditch Homes Housing Register who qualify for the register under the Qualification Criteria must also have a housing need recognised by the Allocations Policy unless they are interested in accommodation designated for older people or are only interested in shared ownership properties. Applicant(s) not satisfying at least one of these criteria will not be registered and will be offered alternative housing options. Applicant(s) will also be offered the right to request a review of this decision.

3.5 Persons from abroad

Applicants must have a right to live in the UK and be entitled to claim public funds. Examples of people who are eligible are British Citizens, EEA nationals (generally those who are working), and those with leave to remain. People applying to join the Housing Register have to provide documents to confirm their identity and their immigration status.

A person from abroad (or two or more persons jointly if any of them is an ineligible person) is ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation if they are subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996, or are excluded from entitlement to housing benefit by s.115 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (c 33) (exclusion from benefits) unless they are of a class prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State. Persons who are subject to immigration control and eligible for housing assistance are;

- Refugee status
- Exceptional leave to remain
- Indefinite leave to remain

This does not apply to a person who is already a secure or introductory tenant of the Council or housing association.

If an applicant has any further questions regarding their status they should contact the Council or seek independent legal advice.

Households who are living abroad and therefore not habitually resident will not be eligible to register.

Applicants who have been considered as ineligible due to immigration status can re-apply at any time.

3.6 Persons with no local connection to the Borough

Applicants who have no local connection to the Borough will not be eligible to join Redditch Homes unless they are:

- Households accepted as statutory homeless under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by Homelessness Act 2002) by the Council and this Duty has not yet been discharged.
- Households with a reasonable preference under the Housing Act 1996.
- Households where the Council is satisfied that the applicant(s) needs to live in the area to provide or receive ongoing, regular and significant care and support to a relative who lives in the area and their application is supported by the local Adult or Children's Services team.
- Households where the Council has agreed to rehouse the applicant under a reciprocal agreement with their current landlord or local authority.
- Households where rehousing or relocation into the local authority area is accepted by the Council as being essential due to public protection issues or for other exceptional reasons.
- Members of the armed forces as outlined in this Allocations Policy.
- Social housing tenants who need to move because they work or have been offered work and they have a genuine intention to take up the offer and will suffer hardship otherwise.
- Where a Local Letting Plan or s106 restriction applies on a specific site.

3.7 Unacceptable behaviour

Where the applicant, or a member of their household, has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make him unsuitable to be a tenant of the relevant authority, they will be ineligible for registration.

Unacceptable behaviour is defined as behaviour which would, if an applicant or member of their household was a secure tenant, entitle a landlord to outright possession under any of the Grounds 1 to 7, Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985.

Unacceptable behaviour can include but is not limited to:

- Owing significant rent arrears and/or failing to comply with a current tenancy condition with a Council, Housing Association or private landlord to such an extent that a Court would grant a possession order.
- Conviction for using the property for an illegal or immoral purpose.
- Causing nuisance or allowing to cause nuisance and annoyance to neighbours or visitors, for example anti-social behaviour.
- Being convicted for offences in or near the home and still posing a threat to neighbours or the community.
- Being violent towards a partner or members of the family.
- Allowing the condition of the property to deteriorate.
- Allowing any furniture or fixtures provided by the landlord to deteriorate due to ill treatment.
- Obtaining a tenancy by deception, for example by giving untrue information.
- Paying money to illegally obtain a tenancy.
- Having lost tied accommodation provided in connection with employment due to conduct making it inappropriate for the person to reside there.

In determining whether an applicant is ineligible due to unacceptable behaviour, the Council will consider:

- Has the applicant or a member of the applicant's household been guilty of unacceptable behaviour?
- Was the unacceptable behaviour serious enough to have entitled the Landlord to obtain an order for possession?
- At the time of the application, is the applicant still unsuitable to be a tenant by reason of that behaviour, or the behaviour of a member of their household who wishes to reside with them?

Should the Council exclude the applicant from the housing register, the applicant has the right to have this decision reviewed. An applicant may become ineligible at any time during the process should the Council become satisfied that they are ineligible due to unacceptable behaviour as described above.

Applicants considered as being ineligible for any reason can make an application for accommodation in the future if their circumstances have changed. It is for the Council to consider behaviour, at the point of application to the housing register, and decide whether they are now eligible under the Policy.

Each application will be assessed on its merits and a decision regarding eligibility will be made accordingly. Anyone deemed ineligible for the register will be provided with

Version 1.812/10/2018

a full written explanation for the decision and will have a right of review of the decision.

Please see the section on Reviews below.

3.8 Applicants who are not eligible to join the housing register

At the point of registration all applicants are asked for information about their housing history and legal status to establish eligibility to join the housing register under the relevant legislation and this allocations policy.

Applicants are not assessed or placed into a band until a decision has been made regarding their eligibility. An applicant's eligibility and other circumstances will be re-checked at the point of allocation.

3.9 Armed Forces

Members of the UK armed forces stationed abroad will be considered as living in the United Kingdom for the purposes of applying for social housing.

The Secretary of State has the power to prescribe in Regulations criteria that may not be used by local housing authorities in deciding what classes of persons are not qualifying persons (s. 160ZA(8)(b)). These Regulations require that local housing authorities do not use local connection (within the meaning of s. 199 of the Housing Act 1996) as a criterion in deciding whether the following are not qualifying persons:

(a) persons who are serving in the regular forces or have done so in the five years preceding their application for an allocation of housing accommodation.

(b) bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where their spouse or partner's death is attributable (wholly or partly) to their service and the bereaved spouse or civil partner's entitlement to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation then ceases.

(c) seriously injured, ill or disabled reservists (or former reservists) whose injury, illness or disability is attributable wholly or partly to their service.

The Council recognises the contribution that armed forces personnel have made and will waive the local connection requirement to those applicants as described above.

3.10 Social housing tenants

The Secretary of State has the power to prescribe in Regulations criteria that may not be used by local housing authorities in deciding what classes of persons are not qualifying persons (s. 160ZA(8)(b)). These Regulations require that local housing authorities do not use local connection (within the meaning of s. 199 of the Housing Act 1996) as a criterion in deciding whether social housing tenants are a "relevant person".

A relevant person has a need to move because the relevant person—

- (a) works in the district of the local housing authority, or
- (b) has been offered work in the district of the local housing authority; and

Version 1.812/10/2018

the authority is satisfied that the relevant person has a genuine intention of taking up the offer of work.

This regulation does not apply if the need to move is associated with work or the offer of work which is—

- (a) short-term or marginal in nature,
- (b) ancillary to work in another district, or
- (c) voluntary work.

In this regulation “voluntary work” means work where no payment is received by the relevant person or the only payment due to be made to the relevant person by virtue of being so engaged is a payment in respect of any expenses reasonably incurred by the relevant person in the course of being so engaged.

Specifically a local connection criteria may not be applied to existing social housing tenants seeking to transfer from another local authority district in England who have a reasonable preference under s.166 (3)(e) because of a need to move to the local authority’s district to avoid hardship where they need to move because the tenant works in the district, or need to move to take up an offer of work.

In considering registering applications the Council will take into account the Right to Move Statutory Guidance March 2015 (or any relevant successor document).

3.11 Care Leavers

Under the Homeless Reduction Act, Care Leavers will have a local connection with the area of the local authority that owes them leaving care duties – therefore if someone is placed in care by Worcestershire County Council and they apply for accommodation under homelessness legislation they will have a local connection with all six Local Housing Authorities in Worcestershire.

A care leaver aged under 21 who normally lives in a different area to that of the local authority that owes them leaving care duties, and has done so for at least 2 years including some time before they turned 16; will also have a local connection in that area. For example if Worcestershire County Council places a young person in Stratford District Council before they turn 16 and they are in care in Stratford District Council for two year period the young person will have a local connection with Stratford and all of Worcestershire.

3.12 The Application of Reasonable Preference

Redditch Homes is required by law to assess the relative priority that housing applicants are awarded. This is particularly important as in the Borough, the demand for social housing is greater than the availability of homes.

The law, as it applies to local housing authorities, requires that Reasonable Preference for housing must be given to those in the categories set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). The statutory Reasonable Preference categories cover:

- All homeless people as defined in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996.

- People who are owed a duty under the Housing Act 1996 because they have a priority need but are intentionally homeless (under s190 (2)), because they are not in priority need and not homeless intentionally 193 (2) or because they are threatened with homelessness, in priority need and not intentionally homeless (195 (2) of the 1996 Act (or under s. 65 (2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under s. (192 (3)).
- People occupying unsanitary, overcrowded or otherwise unsatisfactory housing.
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to a disability).
- People who need to move to a particular locality within the district to avoid hardship to themselves or others.

The Act also gives discretion to a housing authority to award reasonable preference to other categories of applicant in order to meeting locally identified needs. Specific details and examples of how Reasonable Preference and priorities are determined and applied are detailed in the section relating to the Banding Structure.

3.13 Determining priority between applicants with Reasonable Preference

Redditch Homes allocation policy determines priority between applicants with Reasonable Preference by taking into account various factors including:

- The severity of housing need.
- The financial resources available to a person to meet their housing costs.
- Any local connection – as defined in s199 Housing Act 1996 (as amended) – that an applicant has with the Borough.
- The length of time the applicant has been waiting within their current band

Households with a reasonable preference can have their banding reduced because of their behaviour or circumstances at any time.

4. Registration and Assessment Process

4.1 How to Apply

Anyone who wishes to apply for affordable housing through Redditch Homes must register on line or complete a registration form. Anyone in urgent housing need will be interviewed to ascertain the severity of the applicants housing need and understand the type of property that would address this need. The interviewing officer will be able to advise the applicant on whether their needs can be met through Council or other housing association accommodation or whether other options such as the private rented sector should be explored.

Where an applicant needs assistance to complete an application form an advocate (for example, a family member, friend or support agency) can complete the registration form their behalf.

If the applicant is not eligible to register they will be notified giving the reason for the decision and informing them of their right to request a review.

All applications, once received, will be assessed and placed in the appropriate band.

The application must be accompanied by:

- Two proofs of residency one of which must be dated within four weeks of the application date; eg bank statement, bill (phone or utility) with current address.
- one form of identification e.g. birth certificate, passport or drivers licence.

It is recognised that there may be circumstances where this level of evidence is not available, for example where the applicant has lost their document in a fire. In these and similar circumstances applications will be accepted subject to the approval of a senior officer.

The same information is required for any member of the household, over the age of 18, who is to be included on the application.

The Council or Housing Association may ask for updated proof and identification to be provided at the viewing stage and/or point of an allocation.

Where additional information is required to confirm that a higher band is appropriate, the application may be placed in a lower band until the circumstances of the applicant have been confirmed.

Once registered with Redditch Homes the applicant will be given an application number.

Applicants to the scheme are entitled to request details from the Council about information that has been used to make a decision on their registration.

4.2 Help with registration

Help with registration can be given to applicants by council officers as well as other organisations such as County Council social care services, health workers, support workers and voluntary bodies.

In particular, help will be provided to applicants who find it hard to fully participate in the scheme. Support can be offered to assist an applicant to use the system when

Version 1.812/10/2018

actively interested in bidding and ready to move. Access to the system can be provided at the Town Hall and the Locality Offices across the Borough.

4.3 Definition of Household Types

An Applicant(s) household type determines the size and type of housing they may be eligible for.

Single person (under 60)	One person household and with no resident children
Couple	Married, cohabiting, civil partnership and same sex couples without resident children.
Family	Single parent or couple (as defined above) with minimum of one dependent child, who lives with parent (s) as their main or principal home.
Pensioner / Disability Living Allowance (DLA)	One person household and couples over 60 or person in receipt of DLA / Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
Other	Any other household group including friends, brother and sister and families with non-dependent children

Redditch Council Property Size based on Household Type				
Household Size	Suitable Property Size			
	Studio / 1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
Single Person	✓			
Childless Couple	✓			
Parent(s) & 1 child or 25 weeks pregnant (unless Homeless*)		✓		
Parent(s) and 2 children of same sex aged between 0 and 16		✓		
Parent(s) and 2 children of same sex where one of them is over 16			✓	
Parent(s) and 2 children of different sex under the age of 10		✓		
Parent(s) and 2 children of different sex when the oldest reaches 10			✓	
Parent(s) and 3 children – 2 of same sex aged between 0 and 16. Plus 1 other child			✓	
Parent(s) and 3 children - 2 of different sex under the age of 10. Plus 1 other child			✓	Additional bedrooms to be awarded as per age and gender of larger households

Version 1.812/10/2018

*Where the applicant is homeless and the Council has accepted a Duty under homelessness legislation the Duty may be discharged by an allocation into one bedroom accommodation where the child is under 2 years of age.

In order to reflect a housing requirement for a particular property type or size the Council may need to put the applicant into a different category in order to achieve a correct allocation.

Example – if the applicant is a single person with a medical need that means they require a larger property for a resident carer, their household type will be amended to “family” or “other” to enable them to bid.

Where an allocation is made to studio flat accommodation the tenant will be entitled to register for a larger property once they have successfully sustained their introductory/starter tenancy and this has been converted to a secure/assured/fixed term tenancy.

Redditch Homes Process

1. Housing applicants should complete an application form.
2. Once registered applicants will be sent confirmation of their registration number and will be placed in the lowest band whilst waiting for an assessment.
3. Once assessed those placed into Band 1 will be direct matched to a property that meets their needs. Applicants placed in the other bands will be able to place bid on properties that they are eligible for.
4. Vacant properties are advertised each week and applicants, with the exception of Band 1, are advised to look for suitable vacancies regularly.
5. Applicants, other than those in Band 1, can make up to 2 bids per week as long as their circumstances match the advertised eligibility criteria.
6. Applicants who place bids will be prioritised by those with the highest band for the longest time when being considered for a property unless there is a specific eligibility criteria, when preference will be given to the applicant that meets this criteria.
7. Applicants who are direct matched will be prioritised by housing need for that particular housing type by effective date for that band.
8. The successful applicant will be contacted by the Landlord and asked for information such as proof of identity. A viewing will be arranged and subject to the applicant being accepted, an offer will be made.

5. The Banding Structure

Redditch Homes operates a needs-based banding system as described below. Bands are arranged to reflect housing need, with the highest band indicating the greatest need for housing. The scheme consists of five bands and a more detailed description of these bands and of Reasonable Preference can be found below.

The bands within the policy are based on the reasonable preference criteria set out within the 1996 Housing Act (as amended).

When registered the applicant can only be placed in one band and the highest banding possible will be applied according to the policy.

The table below describes the bands into which households will be placed according to their housing circumstances.

Band 1 - Applicant will be Direct Matched to a suitable property– (Bidding blocked)

- Applicants whom this Council has accepted are statutorily homeless and have accepted a duty to re-house under s.193 of Housing Act 1996 (eligible, homeless, priority need, not intentional and with a local connection and the relief duty has come to an end).
- A verified high medical need / disability where the current property has a direct adverse effect on the health of the applicant or a member of their household and when it is unreasonable or uneconomical to adapt the current property to improve the housing situation.
- Accepted on to the supported accommodation 'Move on Scheme'.
- Living in exceptional circumstances.
- Applicants whom are homeless and the Council has a Relief Duty to assist them, have a priority need and would be unintentionally homeless.

Band 2 - High Housing Need – Applicants will be able to bid on properties that they are eligible for

- Homeless cases where no statutory duty to re-house (excluding those deemed intentionally homeless).
- Applicants who are likely to be homeless within 56 days and the Council owes them a 'Prevention Duty' or have become homeless and the Council owes them a 'Relief Duty', but will not be eligible for the full re-housing duty.
- Occupying private rented property in a serious state of disrepair; where a Category 1 hazard exists and enforcement action is being carried out (but not for overcrowding and space).
- Social Housing tenants who are under-occupying social rent or affordable rent housing in the Borough.
- Social Housing tenants who are occupying a social housing property in the Borough with major adaptations that they do not need.
- Households suffering with serious overcrowding (2 or more bedrooms lacking) unless deemed to be deliberately overcrowded.
- Households meeting both criteria from band 3.

Band 3 - Medium Housing Need

- Overcrowding or lacking one bedroom, unless deemed to have deliberately overcrowded.
- Households suffering with some minor disrepair in their privately rented property where an improvement notice has been service for a Category 2 hazard.

Band 4 - Reduced Banding (with Reasonable Preference)(12 month review)

- Applicants with a Reasonable Preference as defined by legislation but no Local Connection with the exception of those who are exempt due to their armed forces or care leaver status.
- Households with financial resources above defined limits.
- Households who have deliberately worsened their circumstances to qualify for a higher banding – eg. deliberate overcrowding.
- Households with housing-related debts and debts owed to Redditch Borough Council.
- Households who have committed acts of anti-social or abusive behaviour (including towards Council staff) and other tenancy breaches but not severe enough to have obtained outright possession.
- Households where the Prevention or Relief Duty has ended due to the unreasonable failure to co-operate.
- Households who are deemed to have become homeless intentionally.
- Households who are not bidding for properties that are available and suitable for their needs or successfully bid but then refuse a property that is suitable for their needs.

Band 5 - Households who do not meet any of the above Reasonable Preference criteria, have a Local Connection under the qualification criteria or are an exempt group, and have a low housing need including;

- Households with low level medical or welfare issues.
- Households that are newly forming.
- Households in privately rented accommodation that do not have a reasonable preference
- Households who are suffering financial hardship.
- Households who are sharing facilities with other non-related households.
- Households residing in an institution or supported housing scheme.
- Households who have insecurity of tenure (those in tied accommodation or lodging with family members).
- In social housing and seeking a transfer.
- Eligible and interested in older peoples accommodation will be eligible to apply even where they do not have a local connection.
- Households eligible and interested in shared ownership

Band 6 – Reduced Preference for those not in a Reasonable Preference category

- Households with financial resources above defined limits.
- Households with housing-related debts and debts owed to Redditch Borough Council.
- Households who have committed acts of anti-social or abusive

behaviour (including towards Council staff) and other tenancy breaches but not severe enough to have obtained outright possession.

5.1 The Bandings Explained

The following criteria will lead to a band being awarded:

Band 1- Applicants will be placed into this band by a Senior Officer of the Council and Directly Matched to a suitable property – (Bidding Blocked)

5.2 Statutory Homeless with a duty to re-house

This band will be awarded by the Council where it has accepted a full duty under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) to provide accommodation for an applicant.

When the Council accepts a duty under homelessness legislation, the Council will directly match applicants to a property. Only one offer of suitable accommodation will be made. Should an applicant refuse an offer of suitable accommodation, the Council will have discharged its housing duty.

Where the Council owes the applicant a 'Relief Duty' and has determined that at the end of the 56 day relief period a full re-housing duty will apply the applicant will be placed into Band 1.

Applicants have the right to request a review of certain decisions made by the Council in respect of their homeless application. This includes the decision to bring to an end the full homeless duty and Relief Duty by making a suitable offer of settled accommodation. The applicant has this right whether they refuse or accept the offer of accommodation. If the review finds in favour of the homeless applicant, the applicant will retain their Band 1 status (provided they are still homeless) and they will be direct matched to an alternative. However, if the reasonableness and suitability of the offer is upheld, any homeless duty will be ended and the applicant's banding will be reassessed. Homeless applicants are therefore strongly advised to accept an offer and then request a review.

5.3 High Medical Need or Disability

Medical priority will only be granted where the current property has a direct adverse effect on the health of the applicant or a member of their family, and when it is unreasonable or uneconomical to adapt their current property. The Council will directly match applicants to a suitable property.

Officers will gather sufficient information to understand the impact of the property on the health of the applicant or their family. The final decision for medical priority will be made by the Housing Services Manager or the Housing Options Manager in conjunction with the Council's medical advisors and Occupational Therapist if required. An example would be someone with severe mobility problems requiring ground floor accommodation.

Version 1.812/10/2018

In certain circumstances the case may be referred to an external body e.g. Now Medical for assessment.

5.4 Living in Exceptional Circumstances

Exceptional circumstances will only be awarded in those instances where the applicant's living circumstances are considered by the Council to be exceptional given the prevailing housing conditions in the Borough and where no other banding criteria reflects or addresses the problem(s).

In reaching a decision to award this banding, account will be taken of the suitability of the current accommodation, and the location of the accommodation in relation to the applicant's needs.

Examples are given below of potential situations where this banding may be granted – the list is not exhaustive and the decision lies with the Council.

- The applicant is adequately housed but needs to give or receive support on the grounds of disability or illness that is substantial and ongoing and it is not possible for the person giving care to use public transport or their own transport to provide assistance.
- The applicant needs to move on welfare grounds e.g. hardship.
- The applicant's household is overcrowded, coupled with medical issues that do not accrue medical priority e.g. ADHD, autism.
- The applicant needs to take up or continue employment, education and/or training that is not available elsewhere and they do not live within reasonable commuting distance.

5.5 Supported Accommodation 'Move on' scheme.

This status is awarded where an agreement between the Council and the Supported Housing provider, is in place for applicants to move on from supported accommodation in the Borough.

This status will only be awarded to applicants in supported accommodation or care-leavers where the following criteria have been met:

- The applicant is ready to move to independent settled social housing on the recommendation of the support provider.
- An ongoing support package has been assessed and where required, is in place.

In the case of young people moving on from care, applicants are awarded this category in accordance with the 16 and 17 year old Joint Protocol between the Council and Worcestershire County Council's Children's Services Department. Applicants must be a former "Relevant Child" as defined by the Children Act 1989.

The evidence to support this will be provided by the County Council's leaving care service and will consist of confirmation that:

- The care-leaver is ready to move to independent settled housing and is genuinely prepared for a move to independent living.
- The care-leaver possesses the life skills to manage a tenancy including managing a rent account.
- An ongoing support package has been assessed and where required, is in place.

Children accommodated out of the area by Children's Services or Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children under the responsibility of Worcestershire County Council will be awarded this status and will be granted a local connection with the Borough

Band 2 - High housing need

5.6 Homeless cases with no statutory duty to re-house (excludes intentional homeless)

This status is awarded by the Council where an applicant is considered under homelessness legislation to be;

- eligible for assistance,
- homeless,
- not in priority need,
- not homeless intentionally.
- has a local connection (or has exceptional circumstances and does not require a local connection)

5.7 Where an applicant will become homeless within 56 days and the Council owes them a 'Prevention Duty or they are homeless and owed the Relief Duty, but, the full Housing Duty has not been determined

This status will be awarded by the Council. At relief duty stage, the banding will last for up to 56 days during which a decision will be made what further Duty may be owed. Where the full housing duty is owed the applicant will be promoted to Band 1. If it is determined that a full housing duty does not apply the applicant will remain in band 2 subject to the Council still considering them to be threatened with homelessness or actually homeless. At relief duty stage a household without a local connection may be referred to an authority where they have a local connection.

5.8 Properties subject to serious disrepair

This status will be awarded where there are category 1 hazards (as determined by the Housing Act 2004) confirmed to be present within a property by a relevant officer; and one of the following enforcement notices has been served:

- Improvement notice for Category 1 hazards (other than for overcrowding and space)
- Prohibition order (on part or all of the dwelling)
- Emergency Remedial Action (on part or all of the dwelling)
- Demolition or Clearance Orders

The priority of the relevant officer will be to remove the category 1 hazard, therefore, Redditch Homes officers will liaise with the enforcement officer prior to an offer of accommodation being made in order to determine whether works have been completed.

Version 1.812/10/2018

Where the notice has been complied with and the works completed, the applicant's band will be re-assessed.

Where one of the following notices has been served on the dwelling which prohibits occupation of the whole dwelling applicants will be dealt with under homelessness legislation:

- Emergency Prohibition Order
- Prohibition Order

Where the applicant is in a Council tenancy the Housing Act 2004 does not apply as it is unable to serve upon itself. This reasonable preference would still be awarded where a notice would be served if the tenure was different.

5.9 Council tenants who are under occupying affordable housing or living in an adapted property where they do not require the adaptations

The Council aims to make best use of existing housing stock and priority will be given where a Redditch Council tenant applies to move to a smaller, or more appropriate type of property.

Some examples would be;

- a) Applicant's currently living in family sized accommodation, either social or affordable rent, who wish to 'downsize' and free up at least one bedroom.
- b) Applicants currently living in family sized accommodation, either social or affordable rent, wishing to move to a one bed property or a two bed property designated for older people e.g. retirement housing, Extra Care or a bungalow.
- c) An applicant occupying an adapted property where they do not require the adaptations.

Please note this only applies where a family sized property or a property with substantial adaptations will become available for re-letting following the move.

Please see 'Bedroom Standard for the Assessment of Overcrowding and Underoccupation' regarding how underoccupation is determined.

5.10 Serious Overcrowding

Applicants lacking two or more bedrooms will be awarded this status e.g. where the applicant has a four bedroom need and is living in a two bedroom property.

Overcrowding assessments will include all household occupants and the overall size of the property in determining the band, regardless of whether the whole household wish to be rehoused together or not. Applicants will have their circumstances assessed against the Redditch Homes Bedroom Standard as set out under the section on Registration and Assessment Process.

5.11 Cumulative Preference in Band 2

Applicants whose circumstances match more than one criterion in the Band 3 will be awarded 'cumulative preference', which means that they will move up to Band 2. For example, an applicant who meets two or more criteria in Band 3 would be awarded Band 2 banding but can't then move to the higher Band 1 unless the applicant is accepted for one or more of the reasonable preference criterion required for the Band 1 as agreed by a Senior Officer of the Council.

Applicants who have been found to be intentionally homeless, within the Band 4 will not qualify for a cumulative preference award.

Band 3 - Medium Housing Need

The following criteria will lead to Band 3 being awarded:

5.12 Overcrowding or lacking required bedrooms

This applies to households who are overcrowded or lacking one bedroom. Please see 'Bedroom Standard for the Assessment of Overcrowding and Underoccupation' table regarding how overcrowding or lacking required bedrooms is determined as set out under the section on Registration and Assessment Process.

5.13 Properties suffering from disrepair

Following confirmation from the relevant officer, properties that are suffering from minor disrepair (regardless of tenure), and are not deemed to be severe or a threat to the health and safety of the occupier or visitors, will be awarded this band. This banding will be applied where a hazard awareness notice has been served for Category 2 hazards (as defined under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004) except for overcrowding and space assessment which is assessed separately under the Redditch Homes overcrowding policy.

The Council will liaise with the relevant officer on a regular basis to check that the property circumstances are still in disrepair prior to an offer of accommodation being made.

Band 4 - Reduced Banding

(Reasonable Preference but reduced priority reviewed after 12 months)

This band will be used for households in Reasonable Preference categories where their priority is reduced for one of the following reasons;

Applicants will initially be banded according to their current housing need but demoted to Band 4. This decision will be reassessed by the Council after a period of twelve months, or at the applicant's request at any time subject to the confirmation of material changes in the applicant's circumstances.

