



Executive Committee

Tue 14 Aug
2018
6.00 pm

Committee Room Two
Town Hall
Redditch

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Executive

Tuesday, 14th August, 2018

6.00 pm

Committee Room 2 Town Hall

Agenda

Membership:

Cllrs:	Matthew Dormer (Chair)	Bill Hartnett
	David Bush (Vice- Chair)	Gareth Prosser
	Tom Baker-Price	Michael Rouse
	Greg Chance	Craig Warhurst
	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 - 12)

5. Scrutiny of Care Leavers Short Sharp Review - Final Report (Pages 13 - 44)

6. Redditch Town Centre Regeneration (Pages 45 - 52)

7. Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Pages 53 - 64)

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

To receive and consider any outstanding minutes or referrals from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Executive Panels etc. since the last meeting of the Executive Committee, other than as detailed in the items above.

9. 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.



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MINUTES

Present:

Councillors David Bush (Chair), Tom Baker-Price, Roger Bennett, Greg Chance, Brandon Clayton, Bill Hartnett, Gareth Prosser and Craig Warhurst

Also Present:

Councillors Joe Baker and Andrew Fry

Mr Raymond Groves (RYCE)

Officers:

Kevin Dicks, Claire Felton, Martin Goodall, Sue Hanley, Jayne Pickering and Dean Piper

Committee Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Matthew Dormer. In his absence the Deputy Leader, Councillor David Bush, chaired the meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair explained that the Leader's Announcements had been tabled in writing for Members' consideration.

.....
Chair

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4. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 6th March 2018 be held as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. SCRUTINY OF CARE LEAVERS SHORT SHARP REVIEW - FINAL REPORT (TO FOLLOW)

The Chair confirmed that this item had been postponed.

6. REDDITCH GATEWAY PROJECT

The Head of Economic Development and Regeneration – North Worcestershire presented a report in respect of the Redditch Gateway. Members were advised that the report was calling for the Council to apply for grant funding from the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) and Worcestershire LEP to pay for a new junction at the Redditch Gateway. Officers were estimating that the junction would cost £3 million to develop and grant funding would help to meet these costs. Planning permission had been granted for the gateway development in Redditch Borough, Stratford District and Warwickshire County Councils, with the latter acting as the relevant Highways Authority for the new junction. Should Members agree to apply for the funding it was anticipated the outline business case would be submitted by the end of July and works would begin on site by November 2018.

Following the presentation of the report Members discussed the timescales for the project. The Committee was advised that the timescales detailed in the report were based on best estimates though it was hoped that these could be followed. There was the potential for the Redditch Gateway scheme to have a positive impact on the local economy, particularly in respect of providing job opportunities.

During the discussions about this item Officers explained that the project would have implications for the Council's capital programme. For this reason it was proposed that an extra decision, in addition to those detailed in the report for this item, should be determined by the Committee.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **delegated authority is given to the Executive Director of Finance and Resources to prepare and submit**

applications for grant funding for highway infrastructure works on the A4023 to relevant Local Enterprise Partnerships following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Town Centre and Commercialism, Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development & Regeneration and Head of Legal and Democratic Services;

- 2) should the relevant funding applications be successful, that delegated authority is given to the Executive Director of Finance and Resources to enter into any grant agreements as necessary following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Town Centre and Commercialism, Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development & Regeneration and Head of Legal and Democratic Services;
- 3) delegated authority is given to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services for the Council to enter into an agreement under section 278 of the Highways Act 1980 or such other agreements as Warwickshire County Council as the relevant highway authority reasonably requires to allow the highway infrastructure works to be undertaken;
- 4) delegated authority is given to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services for the Council to enter into any ancillary contractual arrangements with the developer that may be required to ensure the highway junction scheme is monitored and delivered and that the Council's position is appropriately protected; and

RECOMMENDED that

- 5) should the application for funding be successful that the Council approves an increase of up to £3m in the 2018/19 capital programme.

7. REDI CENTRE - LEASE ARRANGEMENTS

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented a report in respect of the lease arrangement for the REDI Centre. During the presentation of this item the following points were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- Redditch Youth and Community Enterprise (RYCE) had occupied the REDI Centre since 2014. During this time RYCE had provided a number of community activities.
- The REDI centre as a building was increasingly not fit for purpose.

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- RYCE had already secured £67,000 to spend on improvement works.
- In addition RYCE had submitted an application for £465,000 funding from the Big Lottery. This would be used to fund further improvement works in the interior of the building. A number of conditions were attached by the Big Lottery to this funding.
- The conditions included a requirement for the lease to last for at least 10 years, restrictions on what the building could be used for in that period if anything was to happen to RYCE and the rent payable for the premises could not increase during the time.
- The Council was proposing that the rent payable during the period of the lease should be £7,000.
- The Council needed to achieve best value and therefore alternative available options had been outlined for Members' consideration.
- There were some risks that had been identified in relation to RYCE's income projections which were considered to be ambitious. However, RYCE had confirmed that the organisation's income had doubled in recent years.
- As part of the improvement works RYCE was intending to introduce a changing places facility in the building. This would be the second such facility in Redditch as another was already available to use in the Abbey Stadium.
- There was no guarantee that the Big Lottery would agree to the Council's terms.

Following the presentation of the report Councillor Baker was invited to speak in his capacity as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members were advised that the Committee had pre-scrutinised the report at a meeting on 5th July 2018. There had been general consensus during this meeting that RYCE provided a range of valuable activities to the local community. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had therefore proposed that the Executive Committee take into account the first three proposals detailed in the report and this had received cross-party support.

During consideration of this item Mr Raymond Groves, from RYCE, was invited by the Chair to speak. Members were advised that the Big Lottery had been consulted about the proposed rent for the REDI Centre and had agreed with the figure. The improvement works that would be undertaken using the lottery funding would enhance facilities for people with physical disabilities and provide an important venue in which local community groups could meet.

The Committee discussed the report in detail. Reference was made in particular to the social value of the work delivered by RYCE within the local community. Members expressed some

concerns about the meanwhile lease arrangement that had previously been in place with RYCE for the REDI Centre and noted that the proposals in the report would be more sustainable.

RESOLVED that

- 1) a 12 year lease is granted to RYCE for the use of the REDI Centre subject to commence when the Lottery Funding for works on the building is approved;**
- 2) approval of a rent of £7k per annum is agreed for the period of the lease; and**
- 3) should the Lottery grant be unsuccessful that a further report be presented to members on the future opportunities for the centre.**

8. CONSOLIDATED REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN AND FINANCIAL RESERVES STATEMENT 2017/18

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented the Finance Monitoring Outturn Report 2017/18 and in so doing highlighted the following points for the Committee's consideration:

- The Chief Executive and the Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources had met with the external auditors that day and had received some positive feedback.
- There were a number of variances in the final accounts when compared to the Council's budget.
- In some cases there had been higher costs than anticipated, including for the Planning Department and the waste collection team. In the latter case this was due to hiring temporary works to deliver services whilst staff were absent due to sickness and Officers were investigating how to support those on long-term sick leave back into work.
- There had also been a shortfall in income in some areas.
- However, a substantial saving had been achieved in respect of the strategic purpose 'help me find somewhere to live in my locality'. This was partly due to salary savings, though a new service structure would be in place in due course.
- Overall a saving of £20,000 had been achieved by the end of the year. This was partly due to the Council adopting a more robust approach to forecasting.
- The capital budget would be underspent by £1.6 million. Some of the funding concerned would be carried forward to the following year to spend on any delayed projects.
- There had been significant expenditure on supervision and management costs in the HRA, though at the end of the year

there were balances of £1.4 million and £19 million in housing capital reserves.

- The auditors had advised that the Council did not need to continue to monitor expenditure in relation to the Efficiency Plan as the content was now out of date.

Following the presentation of the budget Members discussed the budget position and welcomed news that there was a surplus of £20,000. However, Members also noted that funding from reserves had been used to help balance the budget and there remained a funding gap that would need to be addressed moving forward. Therefore the authority would continue to face challenging financial circumstances in the future. At the request of the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management future financial monitoring reports would take into account variances of £20,000 or above. This would help to ensure that more detail was provided.

RECOMMENDED

- 1) **that the financial position on Revenue and Capital for the financial year 2017-18 as detailed in the report and the transfer to balances £20k as at 31st March 2018 is noted;**
- 2) **approval of the movements of £410k in existing General Fund reserves which reflects the approval required for April - March 2018;**
- 3) **approval of the addition of new General Fund reserves of £212k. This reflects the approval required for April - March 2018;**
- 4) **approval of the movements of £324k in existing HRA reserves as included in Appendix 2 which reflects the approval required for April - March 2018;**
- 5) **that an increase in the 2018-19 Capital Programme of £777,858k for the Disabled facilities Grants is approved. This is due to the budget allocations now being announced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government;**
- 6) **that an increase in the 2018-19 Capital Programme of £2.4k s106 monies for the maintenance and improvements to playing pitches and sports facilities in Feckenham Cricket Ground; and**
- 7) **approval of the carry forward to 2018-19 capital programme of £1.256m.**

9. PERFORMANCE REPORT - HELP ME TO RUN A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS

The Chief Executive presented the performance report for the strategic purpose 'help me run a successful business'. A number of matters were raised for Members' consideration during the presentation of this report:

- The external auditors had confirmed that they were satisfied the Council had a much more robust framework in place, compared to previous years, for performance monitoring purposes.
- There were three strategic measures for this strategic purpose. Unfortunately the data for these measures was often not available until at least 12 months had passed and this needed to be addressed.
- The average earnings for Redditch residents unfortunately continued to be lower than for residents living in other parts of Worcestershire, and was also lower than the national average.
- The Council was working closely with HOW College and the Chief Executive and Portfolio Holder for Economic Development would be meeting with representatives of the college shortly.

Members discussed the report and there was general consensus that HOW College had an important role to play in the economic development of the Borough and this role could be developed further. There was a need to support local businesses and to take action to ensure that average wages in Redditch increased. Businesses located in the Eastern Gateway would potentially require more skilled staff which could have a positive impact on wage growth.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

10. PERFORMANCE REPORT - HELP ME TO BE FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented the performance report for the strategic purpose 'help me be financially independent'. During this presentation the following matters were raised:

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- The Council's Financial Inclusion Team (FIT) had been working hard to help residents become more financially independent. This had included a review of education and skills for customers who were claiming benefits.
- The data that had been gathered for this strategic purpose indicated that action was needed to help residents struggling with fuel poverty.
- Officers were working with customers to try to understand why people got into debt. Frequently this occurred because there had been a delay before a person could access their benefits.
- The level of rent accounts in arrears was generally comparable to the national average. A dip occurred each year as rent was paid on a 48 week basis leaving a number of weeks where no rent needed to be paid.
- The Council's sickness absence figures for staff had increased over the past 12 months. This was possibly due to introducing a new system which was enabling managers to record the absences properly.
- Cash payments had fallen slightly but some residents continued to pay for services using cash, which was more expensive for the Council to process than other payment methods.

Following the presentation of the report Members raised a number of points:

- The action that could be taken by the cashiers to encourage residents to pay by direct debit instead. Officers advised that cashiers did advise customers about other payment methods and advice was also provided about the variety of payment options available on the Council's website.
- The proportion of Redditch residents paying in cash. Members were advised that a higher number of residents in Redditch opted to pay for service using cash than residents living in other parts of the county.
- The need for the Council to communicate more effectively with residents about the costs involved in processing cash payment and the alternative payment methods that were available.
- The action that was already being taken to address fuel poverty, which would involve assessing the methods used by other local authorities to tackle this problem.
- The potential to make changes to Council Tax support, both for care leavers and other social groups. This would be considered further by the Executive Committee later in the year.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

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11. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 31st May 2018 be noted.

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

Officers confirmed that there were no further recommendations from any Committees for Members' consideration at this meeting.

13. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORTS

The Chair explained that verbal updates would be provided by lead Members during the year in respect of the work of the Advisory Panels. The following updates were then provided:

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

In Councillor Dormer's absence Officers confirmed that the next meeting of the Constitutional Review Working Party would take place on 17th July.

b) Corporate Parenting Steering Group – Council Representative, Councillor Gareth Prosser

Councillor Prosser advised that he would be attending the first meeting of the Corporate Parenting Steering Group on Thursday 12th July.

c) Grants Panel – Chair, Councillor Greg Chance

Councillor Chance explained that Panel Members had met for a training session. The first proper meeting of the Panel would take place shortly.

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

In Councillor Dormer's absence Officers reported that a meeting of the Member Support Steering Group had taken place on 2nd July. During the meeting the group had considered feedback for Members elected in May 2018 about the induction programme. There had been some training session that had been positively received by Members,

including the Code of Conduct training and the Overview and Scrutiny training. However, other elements of the induction process had been criticised, particularly the use of PowerPoint by Officers when delivering training.

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

In Councillor Dormer's absence Officers advised that the Chair had decided to continue to convene meetings of PAP directly before Executive Committee meetings. It was anticipated that the first meeting would take place in August.

14. 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 paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act, as amended:

Minute 15 – Enterprise System Project Business Case

15. ENTERPRISE SYSTEM PROJECT BUSINESS CASE

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources and the ICT Application Support Officer presented a business case in respect of the Enterprise Resource Planning System. Members were informed about the following matters during the presentation of this report:

- A number of the Council's existing computer systems were not fit for purpose as they were not flexible or integrated with other systems.
- Concerns in relation to these systems had been raised by officers, including many budget holders as well as internal and external audit.
- The Enterprise Resource Planning System would be fully integrated and incorporate systems for HR, finance, procurement and cash receipting.
- The Council would be using capital receipts to fund the introduction and installation of the system.
- By basing the data on one system officers would have easier access to this when needed.

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- Officers would be able to incorporate systems from other departments if needed without requiring the Council to incur any additional costs.
- There was the potential when using this system to use robotic software to complete mundane tasks on behalf of teams.
- A separate system for the Housing Service would need to be introduced at a later date.

The Committee discussed the report in detail and raised the following points as part of this debate:

- The timescales for delivering the project. Officers advised that the Council would need to be realistic about the timescales involved and it was suggested that to ensure a smooth transition a phased approach should be adopted.
- The potential for the new system to meet customer needs. The Committee was informed that stakeholders would be consulted and a focus group of customers would be convened so that their needs could be taken into account.
- The background research that had been undertaken by officers, which had included investigating the impact of similar systems utilised by other local authorities.
- The training that would be provided to staff when the new system was introduced. Members were informed that this was likely to involve a number of training sessions.
- The budget that had been allocated to training staff to use the system. Members were advised that this budget had been included in the calculations contained in the report.
- The length of time that the Council's existing systems had been in place and why these had not been replaced at an earlier date. Officers advised that the Council's finance system had been procured three years ago and as the contract for this service was due to expire it had been considered timely to explore this subject.
- The potential for the Council's future Housing system to be integrated with the Enterprise Resource Planning System. The Committee was informed that this had been taken into account and it would be possible to integrate the systems.
- The lifespan of the system and the extent to which upgrades would be required. Officers advised that the system would be built to work seamlessly like a mobile phone and like that equipment would need to be upgraded from time to time.
- The likely cost of any upgrades. Officers agreed to investigate this matter further and to report back to Members.
- The Palace Theatre's booking system and the extent to which this could be integrated with the Enterprise Resource Planning System. Members were advised that there would be links, such as through cash receipting arrangements, but these two systems would not be integrated.

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RECOMMENDED that**the Business case for the implementation of an integrated Enterprise Resource Planning System (ERP) is 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 relates to the financial and business affairs of the local authority].

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.25 pm



Overview & Scrutiny

Support for Care Leavers Short, Sharp Review - Final Report

June 2018



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Membership of the Task Group

Councillors Pattie Hill (Chair), Matthew Dormer (Chair March to May 2018), Mike Chalk and Mrs Nina Wood-Ford

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Completed

July 2018

Contact

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FOREWORD

We are very pleased to present the final report of the Support for Care Leavers Short Sharp Review Task Group.

This report provides an account of the work that the group has undertaken to investigate support for care leavers in Redditch, and in particular, the options for making changes to Council Tax Support arrangements for care leavers in the age group 18 to 25. The Task Group was set up in direct response to the motion considered at full Council on 29th January 2018 which called on the Council to introduce changes to either eliminate or significantly reduce the amount of Council Tax payable by care leavers in the age group 18 to 25.

Councillor Hill gave her sincere thanks to all concerned with ensuring our responsibilities as Corporate Parents were met, as well as ensuring Redditch Borough Council investigated all avenues.

Task Group Members expressed their sincere thanks to Councillor Matthew Dormer for his valuable contribution to the Task Group investigation.

Task Group Members were keen to highlight the positive work carried out by the relevant agencies in supporting care leavers.



Councillor Matthew Dormer
Chair of the Support for Care Leavers Short Sharp Review from 21st March to 21st May 2018



Cllr Pattie Hill
Chair of the Support for Care Leavers Short Sharp Review from 21st May 2018



Councillor Mike Chalk



Nina Wood-Ford

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**Recommendation 1**

In recognition of the financial pressures faced by care leavers, and the Council's role as a corporate parent, that the Council Tax Support Scheme be amended to include:-

- a) a new category for care leavers aged 18 to 21 under which care leavers liability for Council Tax will be reduced to nil; and
- b) a new category for care leavers aged 22 to 25 under which tapered relief from Council Tax will be provided based on the means of individual applicants.

Financial Implications:

Amending the Council's Local Council Tax Support scheme will lead to a reduction in the Council Tax Base for Redditch. The costs of awarding support to care leavers will be shared by all precepting authorities; initial estimates based on the information available indicate that the costs of the scheme will be approximately £11,000 per annum; with approximately 13% of these costs falling on Redditch Borough Council.

The award of Council Tax Support to care leavers will place additional administrative burdens onto the Customer Access and Financial Support (CAFS) service through the requirement to confirm care leaver status. It is not possible to provide an estimate of the financial costs associated with this additional administration.

Support for care leavers would not be limited to persons leaving the care of Worcestershire County Council – it is not possible to make an estimate as to the full number of care leavers within Redditch and to provide an accurate reflection of costs. It is thought that the number of care leavers from outside of Worcestershire County Council's care will be limited and there will not be significant additional costs.

Legal implications:

The Council Tax Support Scheme cannot be changed mid-year. Changes can only be made from the start of a Council Tax year; therefore it will only be possible to amend the scheme from 1st April 2019. Changes to the scheme will require statutory consultation firstly with the precepting authorities and then persons with an interest in the operation of the scheme.

The recommendation will require new classes of vulnerable persons to be added to the Council Tax support scheme, one for care leavers under 21 years of age and another for care leavers aged 21 to 25. A 100% reduction in Council Tax would be granted to persons in the first class, and a maximum support of 100% to persons in the second. Support to the second group would taper in line with the existing working age claimants.

A definition of “care leavers” will need to be determined. It may be appropriate to mirror the definition (amended to reflect English Law) that the Scottish Government has used within The Council Tax (Discounts) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2018.

Consideration was given to restricting support to persons who have left the care of Worcestershire County Council. The Local Government Finance Act 2012 provides that the class of persons to whom support is given must be defined by reference to criteria which the authority making the scheme considers identify those who are, in general, in financial need. Restricting support to persons who leave the care of Worcestershire County Council would in effect place a geographical restriction on support. The case R (Winder and others) v Sandwell MBC held that a requirement that restricted Council Tax support to persons who had been resident within Sandwell for two years was unlawful.

In a judgment delivered on 30 July 2014, Judge Hickinbottom found the residency requirement to be unlawful on six grounds.

It is possible that the geographical restriction applied by limiting support to persons leaving the care of Worcestershire County Council may be unlawful for similar reasons and therefore support for care leavers, if provided, should not be restricted.

Recommendation 2

That subject to the outcome of the public consultation on the proposed changes, the measures referred to in Recommendation 1 are brought into force in April 2019 as part of the 2019/2020 Council Tax Support Scheme.