5.14 Reasonable Preference – No Local Connection

Where an application is made and the applicant is assessed as having a reasonable preference as defined by Part VI of the Housing Act 1996, and does not have a local connection as defined under the Qualification Criteria of this Policy then their banding

Version 1.812/10/2018

will be reduced to Band 4. This can be reviewed at any point at which they consider that they meet the Qualification Criteria.

5.15 Financial Resources

Owner occupiers and people with sufficient financial resources available to them to meet their housing needs will be placed in Band 4.

Applicants who have a household income (including benefits) of more than £45,000 per annum and / or savings/capital/assets/equity of £50,000 that will enable them to access and maintain private accommodation will be encouraged and supported to do so through the housing options service. Any household in receipt of a means tested benefit will not be subject to this reduced banding criteria (this does not include Child Benefit).

Applicants will be asked to provide income and asset/savings/capital details at the point of application and if, at that stage, they exceed the threshold their banding will be the reduced to Band 4 (where they have a housing need). The income and assets/capital/savings details will also be considered at the point of offer to ensure the applicant is still on the correct banding.

The financial resources of an armed forces applicant will be disregarded where it is a lump sum that was received as compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service.

Financial thresholds may also be determined by Registered Social Landlords and applicants should contact individual organisations where they believe income or capital may be an issue at the point they are made an offer of accommodation.

5.16 Deliberately worsening housing circumstances

Where there is evidence that an applicant has deliberately worsened their circumstances or deliberately moved into a property that is unsuitable and as a result would qualify for higher priority on Redditch Homes, this priority will be reduced. This would include circumstances where an applicant surrendered their tenancy, where it was reasonable to occupy and / or against the advice of the Housing Options Officer or where they moved to a property that was smaller than their requirements.

Where there is evidence that an applicant has deliberately worsened their circumstances in order to qualify for higher priority on Redditch Homes, this priority will be reduced. This may include the following;

- Unsuitable property choice – e.g. with stairs if need ground floor
- Overcrowding – e.g. moved in with others / moved others in by choice
- Causing disrepair – including not allowing access
- Giving up a suitable tenancy
- Adaptations – apply to move within 5 years and these still meet the households needs
- Refused support which could have maintained tenancy

Officers will consider the applicants circumstances and particularly issues of vulnerability or where poor advice has been given before reducing the persons banding to Band 4.

5.17 Housing related debts or other debts owed to Redditch Borough Council

Where households have housing related debts or other debts to the Council or landlord an assessment will be undertaken to establish how the debts have arisen and if from a deliberate act or omission that led to non-payment.

Those with outstanding debt to the Council or their landlord will be placed in the reduced banding. NB: in certain circumstances restrictions can be lifted. The applicant will be encouraged to make affordable arrangements to pay the debt and they will be placed within Band 4 until an affordable arrangement has been reached with whom they owe the money and the applicant is maintaining regular payments for 13 weeks.

The restriction has been introduced to maximise income to the Council or their landlord as well as prevent customers being housed that have a poor proven payment history for services from the Council.

Outstanding debt to the council would include

- Council Tax arrears
- Sundry debt arrears
- Former tenant arrears
- Court costs
- Recharges
- Housing Benefit overpayments
- Deposit bond schemes

NB: this would include debts that are statute barred (6 years old) and/or have been written off the Council's systems.

The Council will exercise its discretion, depending on individual circumstances where there are mitigating factors or an urgent need to move.

The circumstances where restrictions can be lifted include:

- Debt is less than £1,000 with a repayment plan in place that has been maintained for 13 weeks
- Exceptional circumstances
 - Life threatening circumstances
 - Safeguarding concerns
 - Domestic abuse
 - Severe medical needs
 - Other 'issues' out of the applicants control

Where a request to lift the restriction is made it will be considered on a case by case basis.

All circumstances will need to be evidenced by the submission of a Housing Management report validated by supporting documentation and will be agreed at the

Version 1.812/10/2018

discretion of the Head of Housing, Housing Services Manager or Housing Options Manager.

5.18. Anti-social behaviour, other tenancy breaches or abuse to staff

Where there has been a breach of tenancy such as anti-social behaviour or neglect of the property, the applicant will be placed within Band 4.

Band 4 will apply to applicants who are guilty of anti-social behaviour or tenancy breaches where formal legal action has been commenced e.g. injunction, ASBO, CRIMBO or Notice etc. This would include anyone found guilty of sub-letting a social housing tenancy and waste /neglect of the property. The Council will consider any particular support needs the applicant might have and whether this is having an impact on their behaviour before reducing the applicants banding. The Council will only consider recent tenancy breaches / anti-social behaviour. This would normally be within 6 months.

The Council can reinstate the higher banding where the tenancy breach is resolved or the applicant can demonstrate changed behaviour over a reasonable timescale. This would normally be 6 months.

Applicants who persistently verbally abuse or physically attack staff will have their application placed in Band 4, the reduced priority band, for 6 months.

5.19 Households who have been determined to have become homeless intentionally.

Band 4 will be awarded to applicants where the Council has carried out investigations under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) and found the applicant intentionally homeless. This banding will remain unless the Council has reason to believe that applicant has secured settled accommodation which has broken the chain of causation of the original homelessness from the homelessness application.

5.20 No bidding or refusing offers of accommodation

Where applicants in Bands 1 have refused a property without exceptional reason or applicants in Bands 2 or 3 have failed to place bids, or have placed successful bids but refused properties, and there is evidence that properties that would meet their needs have been advertised on Redditch Homes, their banding will be reviewed within the set time period for their band and they will be placed into Band 4, the Reduced Banding category.

By successful bids the Council means where the applicant(s) has been offered the property and invited to view it (where applicable).

The officer must consider the households' vulnerability and any issues that may have affected their behaviour at the time e.g. domestic abuse, mental health problems.

5.21 How Band 4, the reduced banding, will be applied

Applicants will be banded according to their current housing need but demoted to Band 4. This decision will be reassessed by the Council after a period of twelve months, or at the applicant's request at any time. Review requests where there has

not been any change of circumstances will not be considered. The reduced banding is unlikely to be removed if an applicant's circumstances remain the same.

Band 5 - Some Housing Need

This applies to all applicants who live, work or have a local connection as set out in Section 3 Qualification Criteria, to the Borough and do not meet any of the Reasonable Preference criteria, as set out above, and have low housing need. Applicants applying for designated older persons accommodation will not need to have a local connection to the Borough.

If an applicant has a low level housing need due to medical, disability or welfare conditions / issues, the banding will only be awarded where the condition / issue will be improved by a move to alternative accommodation.

Applicant(s) accepted onto the waiting list and awarded Band 5 include the following;

- In social housing and seeking a transfer.
- Households with low level medical or welfare issues.
- Households who are suffering financial hardship.
- Households in privately rented accommodation that do not have a reasonable preference
- Households who are sharing facilities with other non-related households.
- Households residing in an institution or supported housing scheme e.g. hospital with no access to settled accommodation.
- Households who have insecurity of tenure (those in tied accommodation or lodging).
- Households that are living with family but want to live independently.
- Two separate households wanting to live as one household.
- Households eligible and interested in older peoples accommodation will not need to demonstrate a local connection or housing need.
- Households eligible and interested in shared ownership properties only.

5.22 Low Level medical need

When determining whether an applicant is eligible for a low level medical need in order to be registered onto the system, the Council will accept the applicants own declarations as a sufficient level of evidence.

A low level medical need should be awarded where an individual has a disability, welfare condition or other issue where the issue may be improved by a move to alternative accommodation.

Applicants will be placed in band 5.

Any application in this banding can be closed after two years where no bids have been placed. Band 1 applicants who have not received an offer will also be reviewed after two years.

Band 6 – Reduced Priority for those who are not in a Reasonable Preference category.

Applicants will initially be banded according to their current housing need but demoted to Band 6. This decision will be reassessed by the Council after a period of twelve months, or at the applicant's request at any time subject to the confirmation of material changes in the applicant's circumstances.

5.23 Financial Resources

Owner occupiers and people with sufficient financial resources available to them to meet their housing needs will be placed in Band 6.

Applicants who have a household income (including benefits) of more than £45,000 per annum and / or savings/capital/assets/equity of £95,000 that will enable them to access and maintain private accommodation will be encouraged and supported to do so through the housing options service. Any household in receipt of a means tested benefit will not be subject to this reduced banding criteria (this does not include Child Benefit).

Applicants will be asked to provide income and asset/savings/capital details at the point of application and if, at that stage, they exceed the threshold their banding will be reduced to Band 6 (where they have a housing need). The income and assets/capital/savings details will also be considered at the point of offer to ensure the applicant is still on the correct banding.

The financial resources of an armed forces applicant will be disregarded where it is a lump sum that was received as compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service.

Financial thresholds may also be determined by Registered Social Landlords and applicants should contact individual organisations where they believe income or capital may be an issue at the point they are made an offer of accommodation.

5.24 Housing related debts or other debts owed to Redditch Borough Council

Where households have housing related debts or other debts to the Council or landlord an assessment will be undertaken to establish how the debts have arisen and if from a deliberate act or omission that led to non-payment.

Those with outstanding debt to the Council or their landlord will be placed in the reduced banding. NB: in certain circumstances restrictions can be lifted. The applicant will be encouraged to make affordable arrangements to pay the debt and they will be placed within Band 6 until an affordable arrangement has been reached with who they owe the money and the applicant is maintaining regular payments for 13 weeks.

The restriction has been introduced to maximise income to the Council or their landlord as well as prevent customers being housed that have a poor proven payment history for services from the Council.

Outstanding debt to the council includes:

Version 1.812/10/2018

- Council Tax arrears
- Sundry debt arrears
- Former tenant arrears
- Court costs
- Recharges
- Housing Benefit overpayments
- Deposit bond schemes

NB: this would include debts that are statute barred (6 years old) and/or have been written off the Council's systems.

The Council will exercise its discretion, depending on individual circumstances where there are mitigating factors or an urgent need to move.

The circumstances where restrictions can be lifted include:

- Debt is less than £1,000 with a repayment plan in place that has been maintained for 13 weeks
- Exceptional circumstances
 - Life threatening circumstances
 - Safeguarding concerns
 - Domestic abuse
 - Severe medical needs
 - Other 'issues' out of the applicants control

Where a request to lift the restriction is made it will be considered on a case by case basis.

All circumstances will need to be evidenced by the submission of a Housing Management report validated by supporting documentation and will be agreed at the discretion of the Head of Housing, Housing Services Manager or Housing Options Manager.

5.25 Anti-social behaviour, other tenancy breaches or abuse to staff

Where there has been a breach of tenancy such as anti-social behaviour or neglect of the property, the applicant will be placed within Band 6.

Band 6 will apply to applicants who are guilty of anti-social behaviour or tenancy breaches where formal legal action has been commenced e.g. injunction, ASBO, CRIMBO or Notice etc. This would include anyone found guilty of sub-letting a social housing tenancy and waste /neglect of the property. The Council will consider any particular support needs the applicant might have and whether this is having an impact on their behaviour before reducing the applicants banding. The Council will only consider recent tenancy breaches / anti-social behaviour. This would normally be within twelve months.

The Council can reinstate the higher banding where the tenancy breach is resolved or the applicant can demonstrate changed behaviour over a reasonable timescale. This would normally be twelve months.

Applicants who verbally or physically abuse staff shall have their application placed in Band 6, the reduced priority band, for twelve months.

5.26 How Band 6, the reduced banding, will be applied

Applicants will be banded according to their current housing need but demoted to Band 6. This decision will be reassessed by the Council after a period of twelve months, or at the applicant's request at any time. Review requests where there has not been any change of circumstances will not be considered. The reduced banding is unlikely to be removed if an applicant's circumstances remain the same.

5.27 Bedroom Standard for the Assessment of Overcrowding and Underoccupation

Bedroom Standard for the Assessment of Overcrowding and Under-occupation				
Household Make-up	Suitable Property Size			
	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed
Single Person	✓			
Childless Couple	✓			
Parent(s) & 1 child or 25+ weeks pregnant		✓		
Parent(s) and 2 children of same sex aged between 0 and 16		✓		
Parent(s) and 2 children of same sex over 16			✓	
Parent(s) and 2 children of different sex under the age of 10		✓		
Parent(s) and 2 children of different sex when the oldest reaches 10			✓	
Parent(s) and 3 children – 2 of same sex aged between 0 and 16. Plus 1 other child			✓	
Parent(s) and 3 children - 2 of different sex under the age of 10. Plus 1 other child			✓	Additional bedrooms to be awarded as per age and gender of larger households

The appropriate senior officer within the Council may exercise discretion in deviating from the Bedroom Standard to increase the number of rooms an applicant requires. Examples would include where an extra room is required to accommodate a carer on

health grounds, or where the applicant is a registered foster carer. In some circumstances it may be possible to award this banding and direct match a potential foster parent living in social housing to a more appropriately sized property with the agreement of the landlord. (see also Eligibility for Types of Dwelling under Section 6).

The Bedroom Standard allows the policy to determine whether there is under-occupation or overcrowding for the purposes of banding. The Council will determine, through this allocation policy the type and size of property an applicant can occupy.

Bands 2 and 3 will also apply to applicants needing to be re-housed on the application if they have no bed spaces available to them.

Evidence of overcrowding must be provided at the point of registration and allocation of accommodation and may be verified by a home visit.

There may be some exceptions to the bedroom requirements including the following;

- Where there is a carer included in the household who cannot share a bedroom.
- Where the household contains "a child who cannot share a bedroom". This definition applies to a child who (1) is entitled to the care component of disability living allowance at the highest or middle rate, and (2) by reason of their disability is not reasonably able to share a bedroom with another child.

A carer is someone who, with or without payment, provides help and support to a partner, relative, friend or neighbour, who would not manage without their help. This could be due to age, physical or mental health, addiction, or disability. In all cases the carer must have been identified by the applicant as the person who is primarily responsible for providing them with care and that they need to live with them.

Even if a carer is in receipt of Carer's Allowance this does not necessarily mean that it is necessary for them to reside with the person who is being cared for. An application to include a carer on a housing application will be considered if the need for a carer has been assessed by a relevant specialist organisation (e.g. a social care, health professional) as needing to provide overnight support by a resident carer. In these circumstances the applicant must provide supporting evidence from other agencies e.g. Social Care or a Health professional.

In some limited circumstances it may be possible to consider cases where the carer is not in receipt of Carer's Allowance but would be eligible. Under these circumstances it will still be necessary for the applicant to demonstrate that the person looked after is in receipt of a relevant care related benefit.

5.28 Household with a disabled child

Where the household includes a disabled child and the child isn't able to share a room with another child because of its disability then an additional bedroom requirement can be considered. The disabled child would need to be in receipt of the care component of the Disability Living Allowance (or Personal Independence Payment) at the highest or middle rate.

5.29 Households with access to other children

Anyone with access to children will need to demonstrate their involvement in the care and supervision of the child. A senior officer within the Council will give consideration to factors including regularity of contact, who claims the relevant benefits for the child and any residency orders as well as legislation, codes of guidance and case law in determining which parent has **primary responsibility** for the children. Therefore

Version 1.812/10/2018

unless there is an exceptional circumstance we would be unlikely to provide family accommodation where the applicant is not the primary carer for the child even if they have joint access rights to their child.

Currently case law around eligibility for benefits and homeless case law has found that separated parents do not have an automatic right to benefits or a bedroom for a child they do not have primary responsibility for.

The bedroom standard assessment is for determining overcrowding and does not guarantee that an applicant will be offered the exact property size for their household needs. In particular, where their housing need exceeds four bedrooms but there is a limited supply of larger properties within the Borough they are unlikely to be offered social housing that exactly meets their needs.

There may be other special circumstances subject to emerging case law where the bedroom standard does not apply and this will be determined by a senior officer or manager.

5.30 Time Limited Register

Live applications on the housing register will be closed after 2 years if there have been no bids placed. Band 1 applicants will also be reviewed where no offers have been made within a two year period. Please see the Reviews / Complaints Section for more information.

5.31 Waiting Time

New applicants, who are eligible and qualify, are placed into Band 5 whilst their housing need is assessed. An applicant's waiting time will be from the date of registration (the effective date); this will be the date the on line form is submitted or the paper form is received and date stamped at the Council's offices.

If an applicant is moved up into a higher band (following assessment) then the date they moved into that band will override the registration date (effective date). If the applicant remains in or moves down to the Band 5 or 6 then the registration date (effective date) will apply.

5.32 Removing Applicant's Reduced Preference from Bands 4 and 6

Where an applicant is promoted from Band 4 or 6, the Reduced Band, to a reasonable preference band, the band start date will be back-dated to the date they were originally placed in the assessed band. E.g. Where the applicant has a reasonable preference due to a high medical need the date that this was effective from is the date that will be reinstated.

Where an applicant has been promoted from Band 4 or 6 a housing association may still refuse to accommodate them due to their own allocations policies. Applicants demoted to Bands 4 and 6, the Reduced Bands, will be encouraged to pursue private rented housing wherever possible and appropriate advice and support will be given to assist them to do so.

The decision to promote an applicant from a Reduced Band will be undertaken as part of a full review of the applicant's circumstances to ensure that the applicant is awarded the correct banding.

5.33 Change of Circumstances

All applicants are required to notify the Housing Options Team at the Council immediately of any change to their circumstances which may affect their priority for housing. Applicants will need to provide proof of their change before it is assessed.

Applicants who have had a change of circumstances and have not informed the Council may have their application suspended whilst an investigation takes place in order to determine eligibility. The applicants' banding will be reassessed at the point that they submit the change of circumstances (not at the point when the circumstances change) and this will then determine their band start date. If an applicant does not respond to contact from the Council within one month, their application will be closed.

Applicants should notify the Council of any change in their circumstances. For example:

- A change of address, for themselves or any other person on their application
- Any additions to the family or any other person they would wish to join the application
- Any member of the family or any other person on the application who has left the accommodation
- Any confirmed pregnancy
- Changes of name
- Changes in financial circumstances, including change of employment
- Accommodation issues
- Medical or other housing needs

5.34 Additional Preference – Community Contribution of Key Workers and Volunteers.

The Council wants to recognise the many people who provide key worker services to the Borough, for example nurses, social workers and police officers, and will award an additional waiting time of six months for those applicants in key worker occupations. The key worker status can apply to either the applicant or joint applicant. The responsibility will be on the applicant or joint applicant to provide the evidence to be awarded this additional preference.

I. Applicants Volunteering

Applicants volunteering for a minimum of 20 hours per month and for a continuous period of at least six months, at the point of application, at review and the same at the point of offer will be awarded an additional six months waiting time.

II. Applicants who are full time carers

Applicants who are unable to take up key worker or volunteering positions because they care for someone on a full time basis and have done so for a minimum period of six months (before applying) and are in receipt of carers allowance (due to disability or frailty), or have a child under two years of age for whom they are the primary carer and in receipt of child benefit for that child, will qualify for the award of an additional six months.

III. Applicants with a disability

The Council recognises that it may not be possible for some applicants to take up key worker or volunteering positions due to severe disability (e.g. where they are awarded the support element of Employment Support Allowance or higher rate Disability Living Allowance / Personal Independence Payment) and in these circumstances additional waiting time will be awarded.

5.35 Members of the Armed Forces

By Armed Forces, we mean the “regular forces” and the “reserve forces” as defined by s. 374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006(a). The “regular forces” means the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the regular Army or the Royal Air Force. The “reserve forces” means the Royal Fleet Reserve, the Royal Navy Reserve, the Marine Reserve, the Army Reserve, the Territorial Army, the Royal Air Force Reserve or the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

Members of the Armed Forces who have been served with a cessation to occupy accommodation will be given housing advice and the appropriate banding and, if required, considered under homelessness legislation (Housing Act 1996, Part VII and other relevant legislation).

The Council recognises the contribution made by members of the Armed Forces and we support the principles of the Worcestershire Community Covenant.

The Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preferences for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012 require Local Authorities to give additional preference to a person with an urgent housing need and are in one of the Reasonable Preference categories.

The regulations are that local housing authorities must frame their allocation scheme to give additional preference to the following persons if they fall within one or more of the statutory reasonable preference categories and are in urgent housing need:

- a) serving members of the regular forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service
- b) former members of the regular forces
- c) bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where (i) the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their service spouse or civil partner, and (ii) the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service
- d) existing or former members of the reserve forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness, or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service.

If an “Armed Forces” applicant is able to meet the local connection criteria (or is exempt from this) and does not have sufficient resource to meet their own housing need, this Policy will award the applicant an additional six months in waiting time at the point that need has been assessed or date of registration (if need hasn’t changed over time).

6. Applying for a Property and Lettings

6.1 Looking for Available Properties

Once applicants have been registered with Redditch Homes and notified of their registration number, they can start to look for a property of their choice, unless they are awarded Band 1.

6.2 Advertising

Whilst some properties will be directly matched by the Council the remainder of properties, and those of its partner housing association landlords, will be advertised in the following ways:

- Website – available to anyone with access to the internet. The website enables applicants to view all available properties on line at www.redditchhomechoice.org.uk
- Council Offices – computers will be available to view and bid for available properties. Staff will be on hand to assist where needed

Adverts will provide information about the location, property type and size, rent level, and eligibility criteria.

The Council may advertise during any twelve month period up to 5% of its allocations to existing Council tenants registered in band 5 to facilitate movement within the Council's housing stock.

The Head of Housing will review the percentage target on an annual basis.

6.3 Direct Matching for Band 1 Applicants

For all properties that are available and required for Band 1 a shortlist will be automatically produced of eligible households. The applicant at the top of the shortlist will be made an offer unless there are circumstances that make the allocation inappropriate e.g. where the location of the property is unsuitable for that particular applicant.

If the offer is refused it will be offered to the next applicant on the shortlist until the list is exhausted. If the property has been refused by the Band 1 shortlist or if there are no eligible applicants for the property, it will be advertised through Redditch Homes property shop for open bidding.

Applicants in Band 1 are only eligible for one offer and will be placed into Band 4 (Reduced Banding) if the offer was considered to be reasonable.

6.4 How to Bid

Applicants can bid for properties as detailed below. They will need to have their personal access details to access their account either:

- **On the Internet**

- www.redditchhomes.org.uk

- **In Person**

- At any of the Council's Offices with a public reception area

6.5 When to Bid for a Property

Empty properties will be advertised on a bidding cycle. The time that a bid is placed during the week does not make a difference to the shortlist position – it is not a 'first come first served' system.

6.6 Number of Properties an Applicant can Bid for

Whilst Band 1 applicants will be directly matched to a property, all other applicants will be able to make 2 bids each week as long as they match the advert criteria. Bids must be placed on separate properties for which the applicant is eligible. Applicants can withdraw their bid if they change their mind and re-bid on a different property at any time throughout the weekly bidding cycle.

6.7 Multiple Bidding

As applicants are able to bid on two properties during any given weekly bidding cycle, it is possible that the applicant will appear at the top of both shortlists. In this instance they will be contacted to discuss which property they wish to consider. The council or Housing Association will then indicate the applicant's preference and the applicant will be bypassed from the other shortlist. If the Council or Housing Association (Registered Provider) who has matched the applicant to a property subsequently decides not to offer them the property, the Provider will inform the applicant of the reasons for this directly, but the applicant will retain their banding and be able to continue bidding. Please see the section below on "Reasons why an applicant may not be offered a property".

6.8 Applications from Employees and Elected Members

Staff members, Elected Members, or relatives of either, will have their application approved by the Housing Options Manager or the Head of Housing, in accordance with the Councils equal opportunity policy.

Any offers of accommodation to members of staff or Elected Members, or relatives of either, will be agreed by the Chief Executive. In the absence of the Chief Executive this decision will cascade as follows:

1. Deputy Chief Executive
2. Executive Director for Leisure, Environment and Community Services
3. Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources

6.9 Statutory Homeless Households

Homeless applicants placed in Band 1 will be those who have been:

- accepted as statutory homeless (where the full rehousing duty is owed) by the Council under s193 in Housing Act 1996 (eligible, homeless, priority need and not intentionally homeless, with a local connection) or those owed the relief duty, but who would be owed the full duty when the relief duty comes to an end

If an offer is rejected at the relief stage, subject to review, the full homeless duty will not subsequently be owed.

The Council will direct match all Band 1 applicants. When a Statutory Homeless applicant is directly matched to a property the applicant will be notified of this and, subject to rights of review under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, this will constitute an offer of housing under Part VI as a discharge of the Council's homelessness duty. If this offer is subsequently refused and the applicant requests a review of the suitability of accommodation, then the application will be suspended until the outcome of the review has been determined.

If the refused offer is deemed suitable, the Council will have discharged its Duty and the applicant will be placed into band 4 (reduced banding).

Should a Statutory Homeless applicant (eligible for the full re-housing duty) be rejected by a partner housing association under its own allocations criteria, the homelessness duty will not be discharged and the applicant will remain eligible for a further offer.

6.10 Eligibility for Types of Dwelling

The Council or its housing association (Registered Provider) partners may use their individual landlord policies, or may use their discretion to determine an applicant's eligibility for a size and type of dwelling.

Examples are, but not restricted to:

- Where applicants require larger or specially adapted accommodation on health grounds. This will be considered on a case by case basis, taking into account the advice of the Council's qualified medical advisor.
- Where the landlord wants to deliberately under-occupy a property and a Local Letting Plan is in place.
- Where there is little or no demand for a particular property and it is therefore difficult to let (at the point of advertising the property).
- Where an applicant has a larger family size than the bedroom size criteria.
- There may be properties where, having gone through the usual shortlisting process, have not been let and therefore the Council, or its registered provider partners, may use their discretion to adjust any of the criteria for that particular property as deemed fit.

6.11 Selection process

- Applicants for each property are placed in order of housing need. Priority for a property is decided first by band and then by date within the band and then by effective date.

Version 1.812/10/2018

A bid for a property will not be considered if the applicant's household does not meet the size, age or disability requirements for that property, unless there are exceptional circumstances which need to be taken into account.

Landlords will select and may also interview the top applicant(s) before an offer is made.

A property will not always be offered to the applicant at the top of the shortlist if there are reasons why this applicant is not eligible or would not be suitable. Please see the 'Reasons why an Applicant may not be offered a property' section for more details.

Successful applicants will be given the opportunity to view the property prior to tenancy sign-up.

If the applicant chooses to refuse the property, the reasons for the refusal will be recorded and the applicants banding may be reassessed.

If an applicant is matched to a property they will not be able to bid for other properties until they have decided to either accept or refuse the offer of the property.

If the applicant is at the top of the shortlist the Council or Housing Association will check the application to ensure the banding is correct and there aren't any other factors that would limit offers of accommodation e.g. change of circumstances.

6.12 Reasons why an Applicant may not be Offered a Property or an Offer is Withdrawn

Housing Associations may choose not to allocate a property due to their own allocations policy, please contact individual housing associations (registered provider) for more information.

Where information is received following initial registration that changes the eligibility of the application for the property being offered the offer may not be made or may be withdrawn.

If the applicant requires a certain type of accommodation for example their own entrance and the property does not meet this requirement the offer will not be made or will be withdrawn.

6.13 Restrictions on offers through the advert

The Council and housing associations may apply restrictions in order to identify suitable applicants in particular circumstances and these will always be specified in the advert. Where a property is advertised with certain restrictions, the letting will be made to the bidder who meets the criteria with the earliest band start date in the highest band, as with usual lettings.

Some properties may be restricted for bidding as follows;

- Under agreements pursuant to s.106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) imposing conditions on who is able to bid – normally a restriction to households with a local connection or the applicants age.

- The Council and housing associations may adopt specific lettings criteria in relation to particular developments or areas in order to address identified problems and to create sustainable and balanced communities. In these circumstances a local lettings policy would apply.
- The Council and housing associations may advertise a property with particular criteria to allow for it to be sensitively let in recognition of the impact on neighbours or the neighbourhood. This will be authorised by a senior officer.
- The Council and housing associations are entitled to advertise some properties with preference given to their existing tenants in order to facilitate transfers.

6.14 Refusing Offers of Accommodation

Band 1 applicants are expected to accept an offer of accommodation as the Council will fully understand their requirements. All other applicants are expected to take reasonable care when bidding for a property to ensure it meets their needs. If, however, an applicant decides to refuse an offer of accommodation, the property will be offered to the next suitable applicant. An application may be reassessed if an offer of a property is refused. The Council will take into consideration the suitability of the property and reasonableness of the offer in any reassessment undertaken.

6.15 Refusals by Band 1 applicants to whom the full homeless duty is owed

If a homeless applicant refuses an offer of suitable accommodation, the Council may decide that its duty under homelessness legislation is discharged, subject to the statutory review process, and the applicants banding will be reassessed.

Homeless applicants have the right to request a review of certain decisions made by the local authority in respect of their homeless application. This includes the decision to bring to an end the full homeless duty by making a suitable offer of settled accommodation. The applicant has this right whether they refuse or accept the offer of accommodation. If the review finds in favour of the homeless applicant, the applicant will retain their Band 1 status (provided they are still homeless).

If the reasonableness and suitability of the offer is upheld, the homeless duty will be ended and the applicant will be placed in Band 4 (the Reduced Band). Homeless applicants are therefore advised to accept an offer and then request a review if they believe it to be unsuitable.

6.16 Exempt Allocations – Accommodation provided for lettings that are not covered by this Scheme.

The following exempt allocations are covered by s160, Housing Act 1996 and are not allocations under this Policy:

- Succession to a tenancy on a tenant's death pursuant to s89 Housing Act 1985 and s17 Housing Act 1988 (this will be dealt with by the landlord under the relevant legislation and policies).
- Assignment of a tenancy by way of mutual exchange.

- Transfer of the tenancy by a court order under family law provisions or under the Civil Partnership Act 2004.
- An introductory tenancy (including assured shorthold) becoming an assured/secure tenancy.
- Transfers initiated by the Council or housing associations (registered providers) (e.g. decant to alternative accommodation to allow for major works).
- Being rehoused by the Council pursuant to the Land Compensation Act 1973.

The following allocations are deemed to be exempt as they are likely to require different decision making processes and criteria in making assessments and rehousing the applicant:

- A person being granted a family intervention tenancy.
- Provision of non-secure temporary accommodation in discharge of any homelessness duty or power.
- Supported accommodation.
- Where a partner housing association needs to directly match a property (more details regarding this are included later in this policy).
- Some Extra Care and Sheltered accommodation will need to apply its own policy for the allocation of accommodation which will be based on age and housing and care needs. For more information contact the Council or relevant landlord for information.
- Changes to joint tenancies which will include the granting of a new tenancy through changes from a sole to a joint tenancy and from a joint to a sole tenancy. The Council or partner housing association will decide whether to allow a Joint Tenancy depending on the circumstances of the case.
- Households requiring a move through the Witness Protection Scheme or similar, at the formal request of the appropriate authority.
- Where properties have adaptations and are suitable for applicants with special needs they will, in the first instance, be considered for direct matching to applicants in Band 1. If there is no requirement for the property through direct matching, the property will be advertised through Redditch Homes. Priority for accessible accommodation will be given to those people who have appropriate levels of need and this will be clearly stated in the adverts.

6.17 Local Lettings Plans

Redditch Borough Council reserves the right to apply additional criteria for example specific local connection criteria, offers of family sized accommodation to smaller

households or those in employment when using Local Letting Plans. The Council and housing associations, in the interests of promoting balanced and sustainable communities, agree local lettings plans for specific areas, estates, or blocks. This is to ensure that lettings plans are tailored to the needs of an area, and protect the interests of existing residents and the wider community.

All local lettings plans will be available from the landlord upon request.

6.18 The principles in applying Local Lettings Plans

- Local Lettings Plans may be developed to meet the particular needs of a local area.
- Local Lettings Plans can apply to single properties or a number of properties in a particular area that may become available over a period of time.
- There must be a clear reason for having Local Lettings Plan (this may take the form of recurring antisocial behaviour issues, high child densities or a concentration of older residents) and will be subject to reconsideration.
- Local Lettings Plan must be developed and approved in accordance with an agreed procedure that must have specific aims and will be reconsidered on an annual basis.
- A requirement of a Section 106 agreement of the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act.

The decision to implement a Local Lettings Plan will be developed and approved by a Senior Officer of the Council. The local ward Member will be consulted and will have 7 days within which to respond, after which, if no response is received, it will be assumed that they are in agreement. Any decision to implement a Local Lettings Plan will always take into account the implications for equal opportunities and the need to ensure that the Council is able to meet the allocation needs of those owed a reasonable preference.

Where a property is advertised in accordance with a Local Lettings Plan, the letting will be made to the highest bidder who meets the eligibility criteria of the Local Lettings Plan.

Examples of possible Local Lettings Plans:

The following are examples of local letting criteria that could be included in respect of a specific area, estate, or block:

- Age restrictions.
- Where the property forms part of a rural housing scheme on an exception site.
- Restrictions on lettings to vulnerable households where there are already a concentration of supported tenants/residents.
- Sensitive lettings where there have been issues with anti social behaviour.

7. Administration of the Scheme

7.1 Delegation of Authority

Redditch Homes operates alongside the separate allocation policies and activities of partner housing associations.

The Council will not revoke any of its legal duties and powers.

The administration of the Allocations Policy and scheme is undertaken by Redditch Borough Council who is responsible for updating and reviewing this Policy and scheme in line with good practice, legislation and case law, consulting with partners and customers and ensuring the scheme is followed.

Certain functions within the scheme can only be undertaken by a senior officer or manager and, where this is the case, this has been clarified throughout the allocations policy.

7.2 Reassessment of Bandings

Bandings will be reassessed when it is apparent there has been a change of circumstances.

An applicant will be notified of the reassessment. Failure to respond to appropriate correspondence in relation to the reassessment within one month will result in the application being closed. If good reason can be shown for the failure to respond to the reassessment then the application may be reinstated with the original band start date.

If the Council considers that an applicant in a reasonable preference banding has not been using their priority and bids appropriately, a senior officer will review the application and banding may be altered to Band 4, the Reduced Band unless good reason can be shown as to why bids have not been placed.

7.3 Notification of Bands 4 and 6 - Reduced Banding

Any applicant whose banding is reduced will be provided with notification of the decision that will contain the following information:

- The original band and the revised band
- The reasons for the decision to reduce banding
- That the applicant has a right to request a review of that decision
- What they have to do before their band can be reconsidered

7.4 Closing of Applications

Applications may be closed if applicants:

- Request their application to be closed.
- Do not respond to a request to provide updated information about their registration.

Version 1.812/10/2018

- Do not make a bid, or if in Band 1 have not been offered a property, within 2 years of applying to join the Scheme
- Circumstances have changed and the applicant is no longer eligible under this allocations policy.

When an applicant is re-housed through Redditch Homes, their application will be automatically closed and they will need to complete a new registration form if they wish to remain on the Housing Register.

In all other circumstances where an applicant has moved they will need to complete a change of circumstances and be reassessed.

7.5 Re-joining the Housing Register

Where a household wishes to re-join the Redditch Homes Housing Register at a later date, their new date of application will be the date they re-register unless there are exceptional circumstances to be considered by a senior officer.

7.6 Equality and Diversity

The Council's aim is to implement and maintain services which ensure any potential or current applicant is not treated less favourably on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or marriage and civil partnership, nor is disadvantaged by the application of a rule, condition, or requirement, which has a discriminatory effect which cannot be justified by law. Allocations will only be made to those persons who are eligible.

This policy will be subject to periodic equality impact assessments.

7.7 Confidentiality

The fact that a person is an applicant on the Redditch Homes will not be disclosed (without their consent) to any other member of the public.

7.8 Data protection and Information Sharing

All information held is subject to the Data Protection legislation. Redditch Homes will advise all applicants joining the scheme about how their data will be used. The application and any information relating to it will be able to be viewed by the housing association landlord who has advertised the property. The information is shared under the Council's legal duty for the purposes of allocating housing.

7.9 Information sharing without consent

In exceptional circumstances information may be shared about the individual and their history irrespective of whether their consent has been obtained. This does not happen often but will include:

- In accordance with the provisions of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (S. 115).
- Where there are serious risks to the public, our staff or to other professionals;
- To protect a child; or
- To protect adults who are thought to be at risk, for example if they are frail, confused or cannot understand what is happening to them.
- Where information is relevant to the management or support duties of the proposed landlord or support organisation to ensure the health and safety of the applicant, a member of his or her household, or a member of staff.

7.10 False statements or withheld information

It is a criminal offence for applicants and/or anyone providing information to Redditch Homes to knowingly or recklessly make false statements or knowingly withhold reasonably requested information relevant to their application (s.171 Housing Act 1996). This includes but is not limited to:

- information requested on the housing registration form.
- Information provided in response to correspondence at the review of the application.
- Any information relating to any other reassessment of the application.

An offence is also committed if a third party provides false information whether or not at the instigation of the applicant. This would apply at any stage of the application process.

Where there is suspicion or an allegation that a person has either provided false information or has withheld information, the application will be placed under pending status during the investigation and will be excluded from this Scheme until an outcome is reached.

If the outcome of any investigation establishes that they did not provide false information, or there was no withholding of information or such was not found to be withheld knowingly, then the application will be reinstated from the date of registration, meaning the relevant applicant should not suffer any disadvantage.

However, where the investigation shows that false information was provided on the application form the application will be re-assessed. The applicant may also be liable to prosecution. Ground 5 in Schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by the 1996 Act, s.146) enables the landlord to seek possession of a property where it has been granted as a result of a false statement by either the tenant or a person acting at the tenant's instigation.

If it is determined that an applicant directly, or through a person acting on his or her behalf, has given false information or withheld required information it will result in an applicant being removed from Redditch Homes and deemed ineligible unless there are exceptional circumstances to be considered by a senior officer.

7.11 Monitoring Redditch Homes

The Council will regularly monitor the outcomes being achieved by Redditch Homes.

8. Reviews of decisions

8.1 Information about decisions and reviews

The Council makes the decision regarding the start dates and banding of every applicant.

An applicant to Redditch Homes has a right to request a review from the Council if they are unhappy with any decision (finding of fact). This will include:

- decisions to exclude from registration,
- the level of priority awarded or the way in which the application has been dealt with.

Applicants will be able to appoint an advocate, and once appointed, the Council will deal directly with the advocate. The applicant or advocate must request a review within 21 days of the date of the decision letter unless there are exceptional circumstances which have prohibited them from doing so.

Applicants have the following further and specific rights to information about decisions and rights of review of decisions:

- the right, on request, to be informed of any decision about the facts of their application which has been taken into account in considering whether to make an allocation to them
- the right, on request, to review on following grounds a decision to treat them as ineligible due to immigration controls or unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable to be a tenant

The applicant will be notified of the outcome of the review including reasons. The Council will aim to determine the review within 56 days of the request or such longer period as may be agreed with the applicant. Once the review has been decided upon there is no further right of review on the same matter unless there is a material change of circumstance.

The applicant will also have the right to make a formal complaint through the Council's complaints procedure and escalate this to the Local Government Ombudsman and seek a judicial review.

Reviews will be carried out by a senior officer within the Council and an officer who was not involved in the original decision.

Where the complaint concerns an issue with the letting of a property, the applicant should address their complaint directly to the relevant landlord and follow that organisation's complaint procedure.

8.2 Complaints

An applicant who is not satisfied with the service that they receive may register a complaint with the Council by telephone, e-mail, in writing or in person. All complaints will be acknowledged and investigated. Please see the Council's complaints procedure for details on how to complain and the length of time the Council has to consider the complaint. <http://www.redditchbc.gov.uk/council/corporate/we-want-your-feedback/compliments-and-complaints.aspx>

An applicant can ask someone else or an organisation such as Citizen's Advice Bureau to make a complaint on their behalf.

Appendix 2 Redditch Homes Partners' Contact Details

Name	Address	Phone Number	Email	Website
Bourneville Village Trust	Estate Office, Oak Tree Lane, Bourneville, Birmingham, B30 1UB.	0121 472 3831	info@bvt.org.uk	www.bvt.org.uk
Bromford Housing Group	Regus Birmingham Blythe Valley Central Boulevard Blythe Valley Business Park Solihull B90 8AG	0330 1234 034	customerservices@bromford.co.uk	www.bromford.co.uk
Bromsgrove District Housing Trust	Buntsford Court, Buntsford Gate, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, B60 3DJ	0800 0850 160	info@bdht.co.uk	www.bdht.co.uk
Clarion Housing	Gee Business Centre, Holborn Hill, Aston, Birmingham, B7 5JR	0300 456 3300		www.myclarionhousing.com
Fortis Living	Festival House, Grovewood Road, Malvern, Worcestershire, WR14 1GD.	01684 579579	housingneeds@fortisliving.com	www.fortisliving.com

Friendship Care & Housing	50 Newhall Hill, Birmingham, B1 3JN	0121 506 2800	friendship@longhurst-group.org.uk	www.fch.org.uk
Housing and Care 21	Tricorn House, 51-53 Hagley Road, Birmingham B16 8TP.	0370 192 4000	enquiries@housingandcare21.co.uk	www.housingandcare21.co.uk
Midland Heart Ltd	20 Bath Row, Birmingham, B15 1LZ	0345 60 20 540	customer.servicecentre@midlandheart.org.uk	www.midlandheart.org.uk
West Mercia Homes	Apex 2, Apex Park, Wainwright Road, Worcester, WR4 9FN	0300 7906 531	info@wmhousing.co.uk	www.wmhousing.co.uk
Orbit Heart of England	10 Greenhill Street, Stratford upon Avon, WARMS CV37 6LG	0345 8 500 500	info@orbit.org.uk	www.orbit.org.uk
Redditch Co-operative Homes	Britten House, Britten Street, Redditch B97 6HD	01527 591170	customerfirst@accordgroup.org.uk	www.accordgroup.org.uk
Rooftop Housing Group	70 High Street, Evesham, Worcestershire, WR11 4YD	0800 0421 800	info@rooftopgroup.org	www.rooftopgroup.org
Sanctuary Housing	Sanctuary Midlands, 164 Birmingham Road, West Bromwich, Birmingham, B70 6QG	0800 131 3329	midlands@sanctuary-housing.co.uk	www.sanctuary-group.co.uk
Stonewater	Jephson House Third Floor, Castle Mill,	01234 889494		www.stonewater.org

	Burnt Tree, Tipton, DY4 7UF			
Stonham Housing Association	2 Gosforth Park Way, Gosforth Business Park, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE12 8ET	0845 141 4663		www.homegroup.org.uk
Optivo	Grovenor House, 125 High Street, Croydon CR0 9XP	0330 123 0220	csclondon@optivo.org.uk	www.optivo.org.uk
Walsall Housing Group	100, Hatherton Street, Walsall, WS1 1AB		Enquiries@whgrp.co.uk	
Waterloo Housing Group	Waterloo House, 1700, Solihull Parkway, Birmingham Business Park, Solihull, B37 7YD	0800 435016		www.waterloo.org.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 2 Allocations Policy On-Line Survey

This on line survey has been developed following an extensive review of Redditch Borough Council's allocations policy which takes into account the freedoms and flexibilities made available through the Localism Act 2011. The following changes are now proposed which include:

1. The introduction of qualification criteria which will restrict access to the housing register.
2. Giving additional preference to key workers.
3. Removing points within bands and substituting with six bands that are easier to understand.
4. Adjusting the definition of overcrowding
5. Demoting some applicants into lower bands, for example; those who breach their tenancy conditions or have the resources to meet their own housing needs, or those in a reasonable preference for housing as defined in legislation but no local connection to Redditch.

You can view the proposed policy [here](#).

The Council would like to hear your views on these proposals.

An Overview of the Current Policy

Currently anyone can apply for affordable housing in Redditch, but demand is very high. The Council intends to restrict access to the housing register by setting additional criteria that applicants, who are not in a reasonable preference category, will have to meet in order to be accepted on to the register.

There are currently 1300 applicants registered for housing which have been assessed based on housing need and local connection. Once assessed they placed in one of the following bands:

- Gold
- Silver
- Bronze

Applicants are further awarded points within their bands depending on their circumstances as follows:

- Residency (12 months) or parents 30 Points
- Bedroom deficiency/per room 50 Points
- Children in flat 15 Points
- Studio Flats 5 Points
- Property is Under Occupied / Per room 50 Points
- Leaving Special needs property 250 Points

Properties that become available for letting are either direct matched or advertised through Redditch Home Choice. Properties that are advertised are available for applicants to place a bid to register an interest in a property. An applicant's position on the shortlist is based upon their housing need, their connection to the area they are bidding on and their waiting time as set out in the Allocations policy.

The current policy can be viewed [here](#).

The Changes Proposed for the New Policy

Qualification Criteria: Currently anyone can join the housing register. The Council proposes that only applicants with a significant local connection to Redditch or those with no local connection, but who fall within a category of reasonable preference as defined in the Housing Act 1996. In determining whether the household has a local connection the Council will agree a connection exists in the following circumstances;

- Where the local connection arises due to residency - applicant(s) must have lived in Redditch Borough (by choice) for a minimum period of two years or have resided in the Borough for three out of the last five years at the point of application.
- Where the local connection arises due to employment and the applicant(s) has been in permanent, paid employment in the Borough immediately prior to the application or the applicant(s) has a certified offer of employment in the Borough.
- Where the applicant(s) has a close family member living in the Borough for a minimum period of three years, immediately prior to the application.
- Has a local connection as a result of special circumstances.

Those without a reasonable preference housing need or local connection will no longer be eligible to join the register.

Local housing authorities are required to award Reasonable Preference for housing to the categories set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). The statutory Reasonable Preference categories cover:

- All homeless people as defined in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996.
- People who are owed a duty under the Housing Act 1996 because they have a priority need but are intentionally homeless (under s190 (2)), because they are not in priority need and not homeless intentionally 193 (2) or because they are threatened with homelessness, in priority need and not intentionally homeless (195 (2) of the 1996 Act (or under s. 65 (2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under s. (192 (3)).

- People occupying unsanitary, overcrowded or otherwise unsatisfactory housing.
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to a disability).
- People who need to move to a particular locality within the district to avoid hardship to themselves or others.

Local connection for homeless purposes will be assessed having regard to the definition of local connection contained in s.199 Housing Act 1996 (in the case of homeless applicants) and the code of guidance.

In determining permanent employment the Council will give consideration to the Local Government Association guidelines which state that this is employment other than that of a casual nature and will include zero hours contracts.

Q1a) Do you agree that the Qualification Criteria as described above be introduced?
Yes/No/Don't Know
Please write any comments here:

Housing Need

It is proposed that applicant(s) wishing to join Redditch Homes Housing Register must have a housing need even if they have a local connection. This will include those applicant(s) with Reasonable Preference, those who are under occupying social housing stock and those covered by the categories outlined under the section relating to the Banding Structure. Applicant(s) not satisfying at least one of these criteria will not be registered and will be offered alternative housing options. Applicant(s) will also be offered the right to request a review of this decision.

Households considered to be in some housing need are:

- In social housing and seeking a transfer.
- Households with low level medical or welfare issues.
- Households who are suffering financial hardship.
- Households in privately rented accommodation that do not have a reasonable preference
- Households who are sharing facilities with other non-related households.

- Households residing in an institution or supported housing scheme e.g. hospital with no access to settled accommodation.
- Households who have insecurity of tenure (those in tied accommodation or lodging).
- Households that are living with family but want to live independently.
- Two separate households wanting to live as one household.
- Households eligible and interested in older people's accommodation will not need to demonstrate a local connection or a housing need.
- Households eligible and interested in shared ownership properties only.

Q2a) Do you agree with the above proposal?
Yes/No/Don't Know
If No, please explain why not here:
Q2b) Are you aware of any other groups who have some housing need that should be allowed to join the register?
Yes/No/Don't Know
If yes please give details here:

Removing Points within Bands

The Council is aware that the current policy of bands and points is confusing and would like a more simple and transparent policy. The Council proposes to remove the points within bands criteria and replace it with 6 broad bands without points. Within each band applicants will be considered in date order.

Q3) Do you agree with the above proposal?
Yes/No/Don't know
If No – Please explain why here

Reducing a Households Priority

Households with a reasonable preference can have their banding reduced because of their behaviour or circumstances, at any time. For example tenants who have not paid their rent, or have breached other tenancy conditions, such as anti-social behaviour, applicants who have sufficient equity or income to resolve their own

housing situation, or those who have a reasonable preference for housing (as defined in legislation) but do not meet the local connection requirements.

Q4a Do you agree that certain applicants in a reasonable preference housing need category without a local connection to Redditch Borough should have their banding reduced?

Yes/No/Don't Know

If No please explain here:

Q4b) Do you think the proposals regarding financial resources of a household income of £45k (excluding means tested benefits) or equity of £95K are appropriate thresholds above which the reduced banding is applied?

Yes/No/Don't Know

If No what do you think would be appropriate thresholds?

Q4c) Do you agree that applicants who breach their tenancy conditions such as not paying their rent or enforcement action has been taken for of anti-social behaviour should have their banding reduced?

Yes/No/Don't Know

Q4d) Do you agree that where an applicant has been awarded reasonable preference banding and refuses suitable offers or do not actively bid for suitable properties should have their banding reduced?

Yes/No/Don't Know

Please write any comments here:

Q4e) Do you agree that applicants who have deliberately worsened their circumstances should have their banding reduced. For example moving from suitable accommodation into overcrowded accommodation?

Yes/No/Don't Know

Please write any comments here:

Bedroom Standard

Currently applicants are assessed as overcrowded if two children share a room. We propose that household members are not considered to be overcrowded until the oldest child's 10th birthday where two children are of the opposite sex. Children of the same sex will be expected to share a bedroom until their 16th birthday. This will make

sure the Council is prioritising families in greatest need for larger accommodation, which is in very short supply, and will also bring the policy in line with housing benefit rules which will also prevent applicants being affected by the spare room subsidy.

A senior officer within the Council may exercise discretion to increase the number of rooms an applicant requires in exceptional circumstances, for example a disabled child that requires their own room.

Q5) Do you agree with this proposed bedroom standard?

Yes/No/Don't know

Please write any comments here:

Community Contribution: Key Workers and those volunteering

The Council wants to recognise those who provide key worker services to the Borough by awarding an additional six month's waiting time.

The definition of a key worker is taken from the HMRC employment manual: Nurses and other NHS staff, teachers in schools and in further education or sixth form colleges, police officer and civilian staff in police forces, prison service and probation service staff, social workers, education psychologist, planners and occupational therapists employed by local authorities, whole time junior fire officers and retained fire fighters.

The Council wants to recognise applicants who volunteer by awarding an additional six months waiting time. Applicants will need to show that they have volunteered for a minimum of 20 hours per month and for a continuous period of at least six months, at the point of application, at review and the same at the point of offer.

The Council recognises that some applicants will not be able to take up key worker or volunteering positions and will also award the additional six months waiting time to applicants who are:

- Full time carers for the disabled or elderly who have been doing so for at least 6 months and are in receipt of carers allowance (due to disability or frailty) or have a child under two years of age for whom they are the primary carer and in receipt of child benefit for that child.
- Severely disabled and unable to participate in any of the activities above where the support element of Employment Support Allowance or higher rate Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payments is in payment.

Q6a Do you agree that additional preference should be given to applicants as set out above?

Yes/No/Don't know

Please write any comments here:

Q6b Are you aware of any other roles that you consider should be included in the key worker definition?

Q6c Are you aware of any other groups of people who might be unfairly disadvantaged by this proposal?

Yes/No/Don't Know

If yes – please state whom these might be and why here:

Change to Minimum Application Age

Currently anyone aged 16 years or over can apply to register subject to them meeting other eligibility criteria.

The Council proposes to raise the age of registration to 18 years and over with an exception for those leaving care or where there are exceptional circumstances. Care leavers are given special consideration in order that properties can be identified in time for their 18th birthday when they would ordinarily be expected to find independent accommodation.

Q7. Do you agree that the age of registration should be raised to 18 years and over?
Yes/No/Don't know.

If 'No' please explain why here:

Q8. –What would you consider to be an exceptional circumstance to register 16 and 17 years of age applicants?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire can you let us know whether you are currently registered with Redditch Home Choice?

Are you a Resident, Registered Provider Partner, Charity or Other?

This page is intentionally left blank

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

23rd October 2018

VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY SECTOR GRANTS PROGRAMME 2019/20

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor David Bush, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Town Centre and Commercialism
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Judith Willis, Head of Community Services
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor Consulted	N/A
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 This report recommends a change to the way in which Council funding is awarded to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in Redditch. The report sets out a proposal to move away from awarding funding through a corporate competitive grant giving process to one where each Ward Councillor has a designated budget to propose spend on projects across Redditch and within their Ward. It is suggested that this process is piloted for the year 2019/20.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- 1) the VCS Grants Programme change from a corporate competitive grant giving process to one where funding proposals are made from Ward Councillors for qualifying organisations – a Councillor Community Grants Scheme;
- 2) £5,000 is made available to each Ward Councillor to support VCS organisations, and /or VCS led projects and initiatives in their ward or the wider Borough;
- 3) during 2019/20 a minimum of £350 be dedicated from each Councillor's allocation to project(s) which promote cultural awareness and cultural cohesion;
- 4) the new programme be piloted for a year;
- 5) the Head of Community Services be given delegated authority to sign off funding proposals;

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

23rd October 2018

- 6) a refreshed VCS Grants Policy and Guidance Notes for the Councillor Community Grants Scheme be drafted and considered at a future meeting of the Executive Committee; and
- 7) funding received from the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) Recycling of Metal Recovered from Cremation Scheme be allocated as part of an application process and decided by a panel of members.