Financial implications: As below

Legal implications: As below

Recommendation 3

That pending the review and adoption of the 2019/2020 Council Tax Support Scheme, interim measures are put in place by making changes to the Council Tax Support Hardship Policy under which net liability for young adults leaving the care of Worcestershire County Council in the age group 18 to 25 will be reduced to zero until the care leavers 25th birthday whilst they are living independently in the Borough and liable to pay Council Tax.

Financial Implications:

The hardship scheme is a reduction in Council Tax liability made on a case by case basis using the powers provided for by Section 13A 1(C) of The Local Government Finance Act 1992.

The Collection Fund (Council Tax Reductions) (England) Directions 2013 state that the costs of discount provided for by Section 13A 1(C) shall be met by a transfer from the authority's general fund to its collection fund. This means that the full costs of discounts granted under Section 13A 1(C) will be funded by Redditch Borough Council

The costs in 2018/19 are estimated to be £10,300.

Legal implications:

No additional legal implications.

1. Introduction/ Background Information

A request to scrutinise transitional support for young people leaving care in Redditch was raised as a notice of motion by Councillor Tom Baker-Price at the Council meeting held on 29th January 2018.

The motion was agreed in the following terms:

“This Council notes with deep concern the Children’s Society’s ‘Wolf at the Door’ report (2015) and the representations made by Kelly Pickard the Children’s Commissioner on the subject of council tax for care leavers.

We would like to reaffirm the commitment this Council has to partnership working with Worcestershire County Council, to ensure young people who have left care are appropriately housed and supported in their transition.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 clearly places corporate parenting responsibilities on District Councils for the first time, requiring them to have regard to children in care and care leavers when carrying out their functions.

This Council is the Council Tax billing and housing authority for the Borough of Redditch and as such recognises this group is particularly vulnerable to falling into debt when moving into independent accommodation for the first time.

This Council therefore requests the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to carry out a full investigation and review.”

The objectives are to explore the available options that can be put in place to enable more support to be given; to determine how the process could work in liaison with the County Council; and to assess the financial impact to the Borough, including how we would recover a commensurate share of the necessary funding from the County Council.

In order to provide the maximum support possible to care leavers, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, working with officers, are asked to bring forward proposals to this Council utilising powers granted to this Council under section 13A of the local government financing act 1992 to ensure the following:

1. Reduce their net liability for Council Tax under the national scheme and after Council Tax support to zero, until the care leaver’s 21st birthday.

2. Introduce a transitional discretionary discount scheme to enable a reduction of liability for Council Tax, up to and including zero, from their 21st birthday until the care leaver’s 25th birthday.

These proposals are to be presented to Council within six months of the adoption of this motion.

In order to eliminate the current postcode lottery of exemption, the Council will also write to the Government requesting that consideration is given to introducing national legislation to help care leavers.”

At the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13th February 2018, Committee Members agreed to launch a short sharp review to investigate the subject of the transition of young people leaving care in Redditch, and the first meeting of the group took place on 21st March 2108.

The terms of reference for the review largely reflected the wording of the motion to Council and directed the group to:-

- Investigate the options available to enable more support to be given to care leavers;
- Explore how the Council could use it's powers under section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to make changes regarding council tax for care leavers;
- Assess the financial impact to the Council of introducing any new processes to support care leavers; and
- Report back the findings of the group by July 2018.

In planning what areas to concentrate on the group decided to look at:-

- The legal framework for care leavers and responsibilities on local councils as corporate parents
- The existence of any national legislation or guidance on supporting care leavers through the council tax scheme
- Schemes adopted by other local authorities to support care leavers regarding council tax and how these had been implemented
- The picture for care leavers in Redditch currently and what resources are available
- The options for introducing a scheme for care leavers to give assistance with council tax payments
- The financial implications of providing assistance

In terms of witnesses, the group invited representatives from The Rees Foundation (Redditch) and Worcestershire County Council's Children's Services to attend a meeting of the group.

The Head of Customer Access and Financial Support Manager were also invited to attend a meeting of the group to provide more detailed information regarding the Council's Council Tax Support Hardship Fund and the Council Tax Support Scheme which were introduced in 2013 to replace Council Tax Benefit.

Officers provided information based on research of the schemes for support with council tax for care leavers adopted by other local authorities, and information about the services for care leavers provided by Worcestershire County Council as set out in the Worcestershire's Care Leaver Strategy 2017-2019. Statistical information regarding care leavers in Redditch was received directly from Worcestershire County Council, from information submitted to the Worcestershire County Council Corporate Parenting Committee and from information supplied by Worcestershire County Council to the revenues team.

2. The legal framework for care leavers and responsibilities on local councils as corporate parents

County Councils in shire areas and unitary authorities have traditionally been responsible for transitional support to care leavers between the ages of 16 and 18 (or 21 if in education) as they leave the care system and move to living independently. Prior to the introduction of the Leaving Care Act (2000) there was no statutory framework in place for care leavers with individual local authorities deciding what level of support to provide in their areas. The 2000 Act introduced requirements for local authorities to assess the needs of care leavers, appoint a Personal Adviser for them and develop a pathway plan.

More recently further legislative reforms have been introduced by the government to address the needs of care leavers with the aim of providing a more structured and stable transition from care to independent living. In 2014 the Children and Families Act introduced new measures to support young people to remain with foster carers to age 21 together with new inspection measures to assess the quality of leaving care support.

The government also promoted the concept of “corporate parenting” under which responsibility for providing support for care leavers is shared much more widely. In practice this has seen different government departments and agencies working together to identify where and how care leavers can be better assisted. At local government level, there has been a shift of emphasis from the traditional position of the county/unitary authorities bearing prime responsibility for children leaving care, to the idea that this responsibility should be shared across all levels of local government

Legislation introducing a formal duty for local authorities to act as “corporate parents” came into force last year under the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The Act defines the principles of corporate parenting and places a duty on all local authorities, including district councils, to comply with the principles when exercising its functions.

Locally, the lead authority responsible for children leaving care is Worcestershire County Council, and the specific committee which oversees this area is the Corporate Parenting Board.

Under the 2017 legislation the Borough Council now has a duty to have regard to care leavers when carrying out their functions.

3. The existence of any national legislation or guidance on supporting care leavers through the council tax scheme

By way of background, in 2015 the Children’s Society issued a report “The Wolf at the Door Report” which looked at the effects of Council Tax policies on families. The report made a number of key findings and highlighted the vulnerability of care leavers as regards payment of council tax, due to lack of financial support and inexperience of being financially independent.

Following publication of the report, and in response to campaigning by the Children’s Society to raise the profile of the issue, a number of local authorities in England and Wales started to look at the issue of council tax liability of care leavers. Research for the

Task Group established that some authorities began making changes from 2017 onwards.

One of the issues noted in the Full Council debate on 29th January was the lack of any national guidance or policy on how changes should be implemented, and concern that this could allow different changes to be introduced in different geographic locations with no consistency of approach.

Members therefore also agreed to write to the government to highlight this issue and to request that the government give urgent attention to introducing national legislation to help care leavers.

Accordingly a letter was sent on 13th February 2018 from the Leader of the Council Bill Hartnett to the MP Nadhim Zahawi, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families. A response from Nadhim Zahawi was received dated 12th March which stated as follows:-

“The question of whether to introduce a national exemption was debated in detail during the passage of the Children and Social Work Bill. During the debate we made it clear that we believe that local authorities are best placed to make decision about who should benefit from local council tax support schemes. Instead of mandating exemptions from the centre, we have therefore provided local authorities with the flexibility to design their own support schemes to meet local need”.

This response therefore confirmed the position that central government has no plans to introduce any national legislation to cover changes to council tax support schemes for care leavers, and has taken the view that these matters should be dealt with locally by individual councils.

The relevant legislation is complex and provides various different options that could be used by Councils to reduce the council tax payments of care leavers. The rules relating to Local Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Local Council Tax Discounts are set out in section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. For the purposes of this report the available options are summarised on page 18.

The position adopted by central government leaves open the issue of what level of support is provided, for which age groups and what qualifying criteria should apply. It relies on local authorities choosing voluntarily to provide assistance on a council by council basis.

4. Schemes adopted by other local authorities to support care leavers regarding council tax

For the purposes of the Task Group, officers carried out detailed research into the type of schemes that had been adopted by other councils who had already considered the issue of providing assistance with council tax for care leavers.

Overall it was noted that there was more information available about unitary authorities and specific examples relating to 2 tier areas were more difficult to find.

There was no consistency of approach as to the mechanism for providing assistance with council tax for care leavers. Some authorities had used the hardship scheme either on an individual basis or by exempting a class of people. Other authorities had chosen to make changes to the council tax support scheme. Some councils had combined elements of both approaches, i.e. using the council tax support scheme and hardship policy. There were no consistencies as to the ages of care leavers eligible for assistance, with some authorities assisting up to 21 and others up to 25. Another aspect where there was variation related to the qualifying criteria, and specifically whether assistance would be offered to all care leavers residing in the area, or only to those care leavers who had been in the care of the unitary authority in questions, or in the case of a two tier area, in the care of the relevant County Council.

The Task Group looked in more detail at three local authorities in the West Midlands who had either already introduced measures to assist care leavers with Council Tax, or were in the process of doing so, namely Birmingham City Council, Coventry City Council and Dudley Metropolitan Council. The findings are summarised in the table below:

Authority	Details	Type of scheme	Date introduced
Birmingham City Council	Up to age 21 – care leavers exempt from paying council tax. Age 21 to 25 discretionary discount offered based on individuals applying to the Council and providing evidence that they are struggling financially	Up to age 21 – powers used under section 13A (1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to introduce an “exempt” category for care leavers reducing their council tax liability to zero Awards are made on a discretionary case by case basis under the existing hardship policy. Restrictions: assistance is only available to Birmingham care leavers.	01 April 2017
Coventry City Council	Coventry care leavers living in Coventry aged 18 to 21 are provided with a 100% discount from council tax. Coventry care leavers aged 21 to 25, and non-Coventry care leavers up to the age of 25 can apply for discretionary relief from payment of council tax based on individual circumstances and means testing.	The 18 to 21 discount was introduced under section 13A (1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. For this group awards are made on a discretionary case by case basis under the existing hardship policy. Restrictions: the exemption for care leavers aged 18 to 21 is only for care leavers from Coventry; other care leavers can apply but under the discretionary hardship scheme	01 April 2017
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council	Applies to care leavers aged 18 to 24. New “vulnerable category” added to Council Tax Reduction Scheme.	Exemption under Council Tax Support Scheme – introduced under section 13A (1)(a) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 following consultation on the 18/19 Council Tax Reduction Scheme	01 April 2018

	Provides for means tested reduction up to 25 th birthday		
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5. The picture for care leavers in Redditch currently and what resources are available

Members heard evidence from the Worcestershire County Council Care Leavers Team (South) about the work they do with care leavers in terms of planning for care leavers to move to independent living, and the operation of their team in the Redditch area.

Members were informed that there are 352 care leavers in the age group 18 to 21 in the County and of those 72 are living in Redditch. The care leavers' team that covers Redditch has 10 Personal Advisers (PAs) who each have a caseload of care leavers who they support. The team aim to start working with children in care at age 17 and to develop a Pathway Plan focussing on preparing for future study or moving to live independently. Key elements include health, family, education and networks. The role of the PAs is to meet with the young person regularly and continually keep their needs under review. There is a legal requirement to provide regular face to face visits up to age 21.

The core business of the care leavers' team is with the 18 to 21 age group, but since the law changed to extend the duty up to age 25 there has been an increase in the number of over 21s seeking support. Children's Services are still in the process of scoping the number of young people who may be eligible for assistance in the age 21 to 25 category and steps are being taken to trace former care leavers and signpost them back to services.

The PAs work with numerous partners in the public sector, most notably housing, the Department of Work and Pensions, health, foster carers, colleges, and the Home Office. Childrens Services are trying to place more PAs in the community and in Redditch this is to be trialled with one worker at Nightstop and one at Beoley Court from May 2018.

In terms of support offered to care leavers the key areas are around finances/benefits and housing. One of the roles of the PAs is to ensure that care leavers are receiving benefits they are entitled to and to signpost them to the relevant agencies. The Task Group noted the positive impact of the county wide joint protocol on housing which has improved the flexibility of services around housing for young people. Another initiative which has been particularly successful in Redditch has been the use of training flats by Redditch Housing Department. This has proved to be a good method for enabling young people to make the transition to living independently.

The Members were also informed that there have been some very good examples of care leavers choosing to remain living with foster carers after the age of 18. This is part of the government initiative known as "Staying Put" which was introduced in 2014 and encourages young people to remain in foster placements into early adulthood, for example until they leave higher education. Although not suitable for all care leavers,

staying put is proving to be beneficial as this usually delays the age at which care leavers move to independent living; there are less challenges if they do not move in on their own until they are a bit older.

In terms of areas that prove more difficult for care leavers, the evidence highlighted the following:-

- Issues with budgeting and being able to manage finances.
- Problems with maintaining tenancies which can escalate to eviction.
- For private tenancies, issues around having to pay out rent and deposits in advance.

Children's Services are investigating a scheme for emergency housing for care leavers in the North of Worcestershire so as to help avoid homelessness and the need to place young people in temporary accommodation.

The Task Group also interviewed a representative from the Rees Foundation which is a charity for care leavers which operates nationally but is based locally in Redditch. The charity which was set up four years ago aims to provide somewhere for care leavers to fall back on when they need help and support later in life, in the same way that adult children turn to their parents or family for support.

Members learnt about the work of the charity including the provision of emergency financial support through a Crisis Fund, networking events and training, and noted that support was available for all age groups.

With regard to providing financial support for care leavers, originally the Rees Foundation operated was a scheme that covered grants and crisis loans. However, it has been necessary to prioritise the Crisis Fund. Demand for this has been growing. Between 2015 and 2016 the amount paid out (for England and Wales) increased from less than £1000 per year to £35000 per year. The average payment is £60 to £70 for example for food or utilities. The staff are careful to make checks before giving out monies from the crisis fund, including checking what other sources of entitlements may be available.

The Rees Foundation works with various other agencies but most frequently they have contact with housing and Personal Advisors.

In terms of areas that are more difficult for care leavers, feedback was similar to that from the Care Leavers Team and touched on:-

- Debt problems and money management issues.
- The need to have access to information about benefits and practical support available.
- Alongside the practical issues of living independently, emotional needs and difficulties with relationships/loneliness.

6. The options for introducing a scheme for care leavers to give assistance with council tax payments

Background

During the process, Members invited the Head of Customer Access and Financial Support Manager to attend a meeting of the group.

The Head of Customer Access informed the group that historically Council Tax Support Schemes (CTSS's) were introduced in 2013 to replace Council Tax Benefit (CTB). Whereas CTB had been administered centrally, and was a single system that applied nationally, under the 2013 changes each local authority was required to introduce its own scheme. At the same time the government reduced the central funding that was available to fund support with council tax by 10%.

The whole concept of devolving CTB to local level is known as the "Council Tax Support Scheme". Redditch Borough Council (RBC) established its own local scheme which is referred to as the "Local Council Tax Support Scheme". As an extension of this, RBC also introduced a discretionary hardship fund and this is known as the Council Tax Support Scheme Hardship Fund.

The government has protected pensioners under the CTSS at the same level as CTB, and no changes can be made to the support provided to people of pensionable age. The funding cuts have therefore fallen entirely on the budget available for working age claimants. In addition the Government specified in legislation that the CTSS's must incentivise working.

In April 2014 RBC agreed a scheme which capped the amount of CTSS available at 80% of the liability (after discounts). Working age claimants were required to pay 20% of their liability.

The Hardship Fund was introduced to help households placed in severe financial difficulties as a result of the CTS paid. The annual budget available for the Hardship Fund is £25,000.

Residents experiencing hardship can apply to the fund for assistance. Each application is individually assessed. The Council has put measures in place to ensure that applying for assistance from the Hardship Fund is part of a wider holistic approach to giving support to residents with financial problems. All applicants are seen face to face and offered other support to help them with managing their finances and personal budgeting. Often staff found that the need for help with Council Tax was part of a wider debt problem being experienced by the applicant.

The Hardship Fund for Council Tax is treated as a short term measure. For example support might be provided for a 2/3 month period until a particular problem or situation has been resolved, or to cover a period of crisis.

Anyone who was in receipt of full CTSS is entitled to seek assistance under the Hardship Fund. Some applications are refused where the applicant is not genuinely suffering from hardship. The approach of speaking face to face with applicants to assess their situation allows for any non-genuine claims to be sifted out.

Care Leavers under the current arrangements

There are no special provisions in the CTSS currently for care leavers; the only assistance which could be offered would be through the Hardship Fund. However, this has been set up to respond to short term crises rather than general difficulties with managing on a low income.

Care leavers are generally made aware of the Hardship Fund via advice given by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as part of the process for care leavers claiming Universal Credit or advice from support workers.

The Head of Customer Access commented that the level of advice to care leavers when they first leave care seemed to be good; the support workers appeared to be knowledgeable about the available benefits and well trained at directing care leavers as to what they could claim. Where there are issues, this tends to be for care leavers who are slightly older who perhaps have less contact with support workers.

The group was advised that council tax liability for 18 year olds would depend where they were living (what band of property) and what income they were receiving. Depending on income, they would automatically get assistance under the Council Tax Support Scheme which would cover 80% of any council tax due.

The proposal as set out in the Motion to Full Council, and subsequently agreed by the County Leaders Group, was to see the remaining 20% topped up and paid for them.

For a Band A property the annual council tax in Redditch would be £1,150 per annum. If the care leavers income was low they would receive up to 80% CTS. This would leave the young person roughly £230/240 to pay over the 10 month council tax period.

If the single occupiers discount were to apply the amount due would firstly be reduced by 25% and then the remainder by up to a further 80%.

Any care leavers in the 18 to 21 age group who are in full time education are exempt from Council Tax as students.

It was noted that many care leavers were not affected by council tax as either they were in education, lived with a family, had remained with foster carers or lived in Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

Based on statistics supplied to the Revenues Team by Worcestershire County Council, of 72 care leavers residing in Redditch, analysis had shown that the number with council tax liability was 28. Of these there were 19 care leavers who qualified for support under the CTSS and 9 care leavers were paying council tax which would have been either because they were working or in relationships with partners that are working.

Proposals as discussed at the County Leaders Group

The Head of Customer Access reported that the proposals set out in the motion to Full Council had been discussed at the County Leaders Group and that the agreed aim was not only to help the 18 to 21 age group, but to extend help to care leavers up to the age of 25. Specifically, it was agreed to use the discretionary hardship funds to reduce council tax liability to zero for care leavers under the age of 25 with effect from 01 April 2018 (where the care leaver was in receipt of some council tax support for at least part of the year).

The Task Group was advised that the best way to achieve this in the longer term would be to amend the CTSS rather than using the Hardship Fund. This is because the Hardship Fund is designed to be discretionary and administered on a case by case basis, as opposed to providing assistance to a particular group. However, there would

be a long lead in time to making changes to the CTSS which cannot be altered without public consultation. The earliest the changes could be brought in would be April 2019.

In the interim, the Task Group was advised that it would be possible to make a temporary change to the Hardship Policy to enable care leavers up to the age of 25 to receive assistance pending changes to the CTSS. Members were advised that Councilors at Bromsgrove had decided to adopt this approach.

In terms of the approach across the county, it appeared that initially other districts were opting to use the Hardship Fund for 2018/2019. Officers did not have any information as to what the other districts were planning to do from 2019 onwards.

Options

As previously noted on page 8, in the absence of any national legislation, it has fallen to individual councils to decide what approach to take on a local basis.

In terms of the statutory mechanisms for providing support for care leavers with Council Tax, the Task Group established that there are three options:-

1. Make adjustments to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme under section 13A (1) (a) of the Local Government Finance Act 1972.
2. Use the discretionary hardship fund to give support on a case by case basis to care leavers under section 13A (1) (c).
3. Provide an exemption to a class of persons under section 13A (1) (c).