3. KEY ISSUES**Financial Implications**

- 3.1 The current voluntary and community sector grants budget is set at £240,000. This report recommends a reduction of this budget to £220,000 in 2019/20. This includes a sum of £75,000 Investing Grant currently paid to Citizens Advice under a 3 year contract for Financial and Problem Solving Services, which was awarded in March 2017

Background

- 3.2 Each year the Grants Team looks at how the Grants Programme can best serve the local VCS while aligning the programme to the Council's Strategic Purposes. In previous years, the Major Grants pot has had scope to fund £136,000 worth of projects.
- 3.3 The current Grants Programme also includes the Stronger Communities Grants which are smaller grants of up to £500 which enables small groups to deliver a wide variety of projects. Usually, there is £16,000 worth of funding available for this pot.
- 3.4 A full list of all funded organisations is published on the Council's website. Successfully funded projects funded through the Stronger Communities and the Major Grants Pot in the past has been decided by inviting VCS groups to apply using an application form. A cross party Grants Panel comprising 5 Councillors considers the applications and scores them using a scoring matrix to decide on the final outcome.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**23rd October 2018

Legal Implications

- 3.5 The Council needs to continue to ensure that it has a transparent and fair grants scheme, ensuring that we comply with the 2015 Local Government Transparency Code
- 3.6 Under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the power to incur expenditure which in its opinion is in the interest of and will bring direct benefit to its area or any part of it or all or some of its inhabitants. The direct benefit accruing must also be commensurate with the expenditure to be incurred.
- 3.7 There is a further power to make grants to voluntary organisations providing recreational facilities under Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.
- 3.8 Local Authorities must comply with the 2015 Local Government Transparency Code and Best Value duties.
- 3.9 The proposed scheme will enable the Council to incur this expenditure in compliance with these statutory requirements. Individual members do not have delegated authority to make payments but can propose a payment from the sum 'allocated' to them to support organisations and projects which meet the Council's VCS Grants Programme Policy, which will be signed off by the Head of Community Services who holds the corporate grants budget.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.10 The themes and proposed split of funding for the 2019/20 Grants Programme was last reviewed in September 2017 and changes were made at that point to reflect the Council's Strategic Purposes, customer demand and the current health of the VCS in Redditch. From the £240,000 budget, £4,000 is currently retained for the delivery of training to the VCS and to facilitate external funding.
- 3.11 Officers have worked with the relevant Members to review the funding and thematic split of funding for 2019/20. Instead of awarding funding through the Grants Panel and initiating an application process for both the Major Grants and Stronger Grants rounds, the proposal is to make available £5,000 to each of the 29 Ward Councillors in Redditch. This funding can be used to fund groups, initiatives and projects benefiting communities across Redditch and within their local ward area and must be in accordance with the VCS Grants Policy. The basic principles of the fund include the following:

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

23rd October 2018

- £5000 be made available to each Councillor in the 2019/20 financial year.
 - Any funding not spent within the 2019/20 financial year will be returned to balances.
 - The funding can be spent purely within the Councillors own ward boundary or on projects which benefit the whole of Redditch as well as community members in their ward.
 - Any group can be funded as long as they fit the criteria as set out in the Voluntary and Community (VCS) Grants Programme Policy.
 - If they wish, Councillors can pool their allocations together to increase the amount given to one project or group
 - It is suggested that an agreed cap for the pooling of funding allocations should be set at £20,000 and reflected in the VCS Grants Policy.
 - Each year, a proportion of the funding can be aligned to a particular funding theme or purpose of the Executive Committee's choosing. For 2019/20 it is proposed that a minimum of £350 be dedicated from each Councillor's Pot to project(s) which deliver on issues around cultural awareness and the promotion of cultural cohesion.
 - A short form will be required to be completed by VCS groups briefly describing the group and the project to be funded. This form should then be endorsed by the relevant Councillor who submits this to the VCS Grants Officer to test that it is in accordance with the VCS Grants Policy and for the Head of Service to release the funding.
 - Councillors will be expected to attend a training and information event about the process before any funding is released for their chosen organisations/projects/initiatives.
- 3.12 If this change is approved, the profile of the VCS Grants budget would be as follows:
- Citizens Advice Financial and Problem Solving Advice Contract -
£75,000
Ward Member Fund – 29 x £5,000 = £145,000
- This totals £220,000 which enables a saving of £20,000 to be made. This saving includes £4000 which has been paid in the last three years under a Service Level Agreement to Bromsgrove and Redditch Network (BARN) for training and capacity building which expires in March 2019.
- 3.13 Some of the feedback from the VCS to Officers and Councillors involved in the process over the years had been quite critical of the application process and considered it to favour groups that were particular good at writing funding application bids or could afford to pay professional bid writers. In addition, Councillors involved in the scoring

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**23rd October 2018

process felt constrained by the scoring matrix and that it offered little flexibility to consider other issues which might affect their decision making about groups and their applications.

- 3.14 Advantages to awarding funding through a Councillor Community Grant Fund include:
- an increased ability for each Councillor to influence work undertaken by groups in their local area;
 - an opportunity for Councillors and local VCS groups to get to know each other better and for Councillors to better understand what VCS services are being provided in Redditch;
 - a reduction in the bureaucracy involved in giving out funding;
 - a new opportunity for VCS groups to pitch and discuss their bids rather than submitting requests in writing through a very structured application form;
 - an increased amount of flexibility for how funding is distributed; and
 - a wider spread of funding to groups that may not usually benefit from the Grants Programme.
- 3.15 The possible issues that may arise from the implementation of this change to the programme have also been considered. Some of the concerns include:
- Limitations to Redditch wide based groups not being able to secure funding and the potential burden of having to approach 29 Councillors to ask for funding.
 - Some VCS groups not potentially being able to access the same level of funding they have previously and the potential negative impact of this.
 - Councillors not allocating their funding until the last minute or spending it all at the very beginning of the financial year.
 - The confidence and ability of some VCS groups to approach local Councillors directly for funding.
- 3.16 While undertaking the writing of this report, some consultation and discussion took place with VCS representatives. Officers consulted with Bromsgrove and Redditch Network (BARN), an umbrella organisation representing the VCS locally and also attended a BARN Network meeting where the proposal was discussed. Members also discussed the proposal with some local VCS Groups. In response to early feedback from this consultation, changes were made to the original proposal of Councillors only being able to fund projects within their ward to being able to spend their allocated funding on projects which benefitted residents across the town as well as in their own wards.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**23rd October 2018

- 3.17 Appendix 1 sets out in more detail the feedback received on the proposal. It also provides a response to this feedback and ways to mitigate any possible negative impacts of the proposed scheme.
- 3.18 Part of this review of the grants process addresses the funding given to local bereavement charities on an annual basis as part of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) Recycling of Metal Recovered from Cremation Scheme. Local Authorities are able to send (with permission of the families) metal parts recovered after cremation for recycling. Money made from this is then gifted back to the Local Authority to be distributed to local bereavement charities. Currently Officers nominate charities to receive the funding. It is proposed in this report that in future, charitable organisations which deal with bereavement issues be asked to apply for this funding and for Councillors to make the decisions about which organisation(s) should receive the funding. The finer details of how this would work need to be worked up and included in the refreshed VCS Grants Policy but agreement in principal is being sought from the Executive Committee at this time.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.19 The 2018/19 Grants Programme has supported 21 projects under the main grant fund with 27 projects/events being funded in the first two rounds via the Stronger Communities fund.
- 3.20 The 2018/19 Grants Programme under the main grant fund received 46 applications from 31 organisations, with the Programme seeing several new organisations applying to the programme who had not applied to this fund previously. The total amount requested for the Major Grants Programme for 2018/19 was £316,003.
- 3.21 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been conducted for this proposed change to awarding grant funding which sets out any implications for Equality Groups from these proposals.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 This report requests that an updated Grants Policy which clearly sets out how grants are awarded be written in light of the changes to the Grants Programme. This Policy will be implemented to alleviate a number of risks to the Council including funding being directed to inappropriate organisations or projects and risks from any organisations receiving funding which then subsequently close.

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**23rd October 2018

- 4.2 The VCS Grants Coordinator is available to discuss this process both with VCS groups interested in applying and with Councillors who are looking to allocate the funding. They will be able to help both parties get the best out of this process which should assist in mitigating risks for the Council. It is the intention of the Grants Team to hold three events per year where Councillors and VCS Groups can come together and learn about potential projects and organisations working in Redditch which could be funded.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Councillor Community Grants Scheme – Feedback on Proposal

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Local Government Transparency Code 2014
- Voluntary Sector Task Group Report 2014
- Reference Executive Committee report 2010

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Helen Broughton
E Mail: helen.broughton@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Tel: 01527 64252 Ext. 3237

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 1 - Councillor Community Grants Scheme – Feedback on Proposal

The following table sets out responses from VCS representatives, relevant officers and Councillors regarding the proposal to move from a competitive grants process to a Councillor Community Grants Scheme. Issues are listed which have been raised and where possible a response has been given which may address the issue.

	Issue raised	Response
1.	The scheme could be viewed as a good opportunity for the VCS in Redditch to get to know their local Councillors better and for Councillors to gain a better understanding of the groups operating in their local area and in Redditch as a whole.	This is one of the major benefits of the proposed scheme.
2.	In some cases, VCS groups would welcome the lifting of the burden of writing applications forms.	The complexity of the process and the application forms has been a consistent criticism of the current scheme over the years. The proposed scheme would address this issue by taking away the burden of having to fill in a long application form.
3.	Without set criteria (as in the current scheme) VCS representatives were unsure about what projects/initiatives/service they could request funding for.	VCS groups have been assured that the spirit of the proposed scheme is still the same as the current scheme so community projects focussed on similar themes would be welcomed. A list of types of projects which Councillors would be looking to fund needs to be drawn up by Officers and distributed to VCS groups and included in Councillor Guidance notes once the new scheme is launched.
4.	Concerns were raised by VCS organisations about those organisations whose projects focussed town wide. How would they know which Councillors to target and will it be difficult to convince Councillors to fund their projects rather than something in specific ward areas?	The scheme has already been changed in light of feedback around this issue, however, it is acknowledged by officers that this could pose a problem to those groups who target their work across the whole of Redditch. VCS groups who fall into this category would be advised to approach all Councillors if they felt their project benefitted people from all areas in Redditch. Training provided to Councillors will cover the fact that some organisations and groups target all of Redditch and will encourage them to find ways that they

		might apportion their funding pot between groups in the local ward and those that target the whole of Redditch as well as communities in their own ward.
5.	VCS organisations felt that existing personal relationships with Councillors would have a bearing on how successful they may be.	Groups who already have a good relationship with their local Councillor(s) are likely to find it easier to make those first approaches for funding. However, this gives VCS groups an incentive to forge new positive relationships with their local Councillor(s) and other Councillors in Redditch. Training given to Councillors will cover the need for them to look beyond personal relationships and take this opportunity to find out what else is out there before they make any decisions about their funding pot.
6.	Concerns were raised about the level of inconsistency which may arise from 29 different Councillors making decisions about how to spend grant funding. Some Councillors may only require a quick chat whereas others may want more information, statistics and evidence before being convinced to fund projects.	This is a potential problem of the scheme. The Grants Team though training can try to encourage councillors to be as consistent as possible in the way they make their decisions throughout the process.
7.	Some concerns have been raised about accountability of the funding and ensuring funding is spent wisely.	<p>Pending approval of this new scheme, the VCS Grants Policy will be refreshed to take into account this new way of working and how to ensure councillors are accountable for their spend. The Policy will still set out basic rules about what types of organisations and projects can be funded. Monitoring arrangements will still be in place which will be undertaken through the Grants Team.</p> <p>It is also suggested that some onus be put on leaders of each political group to ensure that Councillors within their group are spending money in accordance with the Grants Policy.</p>
8.	Some concerns have been raised around the impact the proposed scheme will have on planning projects.	Officers need to consider this issue and offer guidance through the policy and guidance notes. Flexibility around agreement and timing of release of funds for groups could be built into the process to circumvent potential problems which could arise.

9.	<p>There were queries around underspend and what happened to any funding left over. It was also asked if the organisations themselves would be able to carry over funding into the next financial year.</p>	<p>The County Council model permits councillors to carry over a £1000 underspend into the next financial year. This is something that needs to be considered and written into the policy and guidance notes. Current policy stipulates that grant funding needs to be spent within the grant year so it is suggested this remains the same for this scheme.</p>
10.	<p>Questions around funding levels and risk have been raised by the VCS. Will there will be a capped amount that community organisations can receive determined by their status e.g. whether they are constituted or not?</p>	<p>The current VCS Grants Policy and process does have strict guidelines around what levels of funding the different types of organisations can receive. For example, the Policy states that new organisations only in existence for a year can only receive £5, 0000 from the Major Grants Pot until they are able to demonstrate a good track record of financial management through their accounts.</p> <p>The current Stronger Communities Pot encourages grassroots and community groups to apply but there is only £500 available to these types of groups. It is suggested that officers build in some criteria into the guidance and policy for the new scheme ensuring that levels of funding being allocated are commensurate to the type of organisation which is applying.</p>

This page is intentionally left blank

EXECUTIVE23RD October 2018**SHAREHOLDER COMMITTEE – RUBICON LEISURE**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Mike Rouse
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Jayne Pickering
Ward(s) Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	None Specific

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 To enable members to consider the establishment of the Shareholder Committee for Rubicon Leisure.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Executive is asked to recommend to Council

2.2 That a Shareholder Committee is established of 5 members. The Committee to take the form of 3 members from the controlling group and 2 members from the opposition

2.3 That the reserved matters as detailed in 3.3 be delegated to the Shareholder Committee.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 As Members are aware approval was given to set up the new Company and transfer various leisure services to it from 1 December 2018.

- 3.2 The Company will be wholly owned by the Council and it will be constituted so that the Council as “shareholder” (or more correctly Member as the Company will be limited by guarantee rather than limited by shares) has various powers reserved to it. This is ensure that the Council retains the desired degree of control over the Company.

- 3.3 In the first instance the following reserved matters are proposed to be reserved to the Council as shareholder:

- Approvals for the appointment and dismissal of NewCo Directors
- Approval of loans over £20,000 , charges on NewCo assets , and contracts with terms of five years or more
- Approval of spending commitments above £250,000, or for duration of 24 months or remaining term (whichever is lower)
- Approval of Directors remuneration (if applicable)

EXECUTIVE23RD October 2018

- Appointment and remuneration of MD , and dismissal of same
- Approval of above inflation pay increases and any other remuneration packages
- Approval of litigation defences or claims
- Approval of the appointment of bankers and auditors
- Approval of the annual Business Plan

3.4 The default position is that these powers will rest with Full Council. To streamline the decision making process, allow active exercise of the shareholder powers, and ensure that the Company is not hampered in responding to commercial opportunities by cumbersome Council process, this report recommends the establishment of the Shareholder Committee and the delegation by the Council of its shareholder powers to that Committee.

3.5 The Shareholder Committee's role will be limited to exercising the Council's powers as shareholder. The Company's Board will be responsible for running the business, and proper delivery of the services by the Company will be ensured through robust management of the service contract by the Council client department (Leisure).

Financial Implications

3.6 There are no financial implications that are as a direct result of the establishment of the Shareholder Committee.

Legal Implications

3.7 The Council must retain control over the Company to ensure that the Company can benefit from the Teckal Exemption, allowing the Council to contract with it for the delivery of leisure services without conducting an open procurement exercise.

3.8 The matters reserved to the Council as shareholder have been framed so as to ensure that the Company falls within the Teckal Exemption. The reserved matters powers must be actively exercised and enforced to ensure that the benefit of the Teckal Exemption is maintained throughout the life of the service contract.

3.9 The necessary degree of active control may be difficult to achieve if the reserved matters powers remain with Full Council.

3.10 The contractual documentation between the Council and the Company will also contain mechanisms and checks and balances to incentivise good performance and also to ensure compliance with the Teckal Exemption.

4. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Business Plan for the Leisure Company

EXECUTIVE

23RD October 2018

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Jayne Pickering – Executive Director Finance and Resources
email: j.pickering@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Tel.: 01527 881207

This page is intentionally left blank

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**23rd October 2018**CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE – BROMSGROVE DC AND REDDITCH BC 2018**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Matt Dormer (Leader of the Council)
Portfolio Holder Consulted	√
Relevant Head of Service	Kevin Dicks, Chief Executive
Ward(s) Affected	N/A
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	N/A
Key Decision / Non-Key Decision	Non key decision

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

To inform members about the outcome and next steps resulting from the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) which took place 22-24th January and 23rd February 2018.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 **Members are asked to discuss and NOTE the attached letter and action plan following the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge which took place in January and February 2018.**

3. KEY ISSUES**Financial Implications**

- 3.1 The cost of the corporate peer challenge is included within the authorities' annual subscription to the LGA. Other costs are internal ones related to officer time. The cost of implementing the CPC action plan will be met from current budgets (unless separate specific reports are required).
- 3.2 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications

- 3.3 None arising directly from this report.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE23rd October 2018**Service / Operational Implications****Background**

- 3.4 Since 2012 the Local Government Association (LGA) has provided, as part of its support to the sector, the facilitation of Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) reviews whereby senior members and officers from other local authorities, supported by LGA staff, visit the Councils with the objective to inform their improvement plans and how to develop corporate learning. It is designed to be forward looking, and to facilitate reflection on issues and how they may be resolved. While it can be used as an external 'health check' on the authority's corporate governance, the peer challenge is not a form of inspection.
- 3.5 The CPC was an opportunity to pause and reflect on what the Partnership (Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils) has achieved so far and to reflect on its future direction of travel and the issues the Councils will face.
- 3.6 The peer team considered the following five questions which form the core components looked at by all Corporate Peer Challenges. These are the areas we believe are critical to councils' performance and improvement:
- Understanding of the local place and priority setting: Does the council understand its local context and place and use that to inform a clear vision and set of priorities?
 - Financial planning and viability: Does the council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?
 - Capacity to deliver: Is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?
 - Political and managerial leadership: Does the council provide effective political and managerial leadership through its elected members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders?
 - Governance and decision-making: Is political and managerial leadership supported by good governance and decision-making arrangements that respond to key challenges and enable change to be implemented?
- 3.7 In addition to these questions the Councils asked the peer team to consider: "Whether the Councils' and partnership's direction of travel is the right one?"
- 3.8 The CPC team comprised of:
- Matt Prosser, Chief Executive, Dorset Councils Partnership Serving: North Dorset DC , West Dorset DC and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council
 - Cllr Paul James, Leader, Gloucester City Council
 - Cllr Tudor Evans, Leader, Labour Group, Plymouth City Council
 - Bindu Arjoon, Director, Exeter City Council

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE23rd October 2018

- Claire Taylor, Director Customers and Service Development, Cherwell and South Northants Councils
- Karen Iveson, Chief Finance Officer Selby DC and Assistant Director North Yorkshire CC
- Raj Khera, LGA programme support
- Clare Hudson, LGA Peer Challenge Manager

The Process

- 3.9 The peer team were based at both the Bromsgrove and Redditch offices during the four day review. There was an initial 'scene setting' and 'checking the brief' discussion with the Chief Executive and Leader. These were done separately for each Council.
- 3.10 Meetings and discussion sessions then took place with a range of officers, members and other stakeholders/partners enabling the peer team to explore the issues relevant to the purpose, scope and suggested terms of reference for the peer review.
- 3.11 At the end of the initial on-site activity (22nd – 24th January) there was a feedback session and members of the Executive (Redditch), Cabinet (Bromsgrove) and Corporate Management Team were invited to attend and presented with the findings of the initial 3 day review. A further day (23rd February) was then held for the team to review their initial findings based upon further discussions and investigations. Again the Executive (Redditch), Cabinet (Bromsgrove) and Corporate Management Team were invited to attend.
- 3.12 This has been followed by a written feedback report (Appendix 1), summarising the peer team's feedback with their recommendations for improvement. This report was received just prior to the "purdah" period (for the Redditch Borough Council elections) and the Leaders of both Councils agreed that due to this that the publication of the report should be delayed.
- 3.13 Following consideration by the Senior Management Team and Leaders of both Councils, these have been pulled together into an Action Plan (appendix 2). Due to the change of political control in Redditch this report has been delayed in order to allow the new leader and Executive in Redditch to discuss this with their counterparts in Bromsgrove.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.14 None directly associated with this report.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE23rd October 2018

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

4.1 No risks have been identified arising directly from this report.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report

Appendix 2 – Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Peer Review for Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils position Statement

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Kevin Dicks

Title: Chief Executive

email: k.dicks@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Tel.: 01527 881484



Corporate Peer Challenge Bromsgrove DC and Redditch BC

22-24th January and 23rd February 2018

Feedback Report

1. Executive Summary

Bromsgrove DC and Redditch BC generally provide good and valued services to their communities. The councils are well regarded by partners having invested significantly in their ability to influence within the sub-region and beyond. Bromsgrove DC (BDC) and Redditch BC (RBC) are open to new ideas and approaches and this has allowed them to meet financial challenges to date. They have retained a focus on meeting customer needs despite falling funding. The councils now need to consider how they will structure and position themselves into the future in order to better understand and pre-empt customer needs going forward and continue to deliver services within their future budget constraints.

Bromsgrove and Redditch are very different communities facing very different challenges. It is a testament to the pragmatism of their leadership that they came together in 2008 to share a chief executive and then management team. The majority of service areas have subsequently become shared services whilst retaining their individual identities. Whilst Bromsgrove has remained Conservative controlled, since 2008, there have been several changes of council leader. Redditch although currently Labour, has also had changes of political control as well as leadership, but supported by a single chief executive they have remained steady in their support for sharing services and the benefits it has bought to each council individually.

Through working together the councils have delivered over £7.5m of savings across the two councils since 2010/11 and are continuing to deliver around £1.5m per annum. There remains scope for further efficiencies and service improvements. Members in both councils are engaged and committed and able to clearly articulate what they view as their councils' ambition and role within the community. In delivering this vision members are supported by an experienced and dedicated workforce loyal to improving their communities within a largely traditional workforce structure.

In order to meet the challenges ahead and maximise their strengths within the region the peer team suggest that the councils should focus on ensuring improved corporate ownership of financial management with tighter control of budget savings, and guarantee that expenditure is directed only towards agreed priority areas. More rigour should be introduced into developing and analysing business cases, and to their impact on priority setting. The councils should also be clearer about how they will track progress on key projects and savings and report against them. This should include identifying the consequences and mitigation if delivery does not progress as planned.

The councils also need to re-assess what they are seeking to achieve from the shared services partnership moving forward. Whilst it has delivered savings, resilience and a greater opportunity to lever influence it has not established a single workforce or culture. This means that siloes and duplication remain deeply entrenched and, combined with a need to invest in IT systems and digital solutions, all of which act as a barrier to greater efficiencies and innovation.

2. Overall messages

The peer team has significant experience of working in shared services partnership and it was striking to us that whilst the vast majority of colleagues work across both councils there is very little sense of partnership identity. A decade into sharing services the peer team would have expected a seamless workforce delivering services through a culture of collaboration to two sovereign councils operating in a single structure that would be more streamlined than two separate workforces.

The peer team found councils led by members who are extremely passionate about their communities, the role of the council, and are highly regarded by partners. Yet, we would question whether you have been able to maximise the benefits of joint working and truly embrace the benefits it could bring. We frequently heard reference to 'that's the Bromsgrove way' or 'the Redditch way' meaning staff are expending unnecessary time and energy navigating a structure and governance system that is more complex than it needs to be.

The peer team refer to this needless complexity and in some cases out of date and inferior systems and approaches as the foundations of shared services throughout this report. Our contention is that if you could improve these core services (ICT, HR and finance) that are the foundation of shared services and make them genuinely efficient and supportive you could free up space for innovation, creativity and collaboration. This could give you the opportunity to redefine your shared ambition.

3. Key recommendations

There are a range of suggestions and observations within the main section of the report that will inform some 'quick wins' and practical actions, in addition to the conversations onsite. The following are the peer team's key recommendations to the Councils:

- Pause and reflect on the shared service journey to date – celebrate your success – use the 10 year anniversary as a moment to do this
- Prioritise the work on tightening financial processes so that they provide the most up to date profiling, model the best in the sector and support strong decision making
- Spend more time together – introduce more joint informal meetings at political level
- Create space to have conversations about the future with your valued partners
- Redefine the shared future journey and ambition
- Define a new shared culture from the bottom up – with input from officers and members
- Share this emerging culture with partners and collectively shape the future community leadership role for the councils and partners
- Establish a single workforce and reduce duplication and time spent navigating two structures and systems of governance
- Having established the above use this re-energised culture to enable officers and members to design services to meet and pre-empt customer needs within your financial envelope.

Further recommendations can be found throughout the various sections of the report and a summary of recommendation are in Annex I.

4. Summary of the Peer Challenge approach

It is important to stress that this was not an inspection. Peer challenges are improvement-focused and tailored to meet individual councils' needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement plans. The peers used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read.

This report provides a summary of the peer team's findings. In presenting this report the peer challenge team has done so as fellow local government officers and members, not professional consultants or inspectors. It builds on the feedback presentation provided by the peer team at the end of their on-site visit 22-24th January 2018, and a subsequent visit to explore recommendations on 23rd February 2018. Our findings, unless clearly stated, refer to both Bromsgrove DC and Redditch BC. By its nature, the peer challenge is a snapshot in time.

Peers reviewed a range of information to ensure we were familiar with the Councils, the challenges it is facing and its plans for the future. We have spent 4 days onsite at Bromsgrove and Redditch councils during which we have:

- Spoken to 120 people including a range of council staff together with councillors and external stakeholders
- Gathered information and views from 50 meetings, visits to key sites and additional research and reading
- Collectively spent more than 300 hours to determine our findings – the equivalent of one person spending around 8 ½ weeks in Bromsgrove and Redditch

Feedback was provided to an invited audience of staff and councillors on day three of our visit and again on day four and this report will be accompanied with the offer of bespoke follow up. We appreciate that some of the feedback may be about things you are already addressing and progressing.

The peer team

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected your requirements and the focus of the peer challenge. Peers were selected on the basis of their relevant experience and expertise and agreed with you. The peers who delivered the peer challenge were:

- Matt Prosser, Chief Executive, Dorset Councils Partnership Serving: North Dorset DC, West Dorset DC and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council
- Cllr Paul James, Leader, Gloucester City Council
- Cllr Tudor Evans, Leader, Labour Group, Plymouth City Council
- Bindu Arjoon, Director, Exeter City Council

- Claire Taylor, Director Customers and Service Development, Cherwell and South Northants Councils
- Karen Iveson, Chief Finance Officer Selby DC and Assistant Director North Yorkshire CC
- Raj Khera, LGA programme support
- Clare Hudson, LGA Peer Challenge Manager

Scope and focus

The peer team considered the following five questions which form the core components looked at by all Corporate Peer Challenges. These are the areas we believe are critical to councils' performance and improvement:

1. Understanding of the local place and priority setting: Does the council understand its local context and place and use that to inform a clear vision and set of priorities?
2. Financial planning and viability: Does the council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?
3. Capacity to deliver: Is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?
4. Political and managerial leadership: Does the council provide effective political and managerial leadership through its elected members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders?
5. Governance and decision-making: Is political and managerial leadership supported by good governance and decision-making arrangements that respond to key challenges and enable change to be implemented?