Although it was noted that some local authorities had used Option 3 to give a general exemption, officers expressed reservations around fairness and whether this could be interpreted as favoring a narrow class of residents.

More generally on the issue of fairness, the Task Group was informed that the The Wolf at the Door report was based on a very small statistical sample of care leavers. There is the wider issue of non-care leavers under 25, and whether young persons in that category might equally be in need of financial assistance. RBC statistics looking at the age group 18 to 25 show the following:-

	Percentage of 18 to 25 year olds whose Council Tax is up to date	Percentage of 18 to 25 year olds whose Council Tax is in arrears
Care Leavers	30%	70%
Non- Care Leavers	50%	50%

Cross-boundary issues

One further issue that Members of the Group had to consider related to situations where care leavers no longer reside in the same geographical area where they were in care and whether this is likely to produce any inequalities.

In particular it was noted that some local authorities have specifically provided that only care leavers who were in the care of their authority may claim assistance with payment of Council Tax. For example, this is the approach that has been adopted by Birmingham, and to a more limited extent by Coventry. On the face of it this could act to exclude care leavers from receiving support if they have moved out of area and disregards the fact that there may be very genuine reasons for them re-locating or having developed links in a location away from their original home area.

The Task Group noted that this was an example of the type of issue which could have been clarified by the passing of national legislation. For councils considering allowing all care leavers to claim assistance, there would be an element of uncertainty as numbers of out of area care leavers would not be known. On the other hand, there might also be a risk of challenge on the grounds of inequalities if new rules were introduced that only applied to certain care leavers and not others. To guard against this when Councilors in Bromsgrove had looked at this issue, officers had carried out an Equality Impact Assessment.

In Worcestershire, Worcestershire County Council has pledged to provide the district councils with regular statistics on the number of care leavers residing in their areas and officers anticipated that this information could be used as part of the verification process for applicants, rather than requiring them to provide evidence themselves of their status as a care leaver.

7. The financial implications of providing assistance with Council Tax

Although statistically care leavers in the age group 18 to 25 make up a relatively small category of residents, the group has established that there will be financial implications of making changes with regard to support for council tax payments. The availability of financial support from Worcestershire County Council to the Districts to assist them in eliminating/ reducing council tax liability for care leavers is referenced in the discussions at the County Leaders Board. However, officers were not aware of any districts having asked for assistance and unless authorities get into financial difficulties in implementing these measures, it is not anticipated that assistance will be available.

For the purpose of this report the Task Group has started from the assumption that any costs would have to be met by the Borough Council.

The Task Group also looked at how making changes would affect the Worcestershire "Collection Fund". When Redditch Borough Council issues council tax bills it not only collects its own council tax but also the council tax for other bodies known as "Precepting authorities". In Worcestershire the precepting authorities include Worcestershire County Council and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service. The method by which a discount or exemption is applied will have implications for the collection fund. In some cases the collection fund remains at the same level and the amount that should have been paid by those persons receiving assistance has to be made up. Alternatively, the way in which the discount or exemption is applied may reduce the overall amount due to the collection fund.

Using the Hardship Fund

Based on the current data provided by Worcestershire County Council on the number of young adults formerly in their care residing in Redditch, the cost of this to RBC would be

approximately £10,500 per year. This would have to be funded from the existing budget for the Hardship Fund of £25,000 per year.

As regards the collection fund, the same amount would be due to be contributed, and in effect the financial implications reflect that RBC would be making up the contributions to the pre-cepting authorities that should have been paid by the persons receiving assistance through the Hardship Fund.

Changing the Council Tax Support Scheme

The projected cost of this to RBC would be approximately £1,400 per annum based on assistance being limited to young adults formerly in the care of Worcestershire County Council. It is difficult for officers to give an accurate estimate of the additional cost of including non-Worcestershire care leavers living in Redditch, as no data is available as to how many young people in this category would qualify for assistance.

With regard to treatment of the collection fund, by introducing a new category of care leavers to the CTSS, the overall amount due to the fund would be reduced. So in essence the total cost would be shared by all the pre-cepting authorities in Worcestershire.

Creating an exempt class of 18 to 21 year olds under section 13A (1) (c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1972.

The cost of this would be £10,500 per year if limited to young adults leaving the care of Worcestershire County Council (the same as using the Hardship Fund), but in addition extra software would have to be purchased to administer the exemption. Projected costs for this would be a one off cost of £8,500 plus licence fees of £1,700 per year, giving a total cost of £20700 in Year 1, dropping to £12200 in subsequent years.

As regards the collection fund, the situation would be the same as for using the Hardship Fund. In other words the amount due to the collection fund would not be reduced and RBC would be making up the difference.

CONCLUSION

The key points identified by the Task Group based on the evidence gathering exercise were:-

That although the transition from being in care to living independently was a period where young people had traditionally been vulnerable and lacked support, that recent reforms have started to see some improvements. For example through the work of Personal Advisers, the raising of the profile of the needs of care leavers and government initiatives such as “Staying Put”. Whilst not underestimating the difficult circumstances of some care leavers, there was evidence of more structured support being made available to all care leavers.

The statistics for Redditch showed that the number of care leavers eligible to pay Council Tax was lower than the group had expected. This would appear to reflect the trend of more care leavers being able to remain with foster carers and delay the transition to independent living. The group also noted the Worcestershire County Council statistics of 52% of care leavers being in education, employment or training.

There was evidence of a number of positives around care leavers receiving good advice about what support they are entitled to and being signposted to the available services. Members of the group were also pleased to note the positive feedback regarding the training flats in Redditch, and the initiative being worked on jointly by the County Council and Districts to provide emergency accommodation specifically for care leavers.

Care leavers would clearly benefit from more support around financial issues both in terms of assistance with money management and the challenges of living on a low income. In a two tier area, and in the current economic climate, the resources available to assist care leavers at district level are limited. However, the Task Group were of the view that the Borough Council should assist where it could, and that one practical step members could take would be to introduce a scheme for care leavers to receive support with payment of council tax.

In introducing a scheme the members of the group were mindful of the need for any arrangements to be easy for care leavers to access, and not overly bureaucratic for staff to administer. Of the options considered, the group preferred the option of amending the Council Tax Support Scheme and noted that once established this would have the lowest impact in terms of financial implications.

The members of the group also favoured an element of means testing in the 22 to 25 age group to reflect that care leavers in that age group would be more likely to be working and receiving an income.

As highlighted earlier in the report, Members of the Task Group noted that some local authorities had specifically provided that only care leavers who were in care in their authority could claim any assistance with payment of their council tax. Members were of the opinion that this could produce inequalities and possible challenge; or could exclude care leavers from receiving support if they have moved out of an area for very genuine reasons. Therefore the group agreed that with regard to Recommendations 1 and 2, there should not be a restriction placed on care leavers from authorities other than Worcestershire County Council relocating into the Borough. The group was advised that

it would be the responsibility of care leavers from another authority to notify the Borough Council that they were residing in the Borough.

Accordingly the Members of the Group are recommending that:-

Recommendation 1

In recognition of the financial pressures faced by care leavers, and the Council's role as a corporate parent, that the Council Tax Support Scheme be amended to include:-

- a) a new category for care leavers aged 18 to 21 under which care leavers liability for Council Tax will be reduced to nil; and*
- b) a new category for care leavers aged 22 to 25 under which tapered relief from Council Tax will be provided based on the means of individual applicants.*

Recommendation 2

That subject to the outcome of the public consultation on the proposed changes, the measures referred to in Recommendation 1 are brought into force in April 2019 as part of the 2019/2020 Council Tax Support Scheme.

Leading on from this, members considered the timing issues, and given that the Council Tax Support Scheme cannot be changed until public consultation has taken place, whether or not any interim measures should be introduced to alleviate hardship on care leavers. The options were either to do nothing in which case there would be no assistance with council tax until April 2019 at the earliest, or to make interim changes to the Hardship Fund, in which case some assistance could be introduced immediately. At the Task Group meeting held on 25th June 2018, the Financial Support Manager, clarified that should an interim arrangement be agreed, WCC care leavers, who resided in the Borough, would have their council tax bill reviewed for the whole of 2018/2019.

Members decided in favour of providing assistance on an interim basis, and the wording of recommendation 3 represents the most efficient way of introducing this in terms of reducing net liability to zero for young adults formerly in the care of Worcestershire County Council up to the age of 25.

Members were mindful that the parameters of the interim assistance are slightly different to those proposed for the revised Council Tax Support Scheme, although the wording does reflect the proposal discussed by the County Leaders Group. With regard to the exclusion of any means testing for the age group 22 to 25, officers have given their re-assurance that it will be highlighted to applicants that the scheme is interim only (for 12 months) and that entitlement from April 2019 onwards may not be the same.

Accordingly, Members are recommending that the Hardship Fund be amended as set out in recommendation 3.

Recommendation 3

That pending the review and adoption of the 2019/2020 Council Tax Support Scheme, interim measures are put in place by making changes to the Council Tax Support Hardship Policy under which net liability for council tax for young adults leaving the care of Worcestershire County Council in the age group 18 to 25 will be reduced to zero until

the care leavers 25th birthday whilst they are living independently in the Borough and liable to pay Council Tax.

APPENDIX 1**Scrutiny Proposal Form**

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

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

Details of referral	Referred to Overview and Scrutiny Committee following motion at Council on 29 th January 2018	Date of referral	Establishment of task group approved by O & S Committee on 13 th February 2018
Proposed topic title	Transition of young people leaving care short sharp review.		
Link to national, regional and local priorities and targets	<p>County Councils in shire areas and unitary authorities have traditionally been responsible for transitional support to care leavers between the ages of 16 and 18 (or 21 if in education) as they leave the care system and move to living independently. Before the Leaving Care Act (2000) there was no statutory framework in place for care leavers with individual local authorities deciding what level of support to provide in their areas. The 2000 Act introduced requirements for local authorities to assess the needs of care leavers, appoint a personal adviser for them and develop a pathway plan.</p> <p>More recently further legislative reforms have been introduced by the government to address the needs of care leavers with the aim of providing a more structured and stable transition from care to independent living. In 2014 the Children and Families Act introduced new measures to support young people to remain with foster carers to age 21 together with new inspection measures to assess the quality of leaving care support.</p> <p>The government also promoted the concept of “corporate parenting” under which responsibility for providing support for care leavers is shared much more widely. In practice this has seen different government departments and agencies working together to identify where and how care leavers can</p>		

	<p>be better assisted. At local government level, there has been a shift of emphasis from the traditional position of the county/ unitary authorities bearing prime responsibility for children leaving care, to the idea that this responsibility should be shared across all levels of local government</p> <p>Legislation introducing a formal duty for local authorities to act as “corporate parents” came into force last year under the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The Act defines the principles of corporate parenting and places a duty on all local authorities, including district councils, to comply with the principles when exercising its functions.</p> <p>Locally, the lead authority responsible for children leaving care is Worcestershire County Council. Under the 2017 legislation the Borough Council clearly now has a duty to have regard to care leavers when carrying out their functions.</p>
Background to the issue	<p>In 2015 the Children Society issued a report (“The Wolf at the Door Report”) looking at the effects of Council Tax policies on families. The report made a number of key findings and highlighted the vulnerability of care leavers as regards payment of council tax, due to lack of financial support and inexperience of being financially independent.</p> <p>In light of the new duties relating to corporate parenting, there has been renewed discussion nationally and in Worcestershire as to the role district councils could play to support care leavers around payment of Council Tax. A motion on this issue was adopted by Worcestershire County Council at its meeting on 18th January 2018. A motion on the same issue was debated by Redditch Borough Council on 29th January 2018. Following debate an amended version of the motion was agreed, a copy of which is attached at Appendix 1.</p> <p>The motion as agreed by Worcestershire County Council requested that the district councils in Worcestershire, as billing authorities for council tax, should provide the maximum support possible to care leavers by</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Reducing their net liability for council tax under the national scheme and after Council Tax support to zero, until the care leavers 21st birthday; 2) Introducing a transitional discretionary discount scheme to enable a reduction of liability for council Tax, up to and including zero, from their 21st birthday until the care leavers 25th birthday. <p>In Redditch, the agreed motion asked for a full investigation</p>

	<p>and review of the position of care leavers with regard to council tax to be carried out by Overview and Scrutiny in accordance with the objectives set out in Appendix 1, and for proposals to bring into effect the changes listed at 1) and 2) above to be presented to Council within 6 months.</p> <p>At its meeting on 13th February 2018 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report on the motion from Council and resolved to set up a short sharp review to investigate the transition of young people leaving care in Redditch.</p>
<p>Key Objectives Please keep to SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely)</p>	<p>1) In relation to Council Tax support, investigate :-</p> <p>(i) the options available to enable more support to be given to care leavers: and</p> <p>(ii) how the Council could use its powers under section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to provide the maximum support to care leavers to enable the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce their net liability for council tax under the national scheme and after Council Tax support to zero, until the care leavers 21st birthday; and • Introduce a transitional discretionary discount scheme to enable a reduction of liability for council Tax, up to and including zero, from their 21st birthday until the care leavers 25th birthday <p>2) To present draft proposals on how changes to Council Tax support could be achieved to Council by July 2018;</p> <p>3) In considering the objectives at (i) and (ii) to :-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine how any new processes could work in liaison with Worcestershire County Council. • Assess the financial impact to the Borough Council of introducing any new processes to support care leavers. • Explore the options for any recovery of expenditure by the Borough Council from the County Council. <p>Optional areas for further investigation:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the current level of support available to care leavers living in Redditch; and • To seek best practice for support for care leavers by district councils from the experiences of other local authorities nationally by reviewing relevant cases.

<p>How long do you think is needed to complete this exercise? (Where possible please estimate the number of weeks, months and meetings required)</p>	<p>It is anticipated that this review should take approximately three months and Members will aim to complete the investigation by mid-June 2018</p>
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Please return this form to: Jess Bayley or Amanda Scarce, Democratic Services Officers, Redditch Borough Council, Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square, Redditch, B98 8AH

Email: jess.bayley@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk / a.scarce@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

APPENDIX 2**Acknowledgements**

The group would like to thank the following people for providing evidence during the course of their review:

Afshan Ahmad, Chief Operating Officer, Rees Foundation Redditch
Rhys Davies, Care Leavers South Team, Worcestershire County Council
James MacDonald Care Leavers South Team, Worcestershire County Council
David Riley, Financial Support Manager, Redditch Borough Council
Amanda Singleton, Head of Customer Access, Redditch Borough Council

APPENDIX 3**Background papers**

Letter from Nadhim Zahawi MP dated 12th March 2018

Worcestershire's Care Leaver Strategy 2017-2019

Local Government Association –Support for care leavers resource pack

Department of Education Report – Keep on caring: Supporting young people from care to independence – July 2016

The Wolf at the Door – How Council Tax debt is harming children – The Children's Society – March 2015

Bromsgrove District Council:

- Report to Cabinet dated 11th April 2018 – Addendum to Council Tax Support – Hardship Policy
- Equality impact assessment

Redditch Borough Council - Council Tax Hardship Fund Policy

Redditch Borough Council – Council Tax Support Scheme 2017-2018

Minutes of the meeting of Worcestershire County Council held on 18th January 2018

Minutes of Worcestershire County Council Corporate Parenting Board dated 8th February 2018

R (Winder and Others) v Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (intervening) [2014] EWHC 2617 (Admin), Case No: CO/633/2014, 30 July 2014

APPENDIX 4

Declarations of Interest

At the meeting on 21st March 2018 Councillor Pattie Hill declared that she was the Council's representative on Worcestershire County Council's Corporate Parenting Board and that she attended meetings of the Board.

APPENDIX 5**Timeline of Activities**

Date	Task Group Activity
21/03/2018	Scoping meeting.
13/04/2018	Consideration of research re Council Tax Support Schemes adopted by other Local Authorities for care leavers and interview with Amanda Singleton, Head of Customer Access and David Riley, Financial Support Manager.
30/04/2018	Discussions with:- Afshan Ahmad of the Rees Foundation Redditch. Rhys Davies and James MacDonald of Care Leavers South Team, Worcestershire County Council.
31/05/18	Task group members re-appointed following May 2018 elections with Cllr Pattie Hill as Chair, and Nina Wood-Ford as co-optee. Cllr Dormer was unable to continue with the Task Group as he had moved to the Executive.
11/05/2018	Meeting of re-formed group to review evidence and discuss findings and draft recommendations
25/06/18	Meeting to finalise wording of recommendation's and draft report, including further discussion with David Riley, Financial Support Manager

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE14th August 2018**REDDITCH TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION****OPEN**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr David Bush – Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Town Centre and Commercialism
Portfolio Holder Consulted	√
Relevant Head of Service	Kevin Dicks, Chief Executive
Ward(s) Affected	Central & Abbey Ward
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	
Key Decision / Non-Key Decision	Key decision

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an updated position in relation to the regeneration of Redditch Town Centre, and outlines the work proposed to be undertaken during the next 12 months.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)**The Executive Committee RECOMMENDS that:**

- 1) The Council provides in principle support for the creation of a new purpose built multi-agency Public Services Hub, with a final decision to be taken by the Executive Committee following:
 - a) The production of a detailed business case setting out the strategic, economic, commercial, financial and management case;
 - b) Identification of potential location options for the Hub and a recommended preferred site for the Hub;
 - c) Negotiations with partner organisations regarding their commitment to transferring services to the Public Services Hub.

Subject to the approval of recommendation 1 above the Executive Committee RESOLVES that:

- 1) Delegated authority is given to the Chief Executive to procure external specialist support to develop the business case as detailed at paragraphs 3.3 - 3.4, utilising the £150,000 already agreed by Council, after consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Town Centre and Commercialism.

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- 2) To progress proposals outlined in the Redditch Regeneration Prospectus, with the initial focus on commissioning specialist support to produce a new vision and masterplan for the Railway Station Quarter and undertake feasibility work for the Library site, utilising the £50,000 already agreed by Council and that delegated authority is given to the Chief Executive to procure this support, after consultation with the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Town Centre and Commercialism.

3. KEY ISSUES**Financial Implications**

- 3.1 As detailed in the report to the Executive Committee in March, the Place Review process has identified the potential financial implications for the Council and partners of working within a Public Services Hub.
- 3.2 According to indicative figures it is estimated that the Council and its partners could achieve efficiency savings by co-locating in a Hub.
- 3.3 To take forward the development of the business case for the Public Services Hub, a sum of £150,000 has been approved by the Council to be funded by balances. Furthermore, £50,000 has been approved to progress other regeneration proposals for the town centre. The Council will continue to seek funding contributions from other public sector partners including Worcestershire County Council, Local Enterprise Partnerships and the West Midlands Combined Authority.
- 3.4 The business case will include a full detailed cost appraisal together with estimates of future efficiency savings that can be realised by partners. The capital funding required to deliver the proposed scheme will be presented to Council for approval.

Legal Implications

- 3.5 There are a number of proposals in the Regeneration Prospectus that relate to land which is largely outside of the Council's ownership and control. Although there may be at the current time an agreement in principle with other public authorities to work together to achieve the objectives, the priorities of other authorities may change and there is no legal commitment for any other parties to commit land in their ownership to the objectives (at any or at an agreed price).
- 3.6 The Council has powers to purchase interests in land from reluctant (public or private sector) landowners compulsorily. Compulsory purchase powers are only available to the Council for a set range of purposes and may only be used if necessary for the delivery of a fully funded and deliverable scheme (which fits within one of the purposes). Even if such a scheme were in place, before

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purchasing compulsorily the Council would be required to demonstrate that the objectives of the scheme could not be achieved in any other way and that the benefit to the public interest outweighed the interference with private property rights. The threshold for justification of compulsory purchase is high as interference with property rights represents an infringement of human rights.