In addition to these questions the Councils asked the peer team to consider:

Whether the Councils' and partnership's direction of travel is the right one?

5. Feedback

5.1 Reflections on the Councils' progress

The two Councils have demonstrated that they are willing to respond to their customer needs and flex their service offers appropriately. To do this both Councils are willing to consider new ideas and approaches and recognise that they can best deliver for their communities by working strongly in partnership, within their own areas and beyond. The workforce is extremely long serving with considerable experience. Staff have responded to challenges by developing and introducing new methods of service delivery,

particularly guided by a systems thinking approach. The Chief Executive has been instrumental in driving forward change and is clearly the guiding voice on transformation within the Councils.

Despite this drive for change the peer team heard time and again that the councils consistently adopt too many priorities and then take too long to implement them. This has led some colleagues to fear 'initiative fatigue' and whilst there is excitement about the potential income that the new focus on commercialisation can bring there is also a weariness that 'this is the latest thing' and an 'add-on' to the day job.

Business cases are now an accepted form of developing and introducing change but they should be closer linked to financial reporting. Whilst business cases are routinely used to develop new areas it was not clear to the peer team what the approach is for de-prioritisation. This is resulting in the organisations not being able to focus in on what is most important to them, and has the highest likelihood of delivery.

This is amplified by inconsistencies in financial reporting, which has been highlighted by external auditors. Greater corporate ownership of financial management is needed. Members 'do not trust the numbers', and as a result can be unwilling to take decisions that might impact on service provision.

5.2 Reflections on the shared services partnership

'Shared services has allowed us to sharpen our skills'

Since 2008 the Councils have come to share most services resulting in efficiencies and greater resilience. The peer team heard of many cases of improved customer outcomes as a result. For staff it has presented opportunities to sharpen and deepen their skills and explore new ways of working. There are many positives to the shared work, but there appears to still be a legacy of two separate organisations as opposed to one partnership serving two sovereign councils.

Shared services partnerships are most successful when partners are viewed as equitable with a fair system of apportioning costs. Bromsgrove and Redditch are different size organisations with varying size of workforce and they rightly agreed at the outset to apportion costs and recharge accordingly. Since then the issue of recharges has been revisited at various moments, but without an agreed corporate approach. This has resulted in a consistent 'poking of the wasps nest' with recharges being viewed as an opportunity to seek to redress the balance if it is felt that one Council is paying 'less than its fair share'. The partnership should adopt a transparent policy to review recharges at certain points or times – or more fundamentally move to a single workforce.

Bromsgrove and Redditch are two Councils operating two models seeking to deliver services under one partnership. The partnership itself has very limited identity. Whilst this may be entirely appropriate from the customer perspective by having very little shared identity and culture the shared services partnership has not been able to evolve from sharing services to a truly shared partnership.

As you move forward there is an opportunity to maximise the benefits of shared working by establishing more of a joint culture and identity, and a single workforce. In the peer team's experience customers and partners are not concerned whether they speak to someone from Bromsgrove or Redditch or Bromsgrove and Redditch/Redditch and Bromsgrove. Indeed one of the most valued services highlighted to the peer team was recycling and waste collection which is one of the few services branded 'Bromsgrove and Redditch'.

6. Understanding of the local context and priority setting

'We don't stop doing one thing before we move on to the next'

The Councils have generally strong relationships with their partners and use these to inform their priority setting. This is often acquitted through well regarded projects and programmes, the Connecting Families approach was consistently praised for its impact. Community groups welcome the support provided to them and feel they are able to make a significant contribution to the community through working with the Councils. Both Bromsgrove and Redditch are viewed as highly committed and valued partners. Engagement with the youth sector appeared varied across the two Councils and the Councils should identify opportunities to share practice.

These partnerships are increasingly looking towards economic development and growth. Bromsgrove DC are widely regarded to be making good progress on economic development, following a change of policy emphasis which has been evidenced by expert analysis. There is a sense of excitement about the regeneration of Redditch town centre and plans for a potential business improvement district. The Councils must ensure that they are clear what they want to achieve with economic development and do not seek to take on new priority work streams without first considering what they will no longer pursue.

Partnership working is broad and valued but it was often difficult for the peer team to understand what the vision and ambition of those partnerships is. The vision of partnership working could be clearer and communicated more consistently internally and externally. As part of clarifying this vision the peer team would encourage the Councils to regularly appraise the added value that partnership working brings. In doing so do not be afraid to make changes to the way you work with partners.

Both Councils share six 'strategic purposes' which provide a rationale for the delivery of services, but the broad nature of them means doing almost anything can be justified by them. Consequently it is difficult to identify what is a priority and what it isn't. Both Councils need to take time to consider what their priorities are, to articulate them clearly and to decide a process for deprioritisation. Resources should then be allocated against them, and regularly reviewed.

Recommendations – Corporate

- Be clear about how you identify when something is no longer a corporate priority – and what it means

- When change is introduced guarantee that it is introduced with greater pace and rigour – with clear lines of accountability at the officer and political level
- Invest more time in considering what role all levels of the organisation contribute towards corporate aims – transformation is everyone's role. Ensure that transformation is adequately resourced with clear programme and project governance, and appropriate skills.
- Management approaches need more consistency to support the development of a single corporate culture
- Establish greater consistency in the foundations of shared services – ICT, HR, Finance should all be enablers of change

Signpost – Adur and Worthing Councils

These two councils operated shared management and services including a single digital strategy. They have taken a radical approach to creating a technology platform which enables rapid 'self-build' of applications, enabling design and prototyping of new approaches at pace and with low risk. Other partners such as the county council, health and the community and voluntary sector can build their own applications on the same platform, holding all the local data in one place. The benefits of doing this across two councils, rather than one, include being able to target shared resources more effectively across a broader area. It has also created opportunities for generating revenue streams.

7. Leadership of place

'The councils are proactive in making changes for residents'

The political and managerial leadership of Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils is perceived as positive and leaders are viewed as voices committed to improving their communities. The leaders and Chief Executive have been instrumental in ensuring that the Council's voices are heard, and valued. There is a refreshing honesty about the relationships with the county, with all partners recognising the strengths and weaknesses in this. It was not clear to us how this relationship could be rebalanced and where and when the strategic conversations that are needed about the future of local government in Worcestershire are taking place.

The implementation of a systems thinking approach and development of strategic purposes for each council has helped to facilitate an outward focus in officers and members alike. This transformation has also impacted on partners who in turn have begun to question and appraise their own strategic purposes. The systems thinking approach has allowed members and officers to explore openly options for change – however it has not always led to change being actually delivered.

Both Councils have invested time and resource in understanding the needs of their localities, including their differences and similarities. Leaders now need to capitalise on this to drive appropriate regeneration and development. The introduction of Place Teams has established greater flexibility in responding to customer need in localities and is seen as having a positive impact. This more flexible approach to identifying and meeting customer need, and working closely with customers to shape future demand could be further explored.

The Councils have a broadly positive relationship with the local media, and the Councils' proactive approach to external communications has been critical to maintaining this. Building on this the peer team would encourage the Councils to consider what more could be done to maximise communications channels and outreach. The Councils do make some use of social media, but this can come across as a broadcast approach to communications. There is potential for the Councils to explore what greater role communications can play in their partnership working and development of the future vision of town centres.

Recommendations

- Re-examine your existing commitments and have an honest conversation about whether they are sustainable, relevant or appropriate
- Evaluate the opportunities for maximising your influence – and focus your energy and leadership on where you can be most effective

Signpost – Suffolk Coastal and Waveney Councils

In Suffolk Coastal and Waveney they have developed shared capacity with their local clinical commissioning group (CCG) to develop a joint approach to public health. By co-funding a key senior post, and having them co-located with council and health partners, they are able to reduce duplication, more closely align strategies and delivery and collectively agree a vision for improved health outcomes that they can each understand their role in.

8. Organisational leadership and governance

'We need to stop letting political posturing get in the way' - Bromsgrove
'We have seats at the table, we now need to turn that to influence' - Redditch

There are clear examples of positive working relationships between members and senior officers. However, the team were struck by numerous instances where the tone of debate has resulted in criticism of individual officers. This is not acceptable and needs to be addressed. This relates solely to Bromsgrove DC, but it has a resulting impact on Redditch.

There are strong and positive relationships between senior leaders and Trade Unions. There is a significant opportunity to capitalise on these relationships by actively engaging Trade Unions in workforce planning, and Organisational Development strategy development, evaluation and implementation.

The peer team found some evidence that systems thinking and transformation has prompted officers to think and act more responsively – though this is not universal. The peer team would encourage leaders to consider how to spread the pockets of transformation throughout the Councils and beyond with partners.

Colleagues understand that the councils' financial outlooks are challenging and that delivering transformation efficiencies and income from commercial activities is critical to securing a sustainable future. To drive this forward a clearer articulation of the ambition and expectation of service areas is needed and should be regularly revisited. Support services have not been able to consistently underpin transformation and the systems thinking approach. The quality and breadth of support has hampered implementation.

This is amplified by being two separate workforces and in some cases distinct HR policies which causes confusion.

Lines of accountability for key programmes and projects need to be clearer, from officer level to portfolio holder. Too often the response was that major projects are the responsibility of the Chief Executive. This invests too much in one role and could expose the Councils to significant risk. Progress on project delivery should be regularly reported on – not simply to committees but also internally to colleagues and externally to partners. Lines of accountability for the delivery of transformation also need to be clearer, and understood by all. This would provide an opportunity to critically challenge, celebrate success, define when projects are completed, and gives licence to de-prioritise.

Scrutiny plays a vital and active role in challenging and probing the Councils' plans and actions. Having the Leader of the Opposition chairing the Scrutiny and Overview Committee in Bromsgrove is valued. There is also a long and valued history (in Redditch) of Opposition colleagues chairing Overview and Scrutiny, Audit and Governance Committees and having places on the Council Executive. Indeed scrutiny provides the opportunity to engage positively with members to inform decision making, including agreeing when something is no longer a priority. The peer team would encourage the Councils to more proactively use scrutiny as a forum for discussing and helping to define the future of the partnership.

During our time onsite the peer team routinely heard about the negative impact that political discourse has had on delivering ambitions in Bromsgrove. The distinctive role of officers and members needs to be clarified and the agreed boundaries adhered to, both in terms of political debate and operational decision-making. An understanding on all sides of what is appropriate behaviour must be established and enforced. The role of the Monitoring Officer is key here, and must be strongly supported by senior officers and leaders.

It is felt by some members that mistakes contained within reports to council and how this impacts on conduct during debate of those reports both act as triggers for confrontational and negative debate. This must be remedied at the most senior level.

Recommendations – governance

- Take action at Bromsgrove District Council to raise the conduct of political debate so that it is constructive and does not undermine the council's reputation, as well as the local government sector
- Review processes for supporting members at council meetings, and where necessary, implement change to ensure members are well supported
- Ensure that boundaries between officers and members are publicly clarified and that their implementation is regularly reviewed
- Review Council Procedures to ensure that they can support constructive debate
- Ensure that report proofing procedures are 'watertight' and errors are not published
- Establish clearer lines of accountability for the leadership and delivery of major programmes and projects – that is appropriately dispersed throughout the organisation to mitigate potential risk in investing too much in one role.

Signpost – Dorset Councils Partnership

Since the establishment of the three councils partnership serving West Dorset, North Dorset and Weymouth and Portland Councils in 2015 senior leaders have placed great emphasis on regular, shared dialogue between members and officers on strategic issues. The senior management team meets weekly with the leaders and deputy leaders of the three councils to understand the issues they have common views on, and those they don't.

9. Financial planning and viability

'Finance is not given the importance it should be'

Shared services have delivered sustained savings for both councils. The emerging plans for commercialisation are an encouraging opportunity. In Bromsgrove specifically the £20m investment and acquisition strategy provides a base for future income streams. Having developed the strategy it must be adequately resourced and reported against. These recommendations would apply equally to Redditch should they proceed with emerging plans for an investment fund. Acknowledging the inherent risks of a borrowing backed strategy, investments must be supported with sound business cases and subject to robust due diligence - ensuring risks and opportunities are clearly understood in the context of the councils longer term financial outlook, and benefits fully realised within the required timescales. Both councils have now adopted Commercialisation Strategies and the plans for implementation and the move away from a traditional budgeting approach towards one with a more defined risk appetite now needs to be better and more widely communicated within the Councils.

Budget planning and monitoring needs to be strengthened. Senior leaders have recognised this and some improvements in financial processing are already underway including more senior finance resource. This needs to be matched with consistent opportunities for financial and budget management – at every level of the organisation. The development of a business case to introduce a new financial system that can underpin future change is urgently needed and should be hastened and delivered within the next financial year. This is critical for both officers and members to have more confidence in financial planning as well as providing an adequate response to concerns raised by external auditors.

Financial management is the responsibility of the Leadership Team and managers but the peer team found limited evidence of truly corporate ownership. Budget planning takes place within directorates but it is not clear how the corporate budget and spend is matched to agreed priorities. As a result the peer team were not assured that budget planning is adequately focused on the overall financial challenge, instead it appears to focus on meeting service needs and demands over a relatively short term horizon. A clearer focus on corporate level budgeting will enable a more strategic, long term approach to financial management. This should include more overt and regular probing of the levels of reserves and capital expenditure to ensure these are directed towards priorities and sufficient to manage the risks the Councils are facing. The councils should continually question how their resources can deliver services but can also contribute to place shaping and longer term ambitions.

Recommendations – finance

- Financial accountability needs greater ownership across the organisation
- Budget planning needs to be more focused on future financial sustainability and not simply meeting service needs and short term demands
- Be clearer about how you track progress and manage risk – on delivering savings and key projects
- Establish a transparent, regularised and proportionate system of reviewing and amending recharges between the two councils – rather than leaving it to specific service areas
- Expedite the business case and implementation of a new finance system

Signpost – 21st century councillor and public servant

These two major pieces of research explore the types of leadership roles and behaviour that are needed in a time of austerity and where the provision of local services and place shaping is more complex than ever. Councillors and officers need to move out of their traditional roles to become municipal entrepreneurs, system architects, commissioners and place shapers in order to deliver good outcomes, alongside partners, with limited resources.
<https://21stcenturypublicservant.wordpress.com/>

10. Capacity to deliver

'We don't agree to stop one thing before we agree to do something else'

Change is a constant in local government and staff have welcomed the opportunity to try new things. Staff have also been engaged in shaping the way that they work – and a tribute to this is the longevity of service of many colleagues. Staff appreciate the efforts put into communicating with them through staff briefings. However change has not been adequately supported by core services such as HR, ICT and Finance. These core services needed to be more consistent and better engaged to deliver and support change.

Performance management is recognised as vital but there are inconsistencies in its implementation – both in terms of delivering services and managing people. Energy is still wasted within both councils in navigating varying approaches to HR and people management. This drains the momentum from the partnership and means that HR is not viewed as an enabler. Performance management is not used routinely enough as an effective tool for learning. There is limited evidence that staff feel the organisation learns from its past experiences, evidenced in the low response rate to the staff survey. The councils should consolidate and invest in these core services and use these refreshed services to invest in leadership development opportunities for all colleagues at all levels – political, managerial, operational.

Similarly ICT provision is mixed but more fundamentally neither council has explored the potential for digital design and delivery. Bromsgrove and Redditch have separate ICT strategies, but this is a 'foundation' service and greater economies of scale and impact could be realised by singularly defining ambition and delivering against it.

Recommendations – transformation

- Consider how to meet customer need and expectation within your financial options using the systems thinking approach. This will help you identify what matters to the customer and design efficient processes to meet this need, removing service boundaries where required.
- Consider how to re-align your customer strategy to most effectively meet customer need within your identified priorities.
- Consider the impact that digital transformation of services can have, releasing capacity whilst improving the customer experience – develop and implement a single digital strategy.
- Develop a clear plan to assess what high volume low complexity transactions can be directed towards more cost effective channels. There is no tension between this and a systems thinking approach - many customers expect and are happy to access council services by means other than face- to-face- as indeed they do for services from other public and private organisations.

Signpost – Breckland and South Holland

Breckland and South Holland councils have a shared management model and a single transformation programme. In 2015 through the LGA's Digital Experts Programme they launched a digitalisation programme to enable customers to 'access the right services at the right time and in the right way'. Since then a new online book and pay service for garden waste in Breckland has been introduced – the number of bookings have increased by 25% and 35% of all bookings are completed online. Similar growth and savings have been realised in South Holland. Customer service centres have been transformed with 'floorwalkers' using tablet devices engaging with customers and manage and channel their queries reducing the need for waits and meeting rooms. Customer self-service access points allow customers to manage their own accounts with the council and feed data to allow the council to reform their services.

11. Looking to the future

Bromsgrove and Redditch have delivered ten years of shared services despite changes in political control and austerity. Throughout this time the Councils have remained highly valued partners and delivered a wide range of valued services. The Councils have focused on moving onto the next thing without necessarily agreeing how they will finish existing projects and priorities.

The peer team suggest that the Councils need to create space to reflect, celebrate success and have open collective conversations about the future. The peer team encourage Bromsgrove DC and Redditch BC to:

Be bold... create space to celebrate success and have collective conversations about the future

Be focused...on delivering what you say you will

Be confident...develop and deliver a shared ambition with a single workforce

12. Next steps

Immediate next steps

We appreciate the senior managerial and political leadership will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions in order to determine how the organisation wishes to take things forward.

As part of the peer challenge process, there is an offer of further activity to support this. The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this. Helen Murray, Principal Adviser is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association. Her contact details are, email: helen.murray@local.gov.uk, Telephone: 07884312235.

In the meantime we are keen to continue the relationship we have formed with the Council throughout the peer challenge. We will endeavour to provide signposting to examples of practice and further information and guidance about the issues we have raised in this report to help inform ongoing consideration.

Follow up visit

The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge process includes a follow up visit. The purpose of the visit is to help the Council assess the impact of the peer challenge and demonstrate the progress it has made against the areas of improvement and development identified by the peer team. It is a lighter-touch version of the original visit and does not necessarily involve all members of the original peer team. The timing of the visit is determined by the Council. Our expectation is that it will occur within the next 2 years.

Next Corporate Peer Challenge

The current LGA sector-led improvement support offer includes an expectation that all councils will have a Corporate Peer Challenge or Finance Peer Review every 4 to 5 years. It is therefore anticipated that the Council will commission their next Peer Challenge before 2022.

On behalf of the peer team:

- Matt Prosser, Chief Executive, Dorset Councils Partnership Serving: North Dorset DC , West Dorset DC and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council
- Cllr Paul James, Leader, Gloucester City Council
- Cllr Tudor Evans, Leader, Labour Group, Plymouth City Council
- Bindu Arjoon, Director, Exeter City Council
- Claire Taylor, Director Customers and Service Development, Cherwell and South Northants Councils
- Karen Iveson, Chief Finance Officer Selby DC and Assistant Director North Yorkshire CC
- Raj Khera, LGA programme support
- Clare Hudson, LGA Peer Challenge Manager

February 2018

Annex I

Key Recommendations

- Pause and reflect on the shared service journey to date – celebrate your success – use the 10 year anniversary as a moment to do this
- Prioritise the work on tightening financial processes so that they provide the most up to date profiling, model the best in the sector and support strong decision making
- Spend more time together – introduce more joint informal meetings at political level
- Create space to have conversations about the future with your valued partners
- Redefine the shared future journey and ambition
- Define a new shared culture from the bottom up – with input from officers and members
- Share this emerging culture with partners and collectively shape the future community leadership role for the councils and partners
- Establish a single workforce and reduce duplication and time spent navigating two structures and systems of governance
- Having established the above use this re-energised culture to enable officers and members to design services to meet and pre-empt customer needs within your financial envelope.

Further Recommendations

1. Be clear about how you identify when something is no longer a corporate priority – and what it means
2. When change is introduced guarantee that it is introduced with greater pace and rigour – with clear lines of accountability at the officer and political level
3. Invest more time in considering what role all levels of the organisation contribute towards corporate aims – transformation is everyone's role. Ensure that transformation is adequately resourced with clear programme and project governance, and appropriate skills.
4. Management approaches need more consistency to support the development of a single corporate culture
5. Establish greater consistency in the foundations of shared services – ICT, HR, Finance should all be enablers of change
6. Re-examine your existing commitments and have an honest conversation about whether they are sustainable, relevant or appropriate
7. Evaluate the opportunities for maximising your influence – and focus your energy and leadership on where you can be most effective

8. Take action at Bromsgrove District Council to raise the conduct of political debate so that it is constructive and does not undermine the council's reputation, as well as the local government sector
9. Review processes for supporting members at council meetings, and where necessary, implement change to ensure members are well supported
10. Ensure that boundaries between officers and members are publicly clarified and that their implementation is regularly reviewed
11. Review Council Procedures to ensure that they can support constructive debate
12. Ensure that report proofing procedures are 'watertight' and errors are not published
13. Establish clearer lines of accountability for the leadership and delivery of major programmes and projects – that is appropriately dispersed throughout the organisation to mitigate potential risk in investing too much in one role.
14. Financial accountability needs greater ownership across the organisation
15. Budget planning needs to be more focused on future financial sustainability and not simply meeting service needs and short term demands
16. Be clearer about how you track progress and manage risk – on delivering savings and key projects
17. Establish a transparent, regularised and proportionate system of reviewing and amending recharges between the two councils – rather than leaving it to specific service areas
18. Expedite the business case and implementation of a new finance system
19. Consider how to meet customer need and expectation within your financial options using the systems thinking approach. This will help you identify what matters to the customer and design efficient processes to meet this need, removing service boundaries where required.
20. Consider how to re-align your customer strategy to most effectively meet customer need within your identified priorities.
21. Consider the impact that digital transformation of services can have, releasing capacity whilst improving the customer experience – develop and implement a single digital strategy.
22. Develop a clear plan to assess what high volume low complexity transactions can be directed towards more cost effective channels. There is no tension between this and a systems thinking approach - many customers expect and are happy to access council services by means other than face- to-face- as indeed they do for services from other public and private organisations.

Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council – Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan

Key Recommendations

Recommendation	Response / Action	Lead Officer	Timescale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pause and reflect on the shared service journey to date – celebrate your success – use the 10 year anniversary as a moment to do this 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a Management Team we recognise that we don't take enough time to celebrate our successes very often and we need to be more proactive of this generally. We will address this moving forward by developing and keeping under review a communications plan to ensure we address this (internally and externally as appropriate). The next set of staff briefings and staff forum will be used as an opportunity to reflect on the journey to date and to celebrate how far we have come. 	Kevin Dicks / Communications Team Kevin Dicks	September 2018 and ongoing September 2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritise the work on tightening financial processes so that they provide the most up to date profiling, model the best in the sector and support strong decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The external auditors have recognised significant improvements (in both Councils) as part of their review of the Statement of Accounts. Much remains to be done and this will be mostly addressed through the implementation of the new Enterprise System – the business case for which has been approved by both Councils. Specification has been drawn up to ensure that all feedback from both 	Jayne Pickering	October 2019

	<p>internal customers and auditors has been taken into account</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will ensure that the improvements in our financial processes will be based on our systems thinking approach. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spend more time together – introduce more joint informal meetings at political level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborative working does exist across the County through the Worcestershire Leaders although it is accepted more needs to be made of this given the ongoing financial challenges faced by all councils. 6 weekly meetings are in place for the Leaders and Deputy Leaders of both Councils to meet with the Chief Executive. Regular informal meetings of the Executive / Cabinet to be introduced from November. 	Leaders / Kevin Dicks	Ongoing
		Leaders / Kevin Dicks	Ongoing
		Leaders	November 2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create space to have conversations about the future with your valued partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will predominantly be undertaken with the Leaders of the other Worcestershire Local Authorities at the Worcestershire Leaders Board and through Partnership Executive Group. Discussions to be held with Clinical Commissioning Group through the Alliance Board as to further transformation work with a focus on prevention. 	Leaders	November 2018
		Kevin Dicks	November 2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redefine the shared future journey and ambition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each Council will be reviewing their 	Leaders	November

	<p>strategic purposes as part of their annual refresh of the council plan. This will help clarify the direction of travel for each council which will then lead to review of shared future journey.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will lead on to portfolio holder joint discussions (across both councils) under strategic purposes • Agreed by the Leaders (notwithstanding the above) that we should look to expand the shared services arrangements and expand them to take in other partners and using this as a basis for further transformation of services and ability to look at things more commercially. 	<p>Portfolio Holders</p> <p>CMT</p>	<p>2018</p> <p>December 2018</p> <p>December 2018</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define a new shared culture from the bottom up – with input from officers and members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work has been going on since the last but one staff survey around the culture of the organisation seeking input from all staff as to what the culture of the council(s) need to be going forward. Whilst there have been improvements in the last staff survey there is still more to do and an action plan will be developed to move this forward. 	<p>Sue Hanley</p>	<p>November 2018</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share this emerging culture with partners and collectively shape the future community leadership role for the councils and partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our priority has to be internally to staff / members. We will focus on our principles and share / discuss them 	<p>Sue Hanley</p>	<p>December 2018</p>

	<p>approach to commercial plans where appropriate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support staff to enable them to know how to redesign services to meet customers needs ○ Customer strategy – statement of intent 	Amanda Singleton	December 2018
--	--	------------------	---------------

Further Recommendations

Recommendation	Response / Action	Lead Officer	Timescale
1. Be clear about how you identify when something is no longer a corporate priority – and what it means	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will be addressed as part of corporate and budget planning for 2018/19 – this will cover both budget and also key projects / initiatives 	Leader / Kevin Dicks	February 2019
2. When change is introduced guarantee that it is introduced with greater pace and rigour – with clear lines of accountability at the officer and political level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business case proforma, using the five case model, is used for all business cases • All major initiatives will be subject to a business case with clear lines of accountability assigned (at officer and political level). • Regular monitoring of these will be included as part of performance reports (adopting a risk based approach) to ensure they are delivered with greater pace and rigour. Heads of Service will ensure initiatives are monitored using the Councils adopted approach to project governance 	<p>CMT</p> <p>Cabinet / CMT</p> <p>Cabinet / CMT</p>	<p>In place</p> <p>September 2018</p> <p>December 2018</p>