- 3.7 If compulsory purchase is necessary the process may take several years to complete and with the potential for protracted negotiations with landowners and a public inquiry, the costs would not be insignificant. Landowners may expect to sell their property by agreement at an inflated price so as to “save” on the costs of compulsory purchase. Landowners whose property is purchased compulsorily may be entitled to compensation above and beyond the value of the land itself.
- 3.8 The proposed developments / redevelopments would be subject to planning consent. The Council as the local planning authority would have to deal with all planning applications strictly on their planning merits.

Service / Operational Implications**Background**

- 3.9 In March 2018, the Executive Committee received a number of proposals contained within a Regeneration Prospectus relating to Redditch Town Centre. Furthermore, the outcome of the One Public Estate review (produced by Place Partnership) for Redditch Town Centre was reported to the Executive Committee, with the key recommendation that the Council should seek to work with partners to develop a multi-agency Public Services Hub. It was agreed by the Executive Committee in March, that the development of the Hub should be subject to the development and finalisation of a detailed business case, to be completed by January 2019.

Current position

- 3.10 Whilst the regeneration of Redditch Town Centre is central to these proposals, and the establishment of a Council-led Public Services Hub, a site at Church Road is no longer considered an appropriate location for it. This is due to the high cost of a new building on that site and the lack of evidence from Place Partnership that a Business Quarter could be developed on the back of a Public Services Hub. The evidence suggests that the office market in Redditch is currently weak; therefore it is now considered that it is speculative to suggest that new offices could be attracted into the town centre due to the construction of a new municipal building and the risk attaching to this proposal is too high. The alternative is for the Council to work with the NHS and Homes England to identify other viable options for the Church Road site. Any assessment of the future of the site will need to take account of viability and aspirations of the land owners.

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- 3.11 This report seeks approval for officers to explore the feasibility of the Town Hall acting as the site for the Public Services Hub and to examine the potential for a refurbished building to host other public service partners and other commercial uses at ground floor level. This proposal will be considered against other potential options, depending on the availability of suitable buildings and/or sites, with a view to maintaining activity, footfall and spend within the environs of the existing Town Hall and to ensure that new development complements and strengthens other key assets in that area such as the Palace Theatre.
- 3.12 It is proposed that the Council progresses the detailed business case for the Public Services Hub and will commission external support to identify site options, partner requirements, funding and delivery options and benefits for the scheme. This will include an assessment of economic, financial and social benefits. The Council will ensure that the public is consulted before any final decision on location is made.
- 3.13 A number of the ideas and concepts contained within the Regeneration Prospectus will continue to be supported and promoted by the Council; these include:
- **Library site** – working with Worcestershire County Council to examine options for the future re-development of this site, including the idea to re-create this area as a new ‘public square/piazza’ with an improved entrance into the Kingfisher Shopping Centre;
 - **Railway Quarter** – visioning and masterplanning exercise to identify re-development opportunities, enhancement and upgrade of the Railway Station, improved public realm and connectivity into the town centre;
 - **Learning Quarter (Heart of Worcestershire College)** – strengthening and reinforcing the role of Heart of Worcestershire College in supporting the town’s economy and developing the Borough’s workforce;
 - **Retail Hub (Kingfisher Shopping Centre)** – working with the owners of the Centre to invest and further develop the offer by bringing exciting new occupiers into the town;
 - **Public realm and connectivity** - the vision remains to create a high quality town centre environment and a sense of place. Development of new and improved public / community spaces, improved pedestrian links and signage and street furniture are at the heart of this vision. In particular, there is a need for improved connectivity between areas outside of the Ring Road and the Town Centre and the Council will work with Worcestershire County Council to commission a feasibility study to look at options to improve the Ring Road.

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- **Blue Light Hub** - the Council will continue to work with Fire and Police to develop a joint Blue Light Hub facility and ensure that the existing sites are re-developed to support the regeneration of the town centre.
- 3.14 The Council will continue to identify potential external funding opportunities to support the regeneration proposals and in particular will make progress in submitting an application for £5m of funding to the Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) to support the re-development of key sites i.e. site acquisition, land assembly, demolition and clearance and public realm works. The Council will also look to potential funding opportunities offered by Worcestershire LEP and the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).
- 3.15 Key work to be taken forward over the next 12 months is as follows:
- Procure external support to support the development of a detailed business case for the proposed Public Services Hub – the business case to be developed by February 2019;
 - Work with partners such as West Midlands Rail and Worcestershire County Council, to commission a masterplanning exercise for the Railway Quarter to identify a new vision, re-development opportunities and funding/delivery strategy within that area;
 - Undertake feasibility work for the Library site to identify potential development options and designs for a new public square/piazza;
 - Work with Worcestershire County Council to commission a feasibility study to identify the potential to re-design the Ring Road to improve access and movement around the town and work towards developing the next phase of Public Realm enhancements;
 - Progress the outline business case to the (GBSLEP) to secure the £5m of capital funding to support the Council's regeneration plans.
- 3.16 The regeneration programme will be overseen by the 'Redditch Town Centre Regeneration Board' led by the Chief Executive and the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Town Centre and Commercialism and comprised of key strategic partners. The Regeneration Board will be responsible for driving forward delivery of the overall regeneration programme including the development of business cases for projects.
- 3.17 In summary, the Council remains committed to delivering an ambitious and credible regeneration programme which will create an exciting new future for Redditch and crucially unlock significant levels of public and private sector investment and unlock the potential of Redditch Town Centre.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE14th August 2018**Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 3.18 The project has identified that there is an opportunity to create a Public Services Hub within the town that will accommodate the Council and a number of public service partners.
- 3.19 A detailed assessment will need to be framed around the impact of change on the Council's service users and staff when the Hub is occupied. It is expected that wider consultation with the public / service users will be sought by the Council and its service partners. This will allow people to offer opinions and voice any concerns at the appropriate stage.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 A detailed 'Risk Log' will need to be produced as part of the detailed business case. However an initial risk register has been produced as follows:

RISK REGISTER	Impact (H/M/L)	Likelihood (H/M/L)	Risk Rating (R/A/G)	Risk Mitigation
Lack of stakeholder buy in and support	H	M	A	Continue to work closely with key stakeholders and ensure collaborative thinking is at the heart of decision making. Each partner to be invited to sit on the Regeneration Board.
Each land owner disposes of land assets individually rather than as part of a cohesive regeneration programme	H	L	A	As above.
Financial risks associated with proposed investment	H	L	A	Full business case will include detailed assessment of financial inputs i.e. build costs, sales prices, rental levels, demand, occupancy levels. No financial decisions will be made without a robust business case.
Reputational risk to Council and partners	M	M	A	Strong project management controls will be put into place to ensure that projects deliver on time and to budget. Additional resource to be procured to supplement project capacity.
Inability to secure funding and investment	H	M	A	The Council has provisionally secured funding from GBSLEP to help unlock some of the regeneration proposals.

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RISK REGISTER	Impact (H/M/L)	Likelihood (H/M/L)	Risk Rating (R/A/G)	Risk Mitigation
				The Council will also seek funding from Worcestershire LEP and the Combined Authority. It is anticipated that investment from the public sector will create the confidence for the private sector to invest in Redditch Town Centre.
Negative perception and image of Redditch	H	M	A	As part of the regeneration programme, the Council will work with key partners such as the Kingfisher Shopping Centre to look at how it can re-position Redditch and counter negative perceptions.
Market does not respond to the Council's vision	H	M	A	Further market analysis will be commissioned to underpin the development of business cases for key projects including an assessment of demand for office uses, the residential market and retail and leisure opportunities.

5. APPENDICES

None

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Redditch Town Centre Regeneration and outcome of the One Public Estate exercise – report to Executive Committee – March 2018
- Redditch Regeneration Prospectus
- Redditch Place Review Report produced by Place Partnership Ltd
- Redditch Economic Priorities and Action Plan – report to Executive Committee – February 2018
- Redditch Town Centre Strategy (Arup) – published in September 2009
- Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 4 – adopted 30th January 2017 (refer to Policies 30 to 33)

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 5th July, 2018

MINUTES

Present:

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

Also Present:

Mr Raymond Groves, RYCE

Officers:

Helen Broughton, Sue Hanley and Jayne Pickering

Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley, L Morris and F Mughal

10. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies were received from Councillor A. Fry.

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor any party whip.

12. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 30 MAY 2018

The Chair alerted the Committee to an urgent request that he had received following the last Committee meeting to give permission for the Town Centre Regeneration item to be considered at the July Executive. After consideration he had declined this request recognising the importance of the item and the need to give time for proper scrutiny.

The Chair also made the suggestion that going forward the use of PowerPoint should be banned at Committee meetings to ensure that presenters engage better with the Committee.

.....
Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 5th July, 2018

RESOLVED that

- 1) the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the Thursday 31st May 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair; and
- 2) the use of PowerPoint be prevented at future Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings.

13. REDDITCH PARTNERSHIP - MONITORING UPDATE REPORT

The Redditch Partnership Manager presented a report on the Redditch Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS). This update was provided to the Committee on an annual basis in response to a recommendation from a 2010 Task and Finish Group considering the Redditch Partnership. In the course of the presentation it was highlighted that;

- The SCS set the priorities for the Redditch Partnership.
- There were four priorities – health inequalities; educational attainment, school readiness and raising expectations of young people; the economy of Redditch with a focus on providing a larger and more diverse job offer and; lead on transformational change of services for citizens of Redditch.
- There should be good information flow between the local level groups and the County level groups.
- The Redditch Partnership Group had in collaboration with the Connecting Families Team agreed to focus on Mental Health. It would be challenging to focus on all priorities and the Group had been encouraged to focus on one.
- Mental health data would be considered and key partners would be asked about communication and barriers to getting things done. The focus would be on preventative work.
- The Redditch theme groups considered each area, with each meeting providing the opportunity for focussed presentations. At the last Economic Development Theme Group meeting for example information had been shared about the work of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership.

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- Redditch Community Wellbeing Trust worked with public health to refresh the Redditch Health profile. There was a focus on an asset based approach and building on what was positive.
- In 2017 the assets in Redditch to improve community wellbeing, for example the voluntary groups and parks, had been mapped. This was a useful process and could be used to benchmark the current position and feed into the mental health work being undertaken by the Redditch Partnership Executive Group and Connecting Families; and taken into account when recommissioning services.
- A Wellbeing Newsletter was produced and shared with all Councillors providing an update on projects and services. A directory of services across Bromsgrove and Redditch called the Knowledge Bank was also available with a searchable directory on the Council's webpages. Partners were encouraged to update their details regularly.