<p>3. Invest more time in considering what role all levels of the organisation contribute towards corporate aims – transformation is everyone’s role. Ensure that transformation is adequately resourced with clear programme and project governance, and appropriate skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that systems thinking approach is embraced / adopted in everything that we do • Culture programme to focus on identified priorities supported by leadership and team development and support • Transformation programme to be refocused and widely shared and understood and embraced throughout the organisation • Clarify direction of travel for the organisations and the way we operate • Project governance approach to be implemented and used across the Council 	<p>Deb Poole</p> <p>Sue Hanley/ CMT</p> <p>Kevin Dicks/ Deb Poole</p> <p>Kevin Dicks/ CMT Deb Poole</p>	<p>December 2018</p> <p>March 2019</p> <p>December 2018</p> <p>December 2018 November 2018</p>
<p>4. Management approaches need more consistency to support the development of a single corporate culture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work is being undertaken with regard to the review of the HR policies and procedures. Training and guidance documentation relating to the revised policies will be made available to all managers 	<p>Deb Poole</p>	<p>November 2018</p>
<p>5. Establish greater consistency in the foundations of shared services – ICT, HR, Finance should all be enablers of change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling services have all been an integral part of the project groups in relation to Leisure Company establishment, HRA business case and development of an Housing Company • Workshops to be held with customer groups (e.g. managers forum) to understand what is required to enable 	<p>Deb Poole / Jayne Pickering</p>	<p>November 2018</p>

	<p>a fundamental change in the approach and culture of enabling services to ensure they proactively support change based on systems thinking principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how services can ensure the enablers can provide them with the support and advice they need 		
6. Re-examine your existing commitments and have an honest conversation about whether they are sustainable, relevant or appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All partnership activity to be reviewed to ensure they are appropriate, relevant and sustainable following review of our clarified strategic priorities 	CMT	December 2018
7. Evaluate the opportunities for maximising your influence – and focus your energy and leadership on where you can be most effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a result of 6 above review where the focus will be and where there is capacity 	Leaders	January 2019
8. Take action at Bromsgrove District Council to raise the conduct of political debate so that it is constructive and does not undermine the council's reputation, as well as the local government sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility of all Councillors to support and act in accordance with codes of practice and community leadership principles. If this doesn't happen Group Leaders to challenge and resolve. 	Group Leaders	September 2018
9. Review processes for supporting members at council meetings, and where necessary, implement change to ensure members are well supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundamental review of the Constitution at Redditch to ensure decisions taken at the most appropriate level • Further development of Cabinet / Exec members to ensure they are fully 	<p>Leader / Claire Felton</p> <p>Leader</p>	<p>September 2018</p> <p>November 2018</p>

	<p>briefed on their portfolios / reports on the agenda (ownership)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconsider the position in BDC to allow officers to speak to clarify points of detail in order to make informed / speedier decisions 	Group Leaders	December 2018
10. Ensure that boundaries between officers and members are publicly clarified and that their implementation is regularly reviewed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point 9 refers • Undertaken as part of the review of the Constitution 	Leader / Claire Felton	September 2018
11. Review Council Procedures to ensure that they can support constructive debate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point 9 refers • Undertaken as part of the review of the Constitution 	Leader / Claire Felton	September 2018
12. Ensure that report proofing procedures are 'watertight' and errors are not published	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report writing training to be provided to all managers. • Portfolio Holders and HoS to ensure reports are discussed and signed off at regular briefing sessions to ensure greater ownership 	Claire Felton	December 2018
		Portfolio Holders / CMT	September 2018
13. Establish clearer lines of accountability for the leadership and delivery of major programmes and projects – that is appropriately dispersed throughout the organisation to mitigate potential risk in investing too much in one role.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be clearly identified within business cases • Project management and monitoring will be undertaken as part of performance report on a risk based approach • Responsibility will be dispersed around portfolio holders and CMT 	Deb Poole / CMT	December 2018

<p>14. Financial accountability needs greater ownership across the organisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training sessions to be held at Managers Forum • Enterprise system implementation will include a full training package for staff • Finance Officers attending DMT meetings to support the change in approach and culture and to clarify the understanding of where the accountability sits • Clear message to be passed on to managers as to responsibility for budgets • Managers to understand potential consequences if accountability not taken 	<p>Jayne Pickering / HOS</p>	<p>November 2018</p>
<p>15. Budget planning needs to be more focused on future financial sustainability and not simply meeting service needs and short term demands</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 year budget planning to include more scenario and forecasting of potential impact of change • Aim to remove unidentified savings to ensure all funding is identified within the 4 year plan • Assess savings achievement based on risk assessment • Reporting to be presented against MTFP 	<p>Jayne Pickering / HOS</p>	<p>November 2018</p>
<p>16. Be clearer about how you track progress and manage risk – on delivering savings and key projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Savings to be shown against a risk assessment of delivery • Highlight key projects and risks associated to CMT 	<p>Jayne Pickering</p>	<p>November 2018</p>

17. Establish a transparent, regularised and proportionate system of reviewing and amending recharges between the two councils – rather than leaving it to specific service areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundamental review of basis for sharing costs of overheads / charges • Cost recovery to be reviewed to ensure overheads do not include any direct costs to teams 	Jayne Pickering	February 2019
18. Expedite the business case and implementation of a new finance system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The business case for the Enterprise System has been approved by both Councils. Implementation by October 2019. • Tender out to suppliers 	Jayne Pickering	October 2019
19. Consider how to meet customer need and expectation within your financial options using the systems thinking approach. This will help you identify what matters to the customer and design efficient processes to meet this need, removing service boundaries where required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refocus the transformation programme and commercialisation programme • Development of a Customer and Digital Strategy as part of the ongoing transformation programme. Publish “statement of intent” – enable people to do business on line in order to release resources to focus on understanding and delivering against customer need (in line with our principles) 	<p>Deb Poole</p> <p>Amanda Singleton /Deb Poole</p>	<p>September 2018</p> <p>December 2018</p>
20. Consider how to re-align your customer strategy to most effectively meet customer need within your identified priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As 19 above 	As 19 above	As 19 above
21. Consider the impact that digital transformation of services can have, releasing capacity whilst improving the customer experience – develop and implement a single digital strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As 19 above 	As 19 above	As 19 above

<p>22. Develop a clear plan to assess what high volume low complexity transactions can be directed towards more cost effective channels. There is no tension between this and a systems thinking approach - many customers expect and are happy to access council services by means other than face- to-face- as indeed they do for services from other public and private organisations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As 19 above 	<p>As 19 above</p>	<p>As 19 above</p>
---	---	--------------------	--------------------

This page is intentionally left blank



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6th September,
2018

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Joe Baker (Chair), Councillor Debbie Chance (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Joanne Beecham, Michael Chalk, Andrew Fry, Pattie Hill, Anthony Lovell, Gemma Monaco and Jennifer Wheeler

Also Present:

Councilor Tom Baker-Price - Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management
Councillor Mike Rouse - Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism
Councillor Craig Warhurst - Portfolio Holder for Housing
Councillor Pat Witherspoon.

Emma Brittain - Group Manager, Safeguarding Services, Worcestershire County Council and Sarah Wilkins – Interim Assistant Director of Early Help and Commissioning, Worcestershire County Council

Officers:

Kevin Dicks, John Godwin, Sue Hanley, Jayne Pickering and Judith Willis

Democratic Services Officers:

Jess Bayley and Farzana Mughal

33. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no apologies for absence.

34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

Councillors Joe Baker and Debbie Chance declared other disclosable interests in respect of Minute No 43, Pre-Decision Scrutiny – Leisure Services Business Plan and Minute No. 44, Pre-Decision Scrutiny – Leisure Services Restructure., as they were both members of the Executive Committee when the original

.....
Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6th September, 2018

decisions on these matters were made. During consideration of the items they took no part in the discussions and left the meeting. Councillor Pattie Hill chaired the meeting for those two items.

Councillor Tom Baker-Price declared other disclosable interest in respect of Minute No. 36 Worcestershire County Council Safeguarding and Early Help, as he was a member of both the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the Corporate Parenting Board for Worcestershire County Council.

35. **MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON THE 5 JULY AND 9 AUGUST 2018**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 5th July and 9th August, 2018 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 5th July and 9th August, 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

36. **SAFEGUARDING AND EARLY HELP - WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL UPDATE**

The Group Manager for Safeguarding Services and the Interim Assistant Director of Early Help and Commissioning for Worcestershire County Council presented a report in respect of Safeguarding and Early Help.

It was reported that Worcestershire Children's Services were the subject of a full Safeguarding Inspection undertaken in October, 2018 by Ofsted, and subsequently had been subject to regular monitoring visits in order to assess progress.

A summary of the inspections was highlighted in the report together with areas for development. These highlighted some of the significant challenges faced in the services provided to children and young people in Worcestershire, particularly those who were looked after.

Whilst it was acknowledged that progress had been made in improving services for children and young people, it was recognised

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6th September, 2018

that further work was required to ensure that the voice of the child was heard and services were making a difference to their lives. The key issues identified were as follows:

- There was evidence that information was not being shared across all partner agencies in a timely manner.
- Children's voices were not being heard at an early stage, which was needed in order for them to receive the right services at the right time.
- Children that had been removed were not recognised on the Child Protection Plan.
- There was drift and delays in respect of the child's outcome.

It was noted that the next monitoring visit was scheduled to take place on 2nd and 3rd October, 2018. These visits would focus on the Family Front Door and relevant Partnerships. A further Ofsted inspection and peer review was also scheduled to take place the following year.

Members requested assurance that the service would not relapse into being inadequate and would be sustainable. Arising from Members' questions, the following points were addressed:

- There was a clear plan in place to address the issues and good improvement continued across the whole of the service, including a good after care service.
- There was strong leadership, commitment and clear decision making in place.
- During the transition, Worcestershire County Council would continue to challenge staff and constantly strive to improve the effectiveness of agencies' work to safeguard children and young people.
- It was important to ensure that children and young people's voices were heard and they received the right services at the right time.
- Worcestershire County Council would monitor and scrutinise progress to ensure that there was effective coordination of understanding and activity across the partnership.

The Committee commented on the open and transparent approach adopted by Worcestershire County Council. To address these problems robust action was being taken by the senior leadership team to improve safeguarding arrangements and working practices. Members thanked Worcestershire County Council for the improvements that had been made.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6th September, 2018

The Committee was informed that Worcestershire County Council was working with elected Members through the Corporate Parenting Board and Scrutiny Panel so that they had better oversight and understanding of the journey of children and young people. It was acknowledged that engagement with Members had to be improved in relation to raising awareness of their corporate parenting role.

Members were informed that Worcestershire County Council had agreed an Alternative Delivery Model (ADM) for Children's Social Care Services. The name of the company "Worcestershire Children First" was also approved by Cabinet.

The proposed change to a wholly owned Council company for children's social care would be implemented on 1st October, 2019. This would allow the priority to remain on improving services and outcomes for children and young people. The full range of actions which underpinned the completion of key milestones had been categorised into 13 interrelated workstreams.

Members questioned how Worcestershire Council County would ensure that children and young people were kept safe from harm and who were at risk of exploitation. Members were informed that regular feedback from children and young people and quarterly reports were shared across Children's Services. There was good engagement with missing children and young people through welfare interviews.

Worcestershire County Council acknowledged that there were significant pressures on the budget and resources which could have implications for services.

RESOLVED that

the Worcestershire County Council update on Safeguarding and Early Help be noted.

**37. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY - DRAFT COUNCIL TAX
REDUCTION SCHEME AND WIDER SUPPORT FRAMEWORK**

The Committee received a report in relation to the Draft Council Tax Support Scheme (CTSS) and Wider Support Framework. The Executive Director of Finance and Resources provided information on the work undertaken by the Customer Access and Financial Support Service to date in respect of the redesign of the CTSS for

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6th September, 2018

implementation by 1st April 2019. The report also set out proposals for public consultation.

The report called for the Council to undertake a formal consultation with the major preceptors and the public on the proposed design of a revised scheme, which would take place for eight weeks from 1st October, 2018. The results of the consultation would be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee in January 2019, with any recommendations going forward to full Council in February, 2019.

The following key issues were highlighted:

- The CTSS had replaced Council Tax Benefit from 1st April, 2013.
- Council had previously agreed a minimum council tax contribution for working age claimants of 20% and 100% for pensioners.
- There were significant changes to the Universal Credit scheme. On average 40% of Universal Credit claimants had between eight and twelve changes in entitlement per annum.
- Since the introduction of Universal Credit a number of challenges had been identified to the administration of the CTS and also the collection of Council Tax generally.

It was proposed that the current means tested scheme should be replaced by a simple income band model. The indicative example of potential Grid Model Approach was provided in the report.

The Executive Director of Finance and Resources informed Members that the Executive Committee would be asked to approve consultation in relation to the draft scheme. This would involve consultation with a number of agencies, including; West Mercia Police, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Service, members of the public and other stakeholders.

It was further reported that a new provision would be included in order to support care leavers who would be provided with 100% Council Tax support up to the age of 21. Additional support would be provided for care leavers aged 21 and up to 25, with support tapering down to the 80% by the age of 25.

Members were advised that if the new proposals for the scheme were not approved then the current scheme would remain in place. Any liable person affected by the proposals would be supported through transitional arrangements funded from the Hardship Fund.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6th September, 2018

In response to a Member question, the Executive Director of Finance and Resources stated that generally the claimant's benefits would not be suspended unless they failed to provide all the information required. The claimant would be advised prior to any action being taken.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management, Councillor Tom Baker-Price, informed the Committee that the current scheme had been challenging and had caused confusion for the claimants, where their benefits had sometimes been changed between eight and twelve times in one year. The scheme would be clear and simple to understand going forward.

In response to a Member question, the Executive Director of Finance and Resources informed the Committee that there was £25k available in the Hardship Fund and that the Council had underspent in the last financial year. It was further stated that the Hardship Fund was a statutory requirement.

Members felt that the revised scheme was prudent in order for any issues to be mitigated. Furthermore, the Committee supported the revised scheme and proposed that the Executive Committee approve the consultation.

RECOMMENDED that

the Council undertake a formal consultation with the major preceptors and the public on the proposed design of a revised scheme to take place for 8 weeks from 1st October. The results of the consultation will be presented to Overview and Scrutiny and Executive in January when it will consider any recommendations that will go to full Council in February.

38. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES AND SCRUTINY OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME - SELECTING ITEMS FOR SCRUTINY

Members considered the Executive Committee minutes from the meeting held on 14th August, 2018 and the Committee's Work Programme. The Senior Democratic Services Officer advised that the final report in respect of the Support for Care Leavers Short Sharp Review Task Group which outlined the findings had been considered by the Executive Committee at their previous meeting.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6th September, 2018

The Executive Committee had amended the group's proposals and their conclusions would be reported to Council. .

The Chief Executive advised Members that the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan was due to be considered at the following Executive Committee meeting. He suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should pre-scrutinise this item.

The following items were agreed to be pre-scrutinised:

- Council Housing Growth Programme.
- Redditch Business Improvement District.
- Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the minutes of the Executive Committee held on 14th August, 2018 be noted;**
- 2) **the Executive Committee's Work Programme be noted; and**
- 3) **the following items should be added to the Overview and Scrutiny work programme for pre-scrutiny as agreed:**
 - a) **Council Housing Work Programme;**
 - b) **Redditch Business Improvement District; and**
 - c) **Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan.**

39. TASK GROUPS, SHORT SHARP REVIEWS AND WORKING GROUPS - UPDATE REPORTS

Councillor Jennifer Wheeler provided verbal updates in respect of the following Working Groups:

- a) Budget Scrutiny Working Group

It was noted that the next Working Group was scheduled to take place on 10th September, 2018. The Head of Environment was invited to the meeting to answer questions from Members.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6th September, 2018

b) Performance Scrutiny Work Programme

Members were advised that previous meetings had been cancelled due to Members availability. The next was to be arranged.

40. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

The following updates were provided in respect of External Scrutiny Bodies:

a) West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Michael Chalk advised that he and Councillor Julian Grubb attended the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 4th September, 2018.

Two reports on purple paper were presented at the meeting in respect of the Proposed Business Support Package and Bus Operator Recharging Proposal.

There was due to be a question and answer session for the WMCA Mayor in relation to Housing, Transport and Air Quality. Councillor Michael Chalk requested that if Members had any questions they should send them to him as soon as possible.

b) Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)

Members were informed that the next meeting of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee was due to be held on 19th September 2018.

41. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Senior Democratic Services Officer presented the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme for 2018/19. Members were informed that the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing had confirmed that he would be attending the meeting of the Committee in December, 2018, together with an officer from the County Council and a representative from Worcestershire Health

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6th September, 2018

and Care Trust in order to provide an update in relation to Sexual Health Services in Redditch. He had requested guidance in relation to the points that Members wanted to address and Members were asked to notify Offices as soon as possible about this.

Officers confirmed that the items Members had requested to be pre-scrutinised would be incorporated to the work programme.

RESOLVED that

the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme be noted.

42. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that

under S.100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following matters on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act, as amended:

- (i) Minutes Nos. 43 and 44 - Pre-Decision Scrutiny of Leisure Services Business Plan and Leisure Services Re-Structure.**
- (ii) Minute No. 45 – Pre-Scrutiny decision of the Housing / HRA Overview and Recovery Plan.**

43. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY - LEISURE SERVICES BUSINESS PLAN

Members considered the report in relation to the Leisure and Cultural Services – Local Authority Trading Company Business Case (LATC). The Executive Director of Finance and Resources provided an overview and highlighted the key areas.

Members were advised on the progress that had been made following approval in March, 2018, to set up a not for profit, Teckal compliant, Local Authority Trading Company (LATC/NewCo) to operate a number of the Council's Leisure and Cultural Services subject to approval of the final Business Plan.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6th September, 2018

The Business Plan summary and detailed report had been prepared by V4 Consulting with input from officers and Members which outlined the approach proposed to the delivery of services based upon the Council's previous Committee decisions, Service Specification and Measures Dashboard.

The themes were highlighted in the report that supported the delivery of the Council's Strategic Purposes of "Provide Good Things to See, Do and Visit" and "Help me to live my Life Independently.

NewCo would be formally set up and registered following Council approval of the transfer of services to it. The Company would be constituted in accordance with the governance arrangements approved by Council.

The Council would be asked to formally delegate its powers as Shareholder to a Shareholder's Committee (constituted of Members) which would oversee the Company and exercise the Shareholder's powers on behalf of the Council.

A report would be presented to Members in October/November 2018, to establish the Shareholder Committee. It was proposed that to enable the recruitment to take place prior to going live on 1st December a Member Panel could be set up to undertake the selection process on behalf of the Shareholder Committee. Members were informed that the recruitment process had commenced this week. It was further proposed that this panel should comprise the Leader, relevant Portfolio Holder and the leader of the opposition, or their nominees. This panel would be supported by two senior officers of the Council.

The service review and restructuring report for the remaining client side functions had been finalised. Staff and union consultation had been considered at Stage 3a in preparation for future discussions. However until a formal decision had been made, the detailed consultation and engagement plans would not be formalised. They would be considered in accordance with all statutory requirements and the Council's Reorganisation and Change Policy.

Officers had consulted with leisure development experts Alliance Leisure Services Ltd (ALS) to look at the potential development opportunities across three of its major facilities.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6th September, 2018

The investments had received appraisal by V4 to assess the rate of return on the investment to ensure financial viability and delivery of additional income to further develop the facilities in the Borough. The key investments were the Abbey Stadium Development; Palace Theatre, 3G and Parkour, Forge Mill Museum and Pitcheroak Golf Course. Clarity was provided that the Community Centres had been included in the specification since October, 2017 though the allotments would not now be included as previously planned.

Should approval be given to progress to Stage 3b, a new Risk Register would be produced to cover these aspects up to the transfer of services on the 1st December, 2018.

RECOMMENDED

- 1) **approval of the Business Plan at Appendix 5 to include the key assumptions at Section 8 and confirmation of a date of transfer as from 1st December 2018 for the following services:**
 - **Abbey Stadium Sports Centre**
 - **Palace Theatre and Palace Youth Theatre**
 - **Forge Mill Needle Museum and Bordesley Abbey Visitors Centre Inc. access to Bordesley Abbey Ruins**
 - **Community Centres at Windmill Drive, Oakenshaw, Batchley and Winyates Green; and**
 - **Pitcheroak Golf Course.**
- 2) **approval of the establishment of a member panel to undertake the recruitment of the Managing Director and Non Executive Directors. It is proposed that this panel comprises the Leader, relevant Portfolio Holder and the leader of the opposition, or their nominees. This panel will be supported by 2 senior officers of the Council;**
- 3) **approval of, in principle, the investment opportunities as detailed in Appendix 6 and request officers bring detailed business cases to the Board of Directors for final approval;**
- 4) **approval of the funding of £55k from balances to fund an Electronic Point of Sale (EPOS) system to ensure the NewCo has the functionality to enable marketing,**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6th September, 2018

income generation and customer insight to be at its most effective;

- 5) approval of a transfer from balances of £74k to cover the period of the initially agreed transfer date of 1st September 2018 to the revised date of 1st December 2018;
- 6) approval of the measures framework as included in Appendix 3; and
- 7) approval of the Company name as Forge Leisure Solutions trading as Forge Leisure.

(During consideration of this item Councillors Joe Baker and Debbie Chance declared other disclosable interests as they had been involved in the Executive Committee when a decision had previously been taken. As such they left the room during consideration of this item and took no part in the debate or voting thereon. In the absence of the Chair Councillor Pattie Hill chaired the meeting).

[During consideration of this item Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to exclude the press and public during the course of the debate on the grounds that information would be revealed which relates to the financial and business affairs of the local authority and which relates to consultations and negotiations, including contemplated consultations and negotiations in relation to labour relations matters].

44. **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY - LEISURE SERVICES RE-STRUCTURE**

Members considered the report in respect of the proposed service restructure for Leisure and Cultural Services. The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services provided an overview of the proposed changes in relation to the revised management structure for the delivery of Leisure and Cultural Service for both Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council.

It was noted that this report should be read in conjunction with the LATC report and would only require a decision on future structures should Members be minded to approve the LATC project.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6th September, 2018

It was reported that as part of the shared services arrangements between Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council a shared Leisure and Cultural Services department was created in August, 2011 with Redditch acting as host authority. As part of the establishment of the costs for the shared service, staff time was allocated to each authority based upon the amount of work each employee was expected to undertake for that authority. Operational budgets used to deliver the services were not considered as these were treated as being a matter for each authority and were to be used by officers to deliver the services required by Members.

It was recommended that the Executive Committee should consider the detailed V4 report and all other information provided and the proposed recommendations to Council were outlined in the report.

The review would be undertaken across all Leisure and Cultural Services to reflect the need to move from a delivery based model to a contract management position. Relevant staff would be TUPE transferred into the new company.

There were key assumptions that had been used to formulate the response to the change of service model and the proposed shared services structure that was to be implemented for Leisure and Cultural Services.

In order to ensure that the service continued to deliver high quality services that met the expectations of Members and residents, that were sustainable and capable of responding to service need proactively, it was agreed that the Council needed to respond to this change of delivery model constructively and undertake a full service review to bring forward a proposed revised service structure to be implemented as part of the wider project.

A ten week gap was required after the Council took a decision in respect of the company; starting with effect from 17th September should Council approve the proposals. However, staff engagement would be undertaken at an earlier stage, which was anticipated to commence on 20th September, 2018, to ensure that staff were aware of the proposals before the start of formal consultation on 5th December 2018. An interim management structure would be put in place to reflect changes within the service from the 1st October, 2018.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6th September, 2018

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism, Councillor Michael Rouse, thanked Councillor Pat Witherspoon for her work and contribution in relation to the restructure.

The Head of Leisure and Cultural Services explained that the revised model would potentially bring both Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District Councils' Leisure and Cultural Services closer together in terms of the model in place in the two authorities.

RECOMMENDED that

the proposed management structure, timeline and associated costs contained within this report are approved.

[During consideration of this item Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to exclude the press and public during the course of the debate on the grounds that information would be revealed which is likely to identify an individual and which relates to consultations and negotiations, including contemplated consultations and negotiations in connection with any labour relations matters. However, there is nothing in this minute which is exempt].

45. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY - HOUSING / HRA OVERVIEW AND RECOVERY PLAN

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the Housing / HRA Overview and Recovery Plan and in so doing circulated a presentation for Members' consideration (Appendix 1). During the delivery of the presentation the following matters were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- Audit reports in 2016/17 had highlighted areas of concern in relation to Housing, particularly Housing Capital.
- A Senior Contracts Manager had been appointed who had identified issues in terms of compliance with contract management and procurement processes.
- Eight members of staff had been suspended and had subsequently left the organisation.
- No evidence had been found of criminality.
- Since August 2017 there had been a wholesale review of Housing Services.
- A number of actions had been taken to address the problems that had been identified but more action was needed, as detailed in the report.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6th September, 2018

- Whilst the report focussed on Housing Services the findings had implications for the whole of the Council as well as elected Members.
- All of the financial and contractual issues that had been identified would be detailed in a report that was due to be considered by the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee in October 2018. The purpose of this report would be to provide Members with assurance.
- Nationally there were challenges within the housing market, particularly in terms of the availability of social and affordable housing.
- Changes to the welfare system, including the introduction of Universal Credit, were impacting on the extent to which people could afford accommodation.
- Redditch Borough Council managed its own housing stock, comprising 5,800 properties.
- The Government had introduced a policy that required rents for Council properties to decrease by one per cent per annum. This policy had been applied over a four-year period.
- The reduction in rents had had a negative impact on the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
- For the first time the Council had only been able to balance the budget for the HRA for one year rather than three consecutive years.
- There had been a number of reasons that had meant that the Council could only balance the HRA budget for one year including the reduction and the costs of recruiting interim management during the course of the review.
- The Council had agreed a business plan for Housing Services in 2012. However, at the time the financial pressures facing the Council had not been appreciated.
- Estimates had been provided regarding the financial position of the HRS moving forward depending on the rent position for both Council properties and garages. These were only indicative models.
- Culture issues within the workforce had been identified. This had been one of the most contentious issues identified in the report but Members were advised that this had been highlighted to ensure that the report was open and honest.
- The culture challenges involved complex issues, including patterns in behaviour.
- There had been a number of findings in the report including:
 - Management weaknesses.
 - The need for greater performance management of staff.
 - The lack of a shared purpose for Housing Services.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6th September, 2018

- A reluctance amongst staff to report issues of concern to senior managers.
- Some staff blaming others for the problems and not regarding the need for change as a collective responsibility.
- There was a need to bring the various parts of the department together so that they worked holistically in the interests of the tenants rather than as separate entities.
- There was an issue with challenge and scrutiny of the service.
- Health, safety and welfare issues needed to be prioritised and taken far more seriously than in the past.
- The Executive Committee would be asked to consider proposed new management arrangements for Housing Services. Officers were proposing that the Head of Community Services should manage the Tenancy, Locality and Community Services and the Head of Environmental Services should manage services involved in property and compliance.
- Phased service reviews would then need to be undertaken, though the first priority would be to undertake a review of the management structure within the services.
- A number of compliance areas had previously been reported to be compliant, including for gas safety, electrical maintenance and asbestos checks. Officers had subsequently found that this was not the case and a lot of work had had to be undertaken to ensure that the Council became compliant and constant scrutiny would be required to ensure that this continued to be the case.
- Housing management needed to be refocused on all tenants not just those who were vulnerable.
- Action needed to be taken to tackle the numbers of void properties. These numbers had been masked and the turnover times were impacting on income as well as the availability of accommodation for those who needed it.
- An urgent review of Repairs and Maintenance was required, which would need to consider both productivity and performance.
- The council needed to deliver on a Tenant Engagement Strategy rather than to just have a policy.
- A business case had been included in the report which called for Members to agree to replace the Council's housing system. Officers were currently using the oldest system in the country and this was not considered to be fit for purpose.
- Officers had developed an action plan designed to shape improvements to services. There would be regular reporting

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6th September, 2018

to the Executive Committee on the progress that was being made with this. The first of these update reports would be presented for the consideration of the Executive Committee in January 2019.

- The capital staffing costs had been removed as they had been viewed as being inflated but they would need to be built back in to financial estimates.

Following the presentation of the report Members discussed a number of points in detail:

- The action that needed to be taken to ensure that the problems that had been identified did not happen again and the approach that had been adopted by officers to handling this. Officers advised that no one action could address the problems as wholesale system change was required.
- The requirement for action to be taken to provide assurance to both tenants and Councillors.
- The need for Members to set a strategic lead for the Housing Services which informed how those services performed.
- The fact that tenants needed to feel safe and the different ways in which various services could help residents to both feel and be safe.
- The need for Officers to be held to account if the measures identified in the action plan did not lead to the systemic change required.
- The training that existing staff within Housing Services had received and whether the Council had provided adequate development opportunities to staff to enable them to deliver the services that were needed.
- The need for staff to receive a range of training, both professional and technical to enable them to develop the expertise required to deliver services effectively.
- The extent to which the skills of staff were understood within the organisation. Members were advised that there had been limited awareness of the skills gap amongst staff and the skills of employees needed to be reviewed in order to identify what training needed to be delivered.
- The need for specialist technical support to be provided to housing services.
- The extent to which staff had been informed about the proposals. Officers explained that staff had all been briefed. Managers had been briefed at an earlier stage to enable them to support their staff.
- The extent to which officers would be supported to enable them to change services. Members were advised that

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6th September, 2018

support would be provided, including from external sources where needed, though senior officers would be uncompromising in their view that there needed to be change in order to meet the needs of tenants.

- The extent to which experienced Members had appreciated the gravity of the situation and the need for Members to learn lessons so that they could ensure that effective services were in place across the authority.
- The £350,000 in capital staffing costs that had been proposed in the recommendations within the report and the extent to which these would be sufficient to meet the needs of the service. Members were advised that at least this amount of funding would be required, though more might be necessary in the long-term, for example to pay for external technical expertise.
- The role of the locality teams in meeting the needs of tenants. Members suggested that they were keen for more staff to get involved with the work of these teams so that the focus would be more on the needs of tenants.
- The need for ward Members to visit and get involved with the work of the locality teams and the tenants they served.
- The value of appraisals for staff and the potentially positive impact that this could have on both staff morale and employees' development.
- The current approach adopted by the council to appraisals. Officers explained that a corporate approach to Personal Development Reviews (PDRs) had been introduced and was being cascaded down the organisation.
- The need for further development of managers. Officers advised that the Council was in the process of developing management role indicators.
- The need for there to be a two-way process, in terms of communication and contributions, in order for an appraisal to have a positive impact.
- The reaction of staff to the findings. Members were advised that the report and briefing had caused some staff to feel upset. There were staff who were passionate about the services that they provided and it could be difficult for them to hear about the criticisms that were being made about the department as a whole.
- The feedback that had been received from staff since they had been briefed on the findings detailed in the report. Officers explained that some staff had reported that they were relieved the issues had been identified. A number had recognised that there were issues with Housing Capital but,

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6th September, 2018

for whatever reason, had not reported their concerns on to senior officers.

- The need for staff to feel comfortable and confident enough to report concerns about services to senior managers. It was noted that this should include staff feeling comfortable reporting their concerns to elected Members.
- The need for Members to work together to support the change that would be necessary over the next few months.
- The potential for mentors to be provided to support staff within the Housing Department.

During consideration of this item Members considered a proposal from the Chair that appraisals should be undertaken by an external person who could provide an independent assessment of an employee's performance. However, concerns were raised that the use of an external organisation for this purpose could be financially expensive for the Council. Members also noted that activities such as the Corporate Peer Challenge could assess the performance of the Council and ensure that staff were supported appropriately. The Committee therefore agreed not to pursue this idea further.

RECOMMENDED that Executive Committee

- 1) consider the content of the report and endorse the strategic action plan detailed at Appendix A to the report;**
- 2) support the financial actions undertaken in respect of the Housing Revenue Account and note the proposed actions subject to formal budget and rent setting processes as detailed in the strategic action plan;**
- 3) support the Director / Heads of Service remits and authorise the Chief Executive / Corporate Management Team Officers to proceed to recruit to the proposed senior managers for the service (subject to service review) with support for phased service reviews for the whole of the services detailed, over the following 12 – 18 months;**
- 4) endorse that the governance and reporting of progress on the strategic action plan be through Executive Committee; and**
- 5) recommends that a sum of £350,000 (capital staffing costs) be built into the capital budget (HRA) for 2018/19**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 6th September, 2018

**to resource the immediate review of Housing Capital /
property and compliance team(s).**

[During consideration of this item Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to exclude the press and public during the course of the debate on the grounds that information would be revealed which relates to the financial and business affairs of the local authority].

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 8.45 pm

Appendix 1 Overview & Scrutiny

Housing/ Housing Revenue Account

6th September 2018



Briefing to cover:-

- Background – Procurement/Capital
- Housing/National/Local Issues
- Financial issues – Housing Revenue Account (HRA)
- Cultural issues/Lessons learned
- Service/Operational issues
- Future arrangements/improvement plans
- Timetable/Council consideration



Procurement/Contractual Issues

- Audit reports 2016/17
- Staffing issues arrangements
- Known issues
 - Contract compliance
 - Contract management
 - Procurement processes
- Rectification actions
- Audit, Governance & Standards



Housing/National/Local

- National Housing Market
- Local issues/challenges
- Redditch Borough Council – Strategic purpose & direction



Housing Revenue Account – Financial Issues

- 30 Year Business Plan/budgetary pressures
- 2018/2019 – One year budget
- Five year review of budgets
- Income/growth programme opportunities
- Full review of revenue/capital



Cultural Issues

- Sources/evidence/overview
- “How we do business”
- Leadership/management
- Services to tenants
- Shared honest understanding
- Lessons learned
- Future opportunities



Service/Operational Issues

- Health & Safety Compliance
 - Electrical Testing
 - Asbestos
 - Fire Safety
 - Gas Servicing
- Voids/Empty Properties



Service/Operational Issues .. continued

- Housing Management/Locality
- Housing Options/Advisory Services
- Housing Older People – Accommodation
- Repairs & Maintenance



Service/Operational Issues .. continued

- Policies/Procedures
- Performance Issues
- Housing Management/IT Systems
- Risk Management



Future Plans/Building for the Future

- Strategic improvement/action plan
 - Corporate/leadership & management
 - Financial plans
 - Staffing/service reviews
 - Voids/empty properties
 - Compliance/capital works
 - Policy/procedures
 - Repairs & maintenance
 - Governance/performance
 - Housing IT system



Questions?



By virtue of paragraph(s) 2, 3, 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**23rd October 2018**COUNCIL HOUSING GROWTH - PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT SITES**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Matt Dormer
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Judith Willis / Amanda Singleton
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor Consulted	No
Non-Key Decision	
This report contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 Council agreed the Council Housing Growth Programme and funding of £12.5m on the 30 January 2017. A number of options to increase the Councils housing stock were agreed including commissioning the construction of new Council houses.
- 1.2 This report identifies a number of Council owned sites that officers, following the completion of a desk top exercise, are proposing the Council add the sites to Phase 1 of the HRA (Housing Revenue Account) new build programme.
- 1.3 The sites identified are considered HRA assets with the exception of the site Hawthorn Road Community Centre (Former Redditch Play Council site) which is a General Fund (GF) asset and the proposal is to transfer this to the HRA.
- 1.4 The Council is able through its HRA new build programme to charge social rent or affordable rent to any properties delivered through it. Officers are proposing that all properties delivered through the programme are let at affordable rent levels, following the Governments Affordable Rent framework, where permitted.
- 1.5 Officers have assessed the possible numbers and type of properties that could be delivered on the suggested sites. It is anticipated that the sites could provide a total of 67 new council homes, subject to planning.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS**The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that**

- 2.1 The sites in Appendix 1 be included in Phase 1 of the HRA (Housing Revenue Account) new build programme and proposals**

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE23rd October 2018

to progress the development of HRA new build council housing on them be approved;

- 2.2 Properties delivered through the Council Housing Growth Programme be let at Affordable Rent, where permitted.

The Committee is asked to RECOMMEND that

- 2.3 The appropriation of the Hawthorn Road site from the General Fund into the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) in order that it can be developed for new council housing.

3. **KEY ISSUES**

Financial Implications

- 3.1 The Council approved a £12.5m budget using Right to Buy 1-4-1 receipts and Capital reserves. As part of the Council Housing Growth Programme £3.285m has been spent on purchasing from the open market, 'off plan' and s.106 properties. The remaining budget is £9.215m.
- 3.2 The table below shows the current maintained receipts and the date these must be used by or returned to central government to include interest payments. These receipts must be used to replace the sales with either new build, buy back of properties or purchase on the open market (new stock). There is a large spending requirement in 2019/20 which increases the risk that the Council may have to return some receipts.

Total Spend Required	Date by	Cumulative Spend
£921,803	31/03/2019	
£1,300,901	30/06/2019	£2,222,704
£1,418,760	30/09/2019	£3,641,464
£1,184,526	31/12/2019	£4,825,990
£715,636	31/03/2020	£5,541,626
£635,133	30/06/2020	£6,176,759
£716,104	30/09/2020	£6,892,863
£602,536	31/12/2020	£7,495,399
£1,240,779	31/03/2021	£8,736,178
£498,060	30/06/2021	£9,234,238

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**23rd October 2018**

- 3.3 Officers have estimated the number of properties each site will possibly achieve subject to planning permission. The estimated cost of developing these sites is £8.173m
- 3.4 There are currently sufficient resources in the budget available without impacting upon other housing investment priorities to fund this programme.
- 3.5 The appointment of all professional services and the construction works will follow the Council's Contract Procedure Rules 2018. Officers will explore framework agreements that organisations such as Homes England and the Central Housing Investment Consortium have in place that are EU compliant to ensure value for money and the developments are delivered without delays.
- 3.6 The cost of building new stock for the HRA will be protected by the cost floor rule if a tenant submits a Right to Buy application for the property. This rule means that the discount is limited so the amount of discount does not reduce the sale price below the cost of the property. This will be in force for a 15 year period from the date the Council obtains the property. The cost of the property will not include land value as there was no acquisition of land.
- 3.7 Transferring the Hawthorn Road site to the HRA will increase the HRA's capital financing requirement. The HRA is currently at the borrowing cap, the cost of the site will be paid down from the HRA reserve to generate sufficient head room for this accounting adjustment. This will have the opposite effect by reducing the General Fund capital financing requirement.

Legal Implications

- 3.8 The Housing Act 1985 Part II section 9 permits a local authority to build/acquire new housing.
- 3.9 The Hawthorn Road site will be required to be appropriated under relevant legislation.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.10 Officers from the Land, Asset & Building Group have undertaken an initial assessment of a number of sites considered as having potential for residential development of new HRA stock. Following this assessment the sites at Appendix 1 have been brought forward for approval for inclusion in Phase 1 and for officers to progress the development of new HRA houses.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**23rd October 2018**

- 3.11 Officers have estimated the cost of building out these sites and the expected rental income on Affordable Rents (Confidential Appendix 2). Officers consider that the sites will be delivered through packages to help reduce the risk of using one building contractor and assist in reducing delivery times. Officers estimate that planning, procurement and build will be up to 18 months per site.
- 3.12 The tables below identify the possible property types for each development subject to detail investigations and planning permission.

1. Loxley Close	2. Clifton Close	3. Auxerre Avenue
4 X 2 Bed Bungalow	5 X 2 Bed Bungalow	5 X 2 Bed Bungalow
2 X 2 Bed House		
2 X 3 Bed House		
2 X 4 Bed House		

4. Fladbury Close	5. Edgeworth Close	6. Ibstock Close
2 X 2 Bed Bungalow	2 X 4 Bed House	8 X 2 Bed Bungalow
	8 X 3 Bed House	
	6 X 2 Bed House	
	4 X 2 Bed Bungalow	

7. Heronfield Close	8. Hawthorn Road Comm Centre	9. Sandygate Close
3 X 2 Bed House	2 X 2 Bed House	5 X 2 Bed Bungalow

10. Cherry Tree Walk / Fox Cres
7 X 2 Bed Bungalow

Total Estimated Provision	
2 Bed House	13
2 Bed Bungalow	40
3 Bed House	10
4 Bed House	4
Total	67

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**23rd October 2018**

- 3.13 Having considered the housing needs of the Borough, Officers are proposing to develop an increased number of two bedroom bungalows to encourage current social housing tenant's under-occupying family accommodation to move to more suitable accommodation.
- 3.14 Developers do not consider bungalows an efficient use of land due to its larger footprint size. To maximise the sites developable area it is proposed that these bungalows will be dormer bungalows with a bedroom and en-suite in the roof space.

Hawthorn Road site

- 3.15 The Council accounts for its General Fund and HRA separately. Assets can be moved from the GF to the HRA with the intention that the asset will be developed for social rented or affordable housing and transfers will be accounted for at market value. As an internal accounting transaction, there are no actual financial costs such as Stamp Duty Land Tax; however accounting adjustments will be recorded to provide an audit trail for the transfer.
- 3.16 The Hawthorn Road site was previously used by Redditch Play Council. The property is in a pretty bad state of repair and assessment has indicated a refurbishment cost of over £180k to bring it up to the required standard to lease out to any interested party. The estimated maximum rental income would be in the region of £10,000 per annum and therefore officers consider utilising the site for build new HRA stock as the most effective use of the site.
- 3.17 The view of an independent valuer has been sought, and the current 'as is' sale value will be accounted for as an adjustment in the respective capital financing requirements of the HRA and GF, as such no money will change hands. To generate sufficient head room in the HRA, HRA reserves will be used to reduce the HRA capital financing requirement.

Next Steps

- 3.18 The Council has not built new homes since the early 1990's and no longer has the in house skills to develop new homes. The Housing Strategy Manager is currently undertaking a process to appoint a development agent to assist in delivery and provide support to Council officers. Subject to approval, it is proposed that the sites will undergo detailed discussions, in terms of design and layout, and be submitted for planning permission to achieve a rapid start on site.
- 3.19 The project will progress through the following process towards delivery.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE23rd October 2018

- Detailed design and viability modelling
 - Consultation with stakeholders
 - Planning approval
 - Procurement of the construction contract
 - Delivery of new homes
- 3.20 Every effort will be made to exploit all opportunities to identify the most cost effective solutions and the potential to utilise modern methods of construction will also be further explored.
- 3.21 Procurement options for both the design and construction stages of the project will be fully explored with the aim of achieving the most cost effective and beneficial procurement method. Delivery via a Framework agreement may be preferable particularly if the programme is to be delivered over a series of small sites.
- 3.22 In addition opportunities to maximise the number of employment and training opportunities for local people will be sought via the procurement process. Any training placements will need to be co-ordinated across a number of dispersed sites to ensure they are of sufficient length to be meaningful.
- 3.23 Individual site appraisals will be undertaken to assess build costs in relation to income generated to ensure that value for money considerations are fully considered and approved by the Executive Committee.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.24 Increasing the Council's housing stock will assist in the provision of affordable housing in the Borough to meet housing need.
- 3.25 In commissioning the construction of new HRA stock the Council will be able to provide housing that can meet specific needs for adapted properties.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 There are a number of risks to implementing the Council Housing Growth Programme which are in the table below:

Risks	Mitigation
Failure to achieve planning permission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A dedicated planning officer will work with the development team to advise specifically on

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**23rd October 2018**

	<p>planning issues and recommend solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of experienced development agents
Local resident objections to building on sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local residents will be consulted and kept informed of proposals to ensure that officers are aware of any potential objections and may work to ameliorate concerns
Risks associated with using consultants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the appointment of both the Development Agent (and its consultants) and, subsequently, contractors are robust, and include an appropriate element of assessment of the parties' ability to undertake the roles and their quality. • Ensure that the Council's risks are minimised through the legal agreements. • Ensure Evaluation Criteria at PQQ and Tender Stage are comprehensive, with key factors weighted appropriately • Ensure that the Development Agent and consultants have sufficient Professional Indemnity Insurance.
Overspend for House Building Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include sufficient provision for contingencies • Ensure effective project management arrangements, to include identification of potential overspends early • Report to Portfolio Holder for Housing quarterly on progress (works and costs)
Abnormal build costs associated with the sites may be discovered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual site appraisals including site investigations will be undertaken to ensure that risks are understood and mitigated prior to progressing any site.
Failure to spend 1-4-1 receipts by required deadline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council approved a number of options to increase the housing stock and officers will pursue these other options in tandem with this development programme.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Site plans (Red line Boundary and some indicative layouts)

Appendix 2 – Estimated build costs and rental income (confidential)

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE23rd October 2018

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Executive Committee Report 12 January 2016 - Housing Revenue Account, rent and capital 2016-17

Executive Committee Report 17 January 2017 - Council Housing Growth Programme

7. KEY

HRA – Housing Revenue Account

GF – General fund

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Matthew Bough

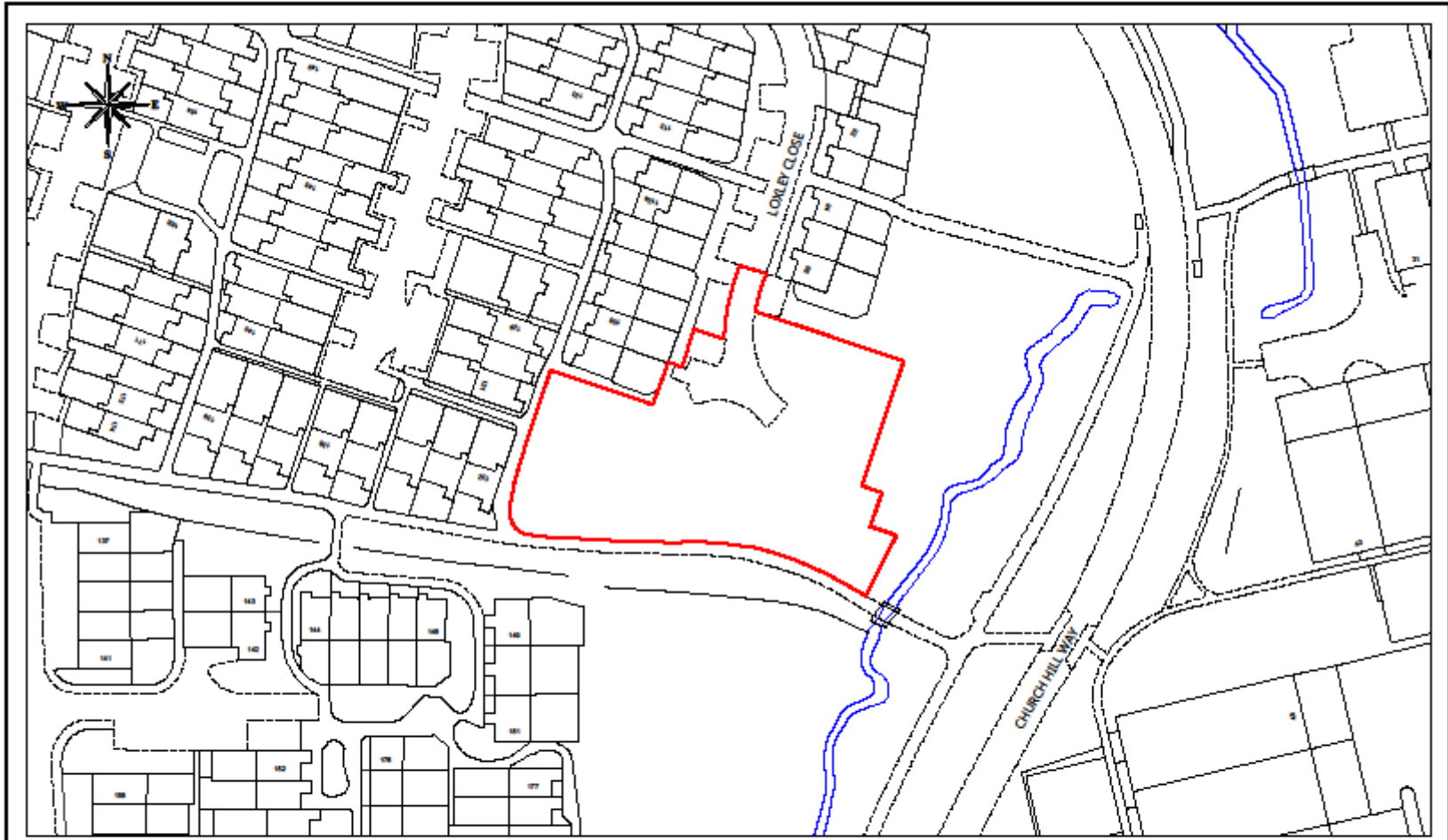
E Mail: matthew.bough@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk



Tel: 01527 64252 ext: 3120

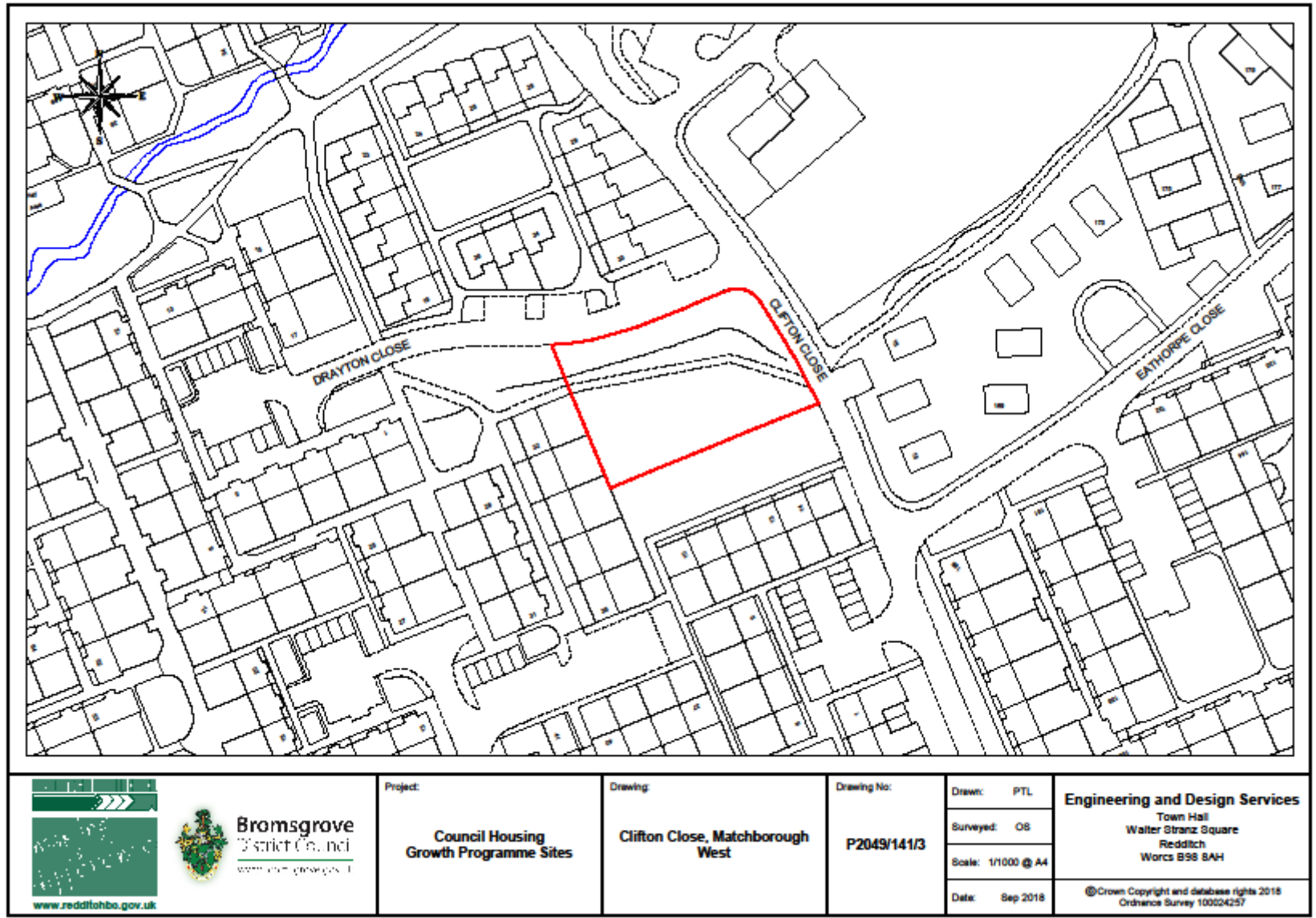
Council Housing Growth Programme



Development Sites

Site Number	Location	Plan Type	Page Number
1	Loxley Close	Red Line	2
2	Clifton Close	Red Line	3
3	Auxerre Avenue	Red Line	4
4	Fladbury Close	Red Line	5
5	Edgeworth Close	Red Line	6
6	Ibstock Close	Red Line	7
7	Heronfield Close	Red Line	8
8	Hawthorn Road	Red Line	9
9	Sandygate Close	Red Line	10
10	Cherry Tree Walk / Fox Cres	Red Line	11