Members' queried which Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) the Council worked with and it was confirmed that the Council's Leader and the Chief Executive had links with both the Great Birmingham and Solihull LEP and the Worcestershire LEP.

The Committee requested a copy of the Redditch Assets Report and it was explained that this was available on the Worcestershire County Council webpages.

It was queried if the work of the Mental Health Task Group would be considered by the Redditch Partnership Executive Group. The Redditch Partnership Manager confirmed that the findings had already been considered and she would bring anything further that may be of relevance to the Group's attention.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the progress update on the Redditch Community Strategy and the work of the Redditch Partnership be noted; and**
- 2) the Redditch Assets Report be circulated to Committee Members for information.**

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14. REDI CENTRE LEASE ARRANGEMENT - PRE DECISION SCRUTINY TO FOLLOW

The Executive Director of Finance and Resources discussed the report detailing the proposal to grant a twelve year lease to Redditch Youth and Community Enterprise (RYCE) for the use of the REDI Centre.

In the course of the presentation it was highlighted that;

- The item would be discussed at the Executive Committee on the 10th July 2018.
- RYCE currently used the REDI Centre and had done so since January 2014 under a meanwhile lease arrangement whereby no rent was paid.
- As detailed at 3.2 – 3.7 of the report RYCE had successfully secured grant funding for feasibility and design reports for the building to ensure that it was fit for purpose for the future.
- A final Stage 3 bid had been presented to the Big Lottery to provide £465k, £350k of which would be for capital works. Part of the condition of any grant allocation will be that the lease arrangement in place had to be ten years or over following the completion of the building work so a lease of twelve years was being proposed.
- The improvements would help ensure better access for all, in particular disabled people and also enable additional community services to be based there.
- It was proposed that the rent would be £7k for the lease period.
- All the arrangements would be subject to further discussion with the Big Lottery.
- The Council had to consider Best Value and the report included consideration of the financial value and community value. The social value included over 1,200 attendances each month.
- Risks included that the RYCE income appeared ambitious but RYCE had confirmed that it could achieve an income of £30-40K per year.
- There were a lot of legal considerations to take into account due to the involvement of the Big Lottery and this would limit what the building could be used for over the next twelve years.

In response to Members' queries the Executive Director of Finance and Resources confirmed that;

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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- In relation to the risks associated with the grant and the dependence on RYCE diversifying income streams, the Council would be meeting with RYCE quarterly going forward to ensure that they could meet the Big Lottery expectations.
- Regarding the impact on other organisations in the vicinity no challenge had been presented as yet. The potential risk referred to was that hirers could move to the centre from elsewhere.

A representative from RYCE explained that the improvements would provide for a Changing Place in Redditch. For there to be a Changing Place there had to be a number of things in place, for example a shower hoist, a moveable wash basin and a privacy area. A Changing Place contractor would be involved. The funding would also provide the opportunity to put in place new lifts and three new toilets capable of taking a wheelchair and improvements to the grounds. The focus was on improving access for disabled people.

The Chair referred to the good work of RYCE and proposed that the Committee recommend that the Executive Committee consider recommendations 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 in the report.

This was seconded by Councillor Chance, with the whole Committee voting in favour of the proposal.

RECOMMENDED that

the Executive Committee take into account the following three recommendations;

- 1) a 12 year lease is granted to RYCE for the use of the REDI Centre subject to commence when the Lottery funding for works on the building is approved;**
- 2) approval of a rent of £7k per annum is agreed for the period of the lease; and**
- 3) should the Lottery grant be unsuccessful that a further report be presented to Members on the future opportunities for the centre.**

15. FINAL REPORT OF THE SUPPORT FOR CARE LEAVERS SHORT SHARP REVIEW TASK GROUP TO FOLLOW

RESOLVED that

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 5th July, 2018

this item be deferred to the next meeting.

16. TASK GROUP REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENT TO FOLLOW

Councillor Rouse introduced the scoping document. He highlighted that he was aware of anti-social behaviour (ASB) issues in Church Hill Ward and across Redditch which had been embodied by young people climbing up the side of a bus following the England football match. The issue had also been discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme event. He suggested that the Group could consider the definition of ASB. He referred to ASB in Church Hill Ward being committed by sixteen and seventeen year old young people but that eleven and twelve year old children who were innocently playing on their bikes were being mistaken for taking part in ASB too. It would be useful to consider where intervention was working to reduce ASB, how ASB was being monitored in the Borough and what could be learnt. The review would be timely as ASB could increase during the summer school holidays.

A Member referred to a previous Task Group on the matter which was undertaken in 2006.

Members commented that;

- The incident with people climbing onto a bus involved adults and not children or young people.
- The Police had visited the families of children and young people in Church Hill when matters had arisen.
- The situation in Matchborough had been addressed locally.
- It was important to narrow down the scope of the work.
- It would be helpful to focus on something specific and undertake a Short, Sharp Review.
- ASB had an impact on the town and anything that the Council could do to improve the situation was worth considering.

Councillor Rouse suggested that it was important to consider the issue as a whole as ASB could be generational.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **A Short Sharp Review be undertaken to consider the issue of ASB.**

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2) Councillor Rouse to Chair the Review.

3) Members to notify their Group Leader if they want to serve on the review.

17. RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER

The Senior Democratic Services Manager introduced the report and highlighted where the recommendations had been completed. A number of recommendations remained in progress and some had been abandoned.

Members' expressed disappointment that the recommendation to employ an apprentice to support the works of the Grants Officer had been abandoned and the Deputy Chief Executive gave reassurance that providing apprentice opportunities and work experience opportunities was something that was corporately supported, although the individual needs of the service also had to be considered, and in this case it had been felt that a different approach was required with a full time member of staff being recruited.

Members' referred to young people having access to work experience at the Council and having the opportunity to see all Council departments. Reference was made to some of the apprentices currently employed by the Council.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted and that completed recommendations be removed from the tracker.

18. CONSIDERING THE OUTCOMES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME EVENT HELD ON THE 25 JUNE 2018

The Committee Chair thanked all those who had contributed to the Work Programme event.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer referred to the report which detailed the potential items for scrutiny going forward and a number of matters which could form the basis of a question to residents in the Community Panel Survey later in 2018.

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The Committee Chair suggested that the following items should be included in the Committee Work Programme for scrutiny;

- Town centre regeneration and improvements.
- Homeless policy and the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act
- The lack of sexual health services in Redditch

Committee Members agreed with these items and also referred to the need to incorporate;

- The Housing Attitudes Survey
- The Council's website
- Public transport

The Senior Democratic Services Officer commented that an item on homelessness would be shared at the 6 December 2018 Committee meeting as previously requested by the Committee.

Members' suggested the following additional items also be included in the scrutiny work programme;

- The management of waste in relation to housing of multiple occupation.
- How businesses in Redditch could benefit from the HS2 development.

It was commented by Members' that the previous Leader had undertaken some work with businesses regarding what they could offer in terms of HS2 and officers suggested that there could be an opportunity to discuss the matter with North Worcestershire Economic Development Unit.

Members' felt that the additional items suggested at the Work Programming event should be included in the Work Programme for consideration at a later date. The Senior Democratic Services Support Officer confirmed that the Work Programme would be amended to include both the items prioritised by the Committee and the remaining items would be recorded for potential scrutiny at a later date.

Members' referred to the issue of looked after children and Council tax and it was confirmed that this would be discussed when the final report of the Support for Care Leavers Short Sharp Review was presented to the Committee.

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RESOLVED that;

- 1) **The Committee note;**
 - a) **the issues raised as potential items for scrutiny, including pre-scrutiny in 2018/19**
 - b) **the subjects raised as potential items for scrutiny in 2019/20 which will form the basis of a question to residents in the Community Panel Survey later in 2018.**

- 2) **That the items suggested by Members during the discussion be incorporated into the Committee Work Programme and the remaining items be included for future consideration.**

19. SCRUTINY OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME - SELECTING ITEMS FOR SCRUTINY

The Senior Democratic Services Officer highlighted to Members the recent amendments made to the Executive Committee's Work Programme.

In response to Members' queries it was confirmed that items on the Leisure Services Business Plan, the Town Centre Regeneration and the HRA Gas Maintenance Service Delivery Options would be included on the Committee's Work Programme. Issues in relation to finance were likely to be considered by the Budget Scrutiny Working Group.

RESOLVED that

the Committee Work Programme be updated to reflect the suggestions made by the Committee.

20. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Senior Democratic Services Officer informed the Committee that as requested at the previous meeting an item on homelessness would be presented at the December Committee meeting. In addition permission had been sought and approved by the Chairman to bring forward the Emergency Planning Annual Update to the 18th October 2018 meeting.

RESOLVED that

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the above amendments to the Work Programme be approved.

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

A. Budget Scrutiny Working Group

Councillor J. Wheeler confirmed that the Budget Scrutiny Working Group would be meeting during the following week and she would provide an update at the next Committee meeting.

B. Performance Scrutiny Work Programme

Councillor J. Wheeler explained that the Performance Scrutiny Working Group would be meeting on the 12th July 2018 and she would provide an update at the next Committee meeting.

22. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

a) Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP (GBSLEP) Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Rouse had attended a meeting of the GBSLEP Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This meeting had focussed on the governance and accountability arrangements.

b) West Midlands Combined authority (WMCA) Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Chalk had not yet attended the West Midlands Combined authority (WMCA) Overview and Scrutiny Committee but would be discussing the role with the Senior Democratic Services Officer as well as the Chairman of the WMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee at a later date.

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c) Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)

Councillor Rouse had attended the HOSC that day. There had been consideration of the winter pressures on hospitals and patient flow in and out of hospital. There had been an ambulance divert pilot where by ten patients a day had been diverted to the Alexandra Hospital. The pilot was due to end at the end of July and would be reviewed to determine the approach going forward.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.05 pm

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