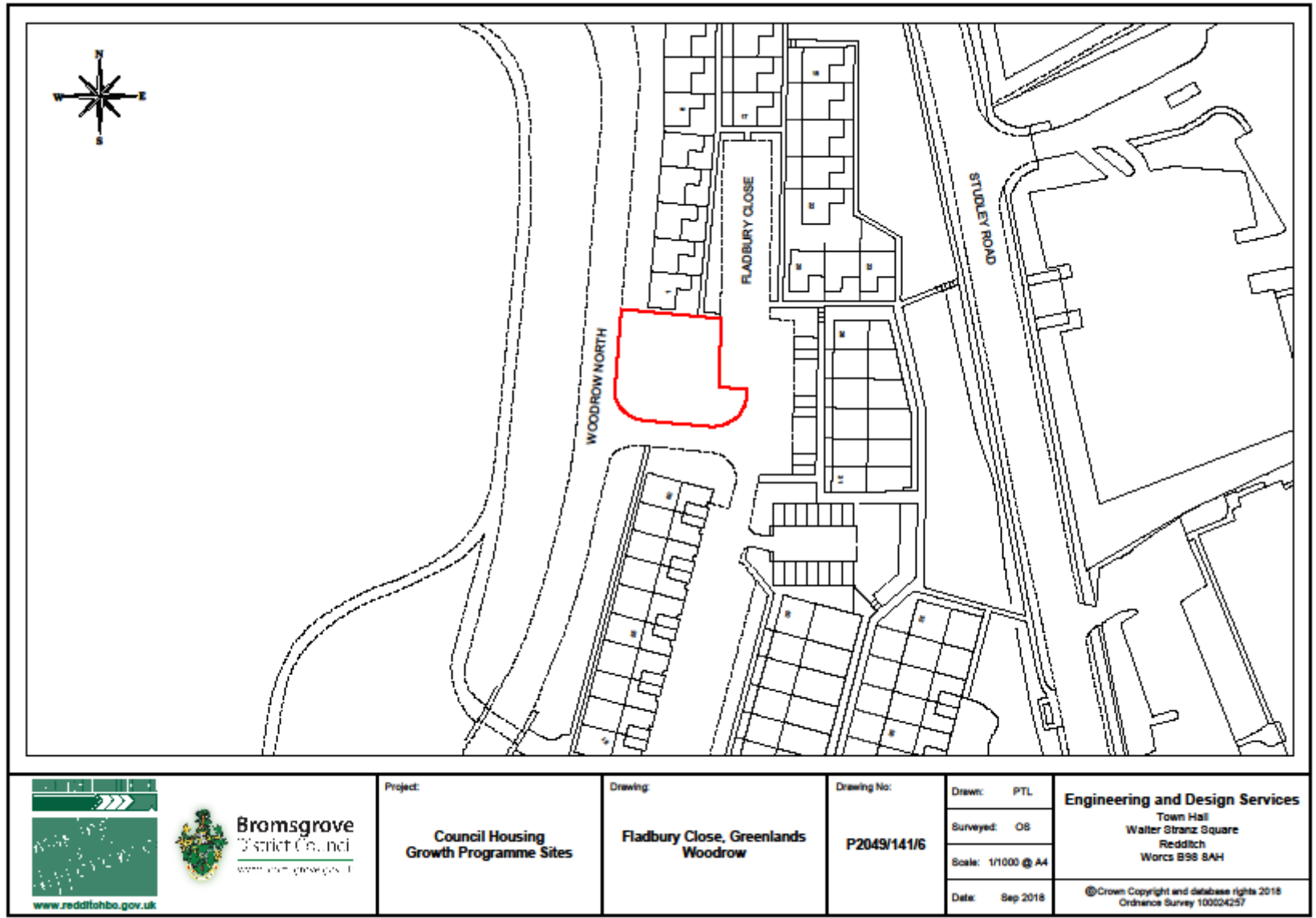
 <p>www.redditchbo.gov.uk</p>	 <p>Bromsgrove District Council www.bromsgrove.gov.uk</p>	<p>Project:</p> <p>Council Housing Growth Programme Sites</p>	<p>Drawing:</p> <p>Loxley Close, Church Hill South</p>	<p>Drawing No:</p> <p>P2049/141/1</p>	<p>Drawn: PTL</p> <p>Surveyed: 08</p> <p>Scale: 1/1000 @ A4</p> <p>Date: Sep 2018</p>	<p>Engineering and Design Services</p> <p>Town Hall Walter Stranz Square Redditch Worcs B98 8AH</p> <p><small>© Crown Copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey 100024257</small></p>
--	---	--	---	--	---	---





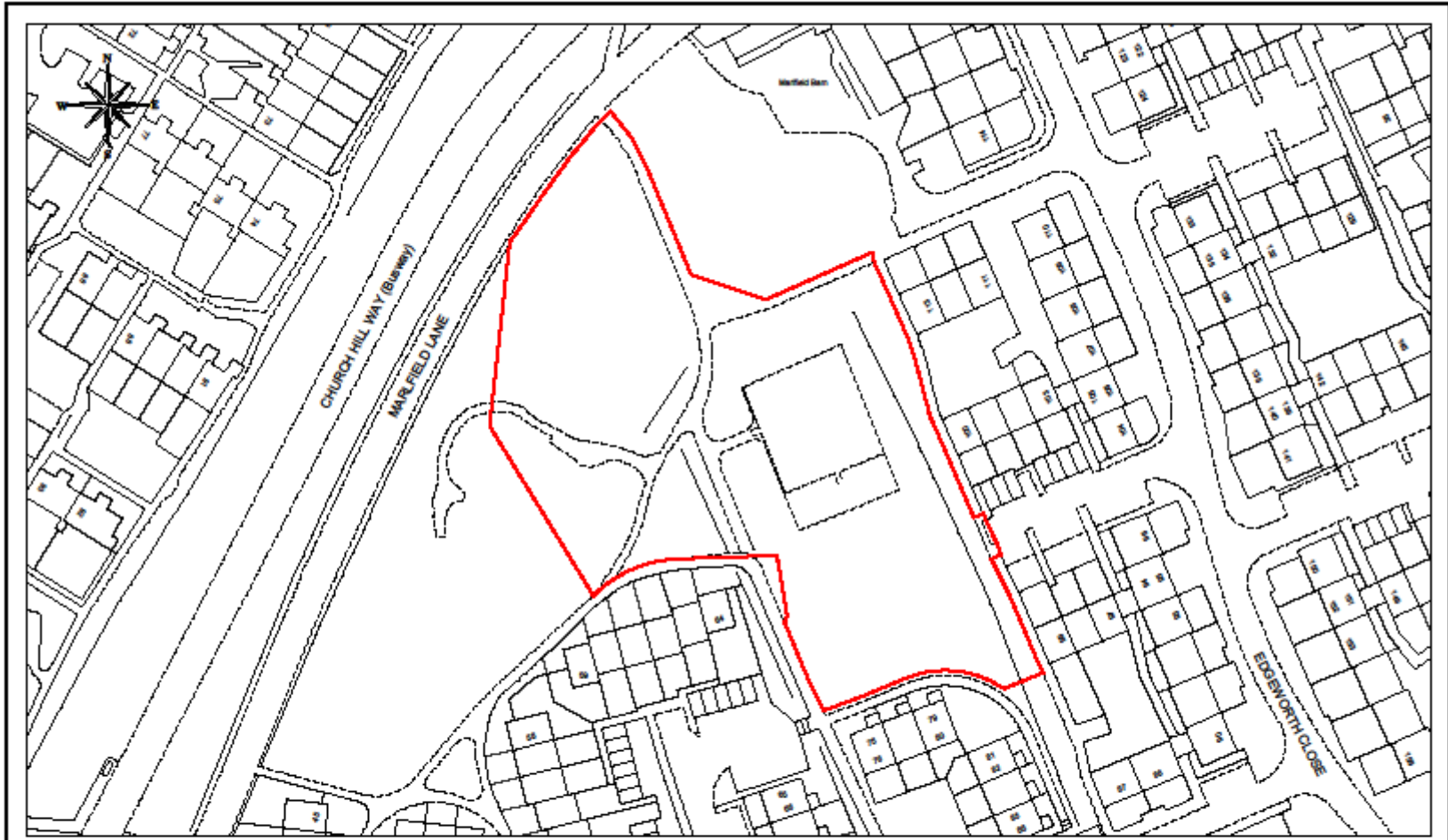
 <p>www.redditchbo.gov.uk</p>	 <p>Bromsgrove District Council www.bromsgrove.gov.uk</p>	Project:	Drawing:	Drawing No:	Drawn: PTL	Engineering and Design Services Town Hall Walter Stranz Square Redditch Worcs B98 8AH <small>© Crown Copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey 100024257</small>
		Council Housing Growth Programme Sites	Clifton Close, Matchborough West	P2049/141/3	Surveyed: 08	
					Scale: 1/1000 @ A4	
					Date: Sep 2018	





 <p>www.redditch.gov.uk</p>	 <p>Bromsgrove District Council www.bromsgrove.gov.uk</p>	Project:	Drawing:	Drawing No:	Drawn: PTL	Engineering and Design Services Town Hall Walter Stranz Square Redditch Worcs B98 8AH <small>© Crown Copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey 100024257</small>
		Council Housing Growth Programme Sites	Auxerre Avenue, Greenlands	P2049/141/5	Surveyed: 08	
					Scale: 1/1000 @ A4	
					Date: Sep 2018	




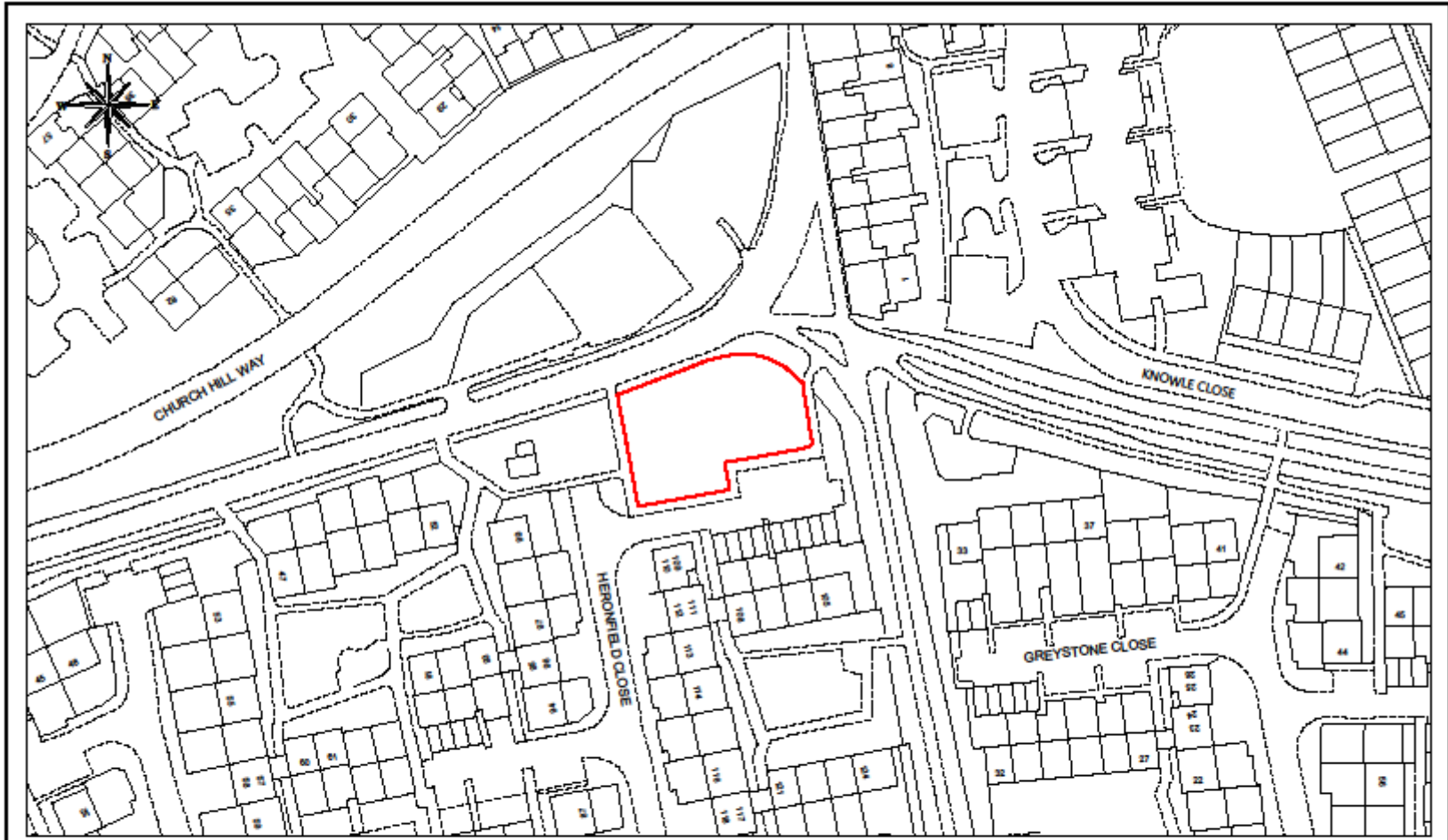
 <p>www.redditchbo.gov.uk</p>	 <p>Bromsgrove District Council www.bromsgrove.gov.uk</p>	Project:	Drawing:	Drawing No:	Drawn: PTL	<p>Engineering and Design Services Town Hall Walter Stranz Square Redditch Worcs B98 8AH</p> <p><small>© Crown Copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey 100024257</small></p>
		Council Housing	Fladbury Close, Greenlands	P2049/141/6	Surveyed: 08	
		Growth Programme Sites	Woodrow		Scale: 1/1000 @ A4	
					Date: Sep 2018	





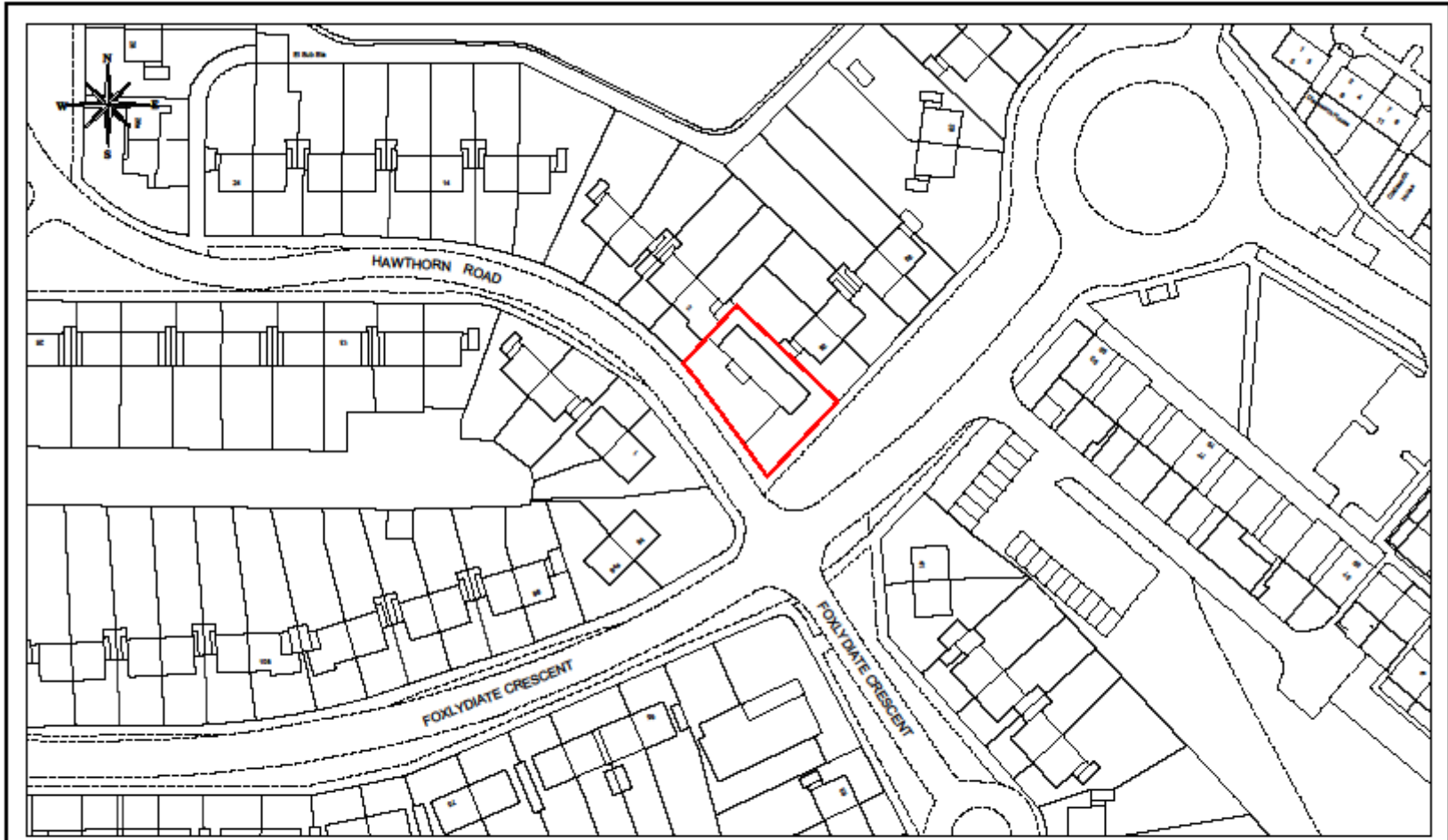
 <p>www.redditchbo.gov.uk</p>	 <p>Bromsgrove District Council www.bromsgrove.gov.uk</p>	<p>Project:</p> <p>Council Housing Growth Programme Sites</p>	<p>Drawing:</p> <p>Edgeworth Close, Church Hill South</p>	<p>Drawing No:</p> <p>P2049/141/7</p>	<p>Drawn: PTL</p> <p>Surveyed: 08</p> <p>Scale: 1/1000 @ A4</p> <p>Date: Sep 2018</p>	<p>Engineering and Design Services</p> <p>Town Hall Walter Stranz Square Redditch Worcs B98 8AH</p> <p><small>© Crown Copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey 100024257</small></p>
--	---	--	--	--	---	---





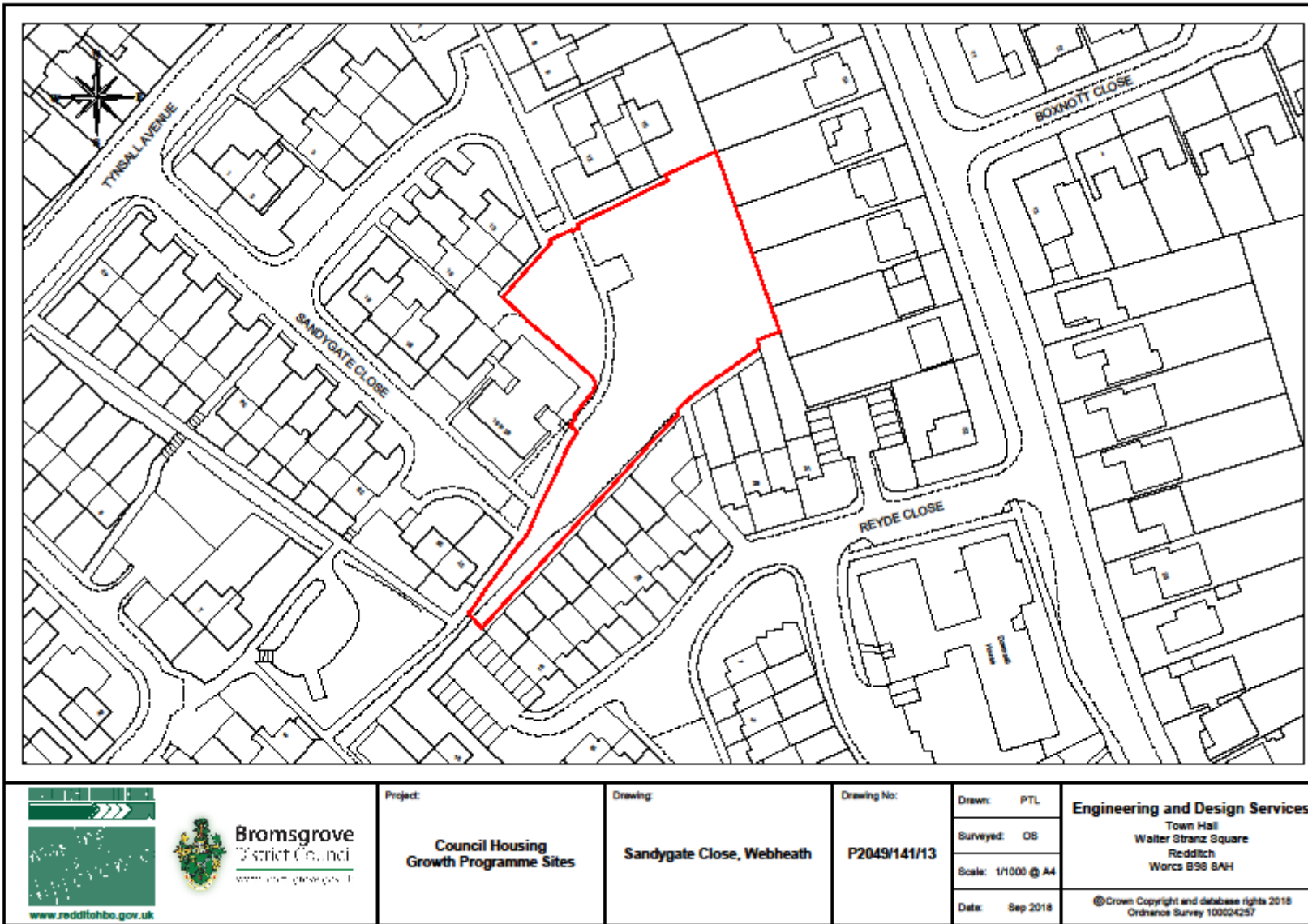
 Bromsgrove District Council www.bromsgrove.gov.uk	Project: Council Housing Growth Programme Sites	Drawing: Ibstock Close, Winyates East	Drawing No: P2049/141/9	Drawn: PTL Surveyed: 08 Scale: 1/1000 @ A4 Date: Sep 2018	Engineering and Design Services Town Hall Walter Stranz Square Redditch Worcs B98 8AH <small>© Crown Copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey 100024257</small>
---	--	--	-----------------------------------	--	--

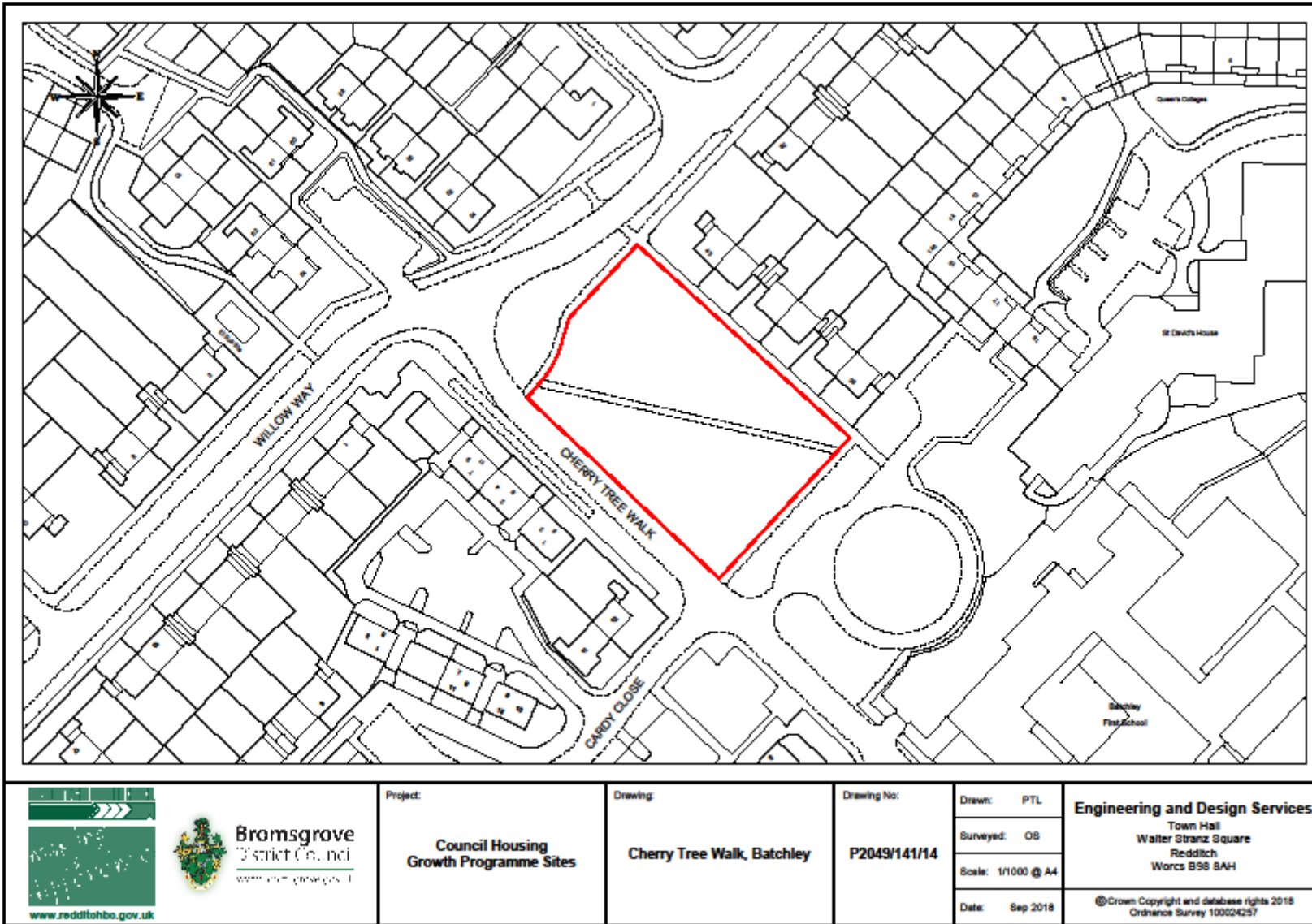




 www.redditchbo.gov.uk	 Bromsgrove District Council www.bromsgrove.gov.uk	Project:	Drawing:	Drawing No:	Drawn: PTL	Engineering and Design Services Town Hall Walter Stranz Square Redditch Worcs B98 8AH <small>© Crown Copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey 100024257</small>
		Council Housing Growth Programme Sites	Heronfield Close, Church Hill South	P2049/141/11	Surveyed: OS	
					Scale: 1/1000 @ A4	
					Date: Sep 2018	



 <p>www.redditchbo.gov.uk</p>	 <p>Bromsgrove District Council www.bromsgrove.gov.uk</p>	Project:	Drawing:	Drawing No:	Drawn: PTL	Engineering and Design Services Town Hall Walter Stranz Square Redditch Worcs B98 8AH <small>© Crown Copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey 100024257</small>
		Council Housing Growth Programme Sites	Hawthorn Road, Batchley	P2049/141/12	Surveyed: 08	
					Scale: 1/1000 @ A4	
					Date: Sep 2018	





 <p>www.redditchbo.gov.uk</p>	 <p>Bromsgrove District Council with our partners</p>	Project:	Drawing:	Drawing No:	Drawn: PTL	Engineering and Design Services Town Hall Walter Stranz Square Redditch Worcs B98 8AH <small>© Crown Copyright and database rights 2018 Ordnance Survey 100024257</small>
		Council Housing Growth Programme Sites	Cherry Tree Walk, Batchley	P2049/141/14	Surveyed: OS	
					Scale: 1/1000 @ A4	
					Date: Sep 2018	

This page is intentionally left blank

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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank