

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 7th November, 2019

## MINUTES

### Present:

Councillor Joe Baker (Chair), Councillor Debbie Chance (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Salman Akbar, Michael Chalk, Peter Fleming, Andrew Fry, Nyear Nazir, Yvonne Smith and Jennifer Wheeler

### Also Present:

Councillor David Thain (Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management)  
Reverend Robin Baker (Oasis Christian Centre)  
Mr Jordan Cooke (Your Ideas Youth and Community Project)  
Mr Ray Groves (RYCE)  
Ms Maureen Hayden (What's Your Point)  
Mr Tom Rossiter (Redditch Boxing Academy)  
Ms Liz Williams (Fighting for Survival Group)

### Officers:

Matthew Austin, Lyndsey Berry, Chris Forrester, Sue Hanley, Ostap Paparega, Guy Revans, Judith Willis and Richard Woodward

### Senior Democratic Services Officer:

J Bayley

#### 43. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Joanne Beecham and Mark Shurmer and it was confirmed that Councillors Nyear Nazir and Yvonne Smith were attending as their substitutes respectively.

#### 44. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

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Chair

## 45. MINUTES

### RESOLVED that

**the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2019 be held as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.**

## 46. PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Committee welcomed six public speakers to the meeting, who were invited to speak to the Committee in turn. In some cases a written record of the individual's speech was also provided for Council records. The speeches as delivered during the meeting, which lasted for a maximum of three minutes each and might therefore, not reflect the full length of the points residents had recorded in advance of the meeting, are recreated below.

### a) Mr Ray Groves – RYCE

“It has often been said that the best decisions are made when you have the clearest and best-informed information possible. Unfortunately, tonight you have got the worst. This report is devoid of any suggestion as to the inevitable costs to Redditch Borough Council that will far exceed these so called savings. There are no risk analyses; what happens if the Batchley Support Group closes? What impact will that have on the area? Will the schools provide meals during the summer break or will the Council have to step in and provide staff and facilities or will you let hungry children wander the streets looking for food? Likewise, if the Boxing Academy closes what happens to the individuals who currently use the facilities?”

On the 16<sup>th</sup> October in the houses of Parliament Rachel Maclean said, as reported by Hansard: “I was delighted to see the focus on youth services because as I have said, anti-social behaviour often happens because there is nowhere for young people to go. We need to focus on those services in our local communities so that there is somewhere constructive for people to go. We have some fantastic services in Redditch. We have a wonderful Boxing Academy that takes young people off the streets and teaches them fun, useful and constructive skills. That is a great initiative but we need more like it across town.”

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With over 100 individuals left to wander the streets how many more police will be needed to patrol the area? I could go on and talk about The Space, the shops run by Oasis Church. What happens if these units close? The retail sector is in trouble as has been highlighted by Bon Marche, Maplins and Mothercare; it is very doubtful if they can be let on a strictly commercial basis, meaning even more derelict units will invade our shopping areas.

Why is there nothing in this report about the money that the voluntary groups save the Council? Why isn't the £28k set against this saving? Surely the Council could have looked at the Social Return on Investments – SROI is an internationally accepted way of showing how much worth the voluntary sector provides, that ultimately saves public money.”

b) Ms Liz Williams – Fighting for Survival Group

“For those of you that don't know me I'm Liz Williams, and I am speaking on behalf of the Fighting for Survival Group. Firstly can I just say thank you to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for listening.

We welcome the decision of the Executive Committee to delay consideration of the Concessionary Rents Policy until their meeting in January 2020, the offer made to talk to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) about the affect this will have on the sector and to try and reach a resolution.

However, having read the Public Document Pack from the Executive Committee meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2019 and future papers for the meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2019, we believe that the creation of the report has not followed due process and should be withdrawn completely and be brought forward after the negotiations with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) have been completed and alternative funding methods have been fully examined and implications and costings fully detailed.

Across the documents I have referenced above there appear:

- 1 x Cross Party Working Group
- 1 x detailed budget framework document
- 2 x reviews
- 4 x Advisory Panels

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- 3 x fully costed and 1 partially costed financial implications.
- 6 x fully evidenced legal implications
- 1 x fully detailed service / operational implications
- 5 x sufficient customer / equalities implications
- 1 x full consultation with those affected
- 1 x equality impact assessment, although it is not appended to the report.
- 1 x Action Plan
- 1 x detailed appraisal of costs generated by Council decisions
- 2 x scrutiny groups
- 2 x Task Groups
- 5 x sufficient risk management implications
- 2 x consultants' reports

In the Concessionary Rents report.

And further:

- 1) Ward Councillors were not consulted about this report. Surely something that has the potential to affect so many residents should have been at least talked about with ward Councillors. In particular, focussing on those representing Matchborough, Winyates and Greenlands, where we think six of the nine groups affected are based.
- 2) The Executive Summary contains no reference to why this report was written.
- 3) The recommendations contain no other options to the proposal made.
- 4) There is no financial information about how the shortfall figure was arrived at.
- 5) There is no reference to the Council's strategic purposes when obviously the VCS in Redditch contributes heavily towards the achievement of these.
- 6) There appears to have been no discussion with partner agencies or the Redditch Partnership by Redditch Borough Council, considering this will also impact heavily on them as well.
- 7) There is no detail about how the transitional arrangement in the appendix is arrived at.
- 8) How many properties are actually affected and where are they?
- 9) How many leases have expired? How can expired leases be changed as the occupants of these properties are tenants at will.

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- 10) No letters were ever received advising us that changes to the policy will be made in the near future. This therefore denied the VCS any opportunity to discuss with the Council what this would actually mean?
- 11) An Equalities Impact Assessment has been conducted. Where is it?"

c) Reverend Robin Baker – Acts of Kindness and Oasis Christian Centre

"I am Reverend Robin Baker. I believe that many of you know who I am but for those of you who don't, I set up the charity Acts of Kindness that runs the Redditch Foodbank and I am the Church Minister of Oasis Christian Centre. The church is currently operating two charity shops – one in Winyates that we have had for nearly nine years and one in Woodrow for nearly six years.

I am obviously wanting to talk about the removal of the concessionary rents that affects the three shop units that we use – one for the foodbank and two for our charity shops.

These charity shops are vital to the community. Amongst many benefits for the community, they offer:

- 1) Low-cost retail to people on very low incomes.
- 2) Employment for five people.
- 3) Volunteer opportunities for over 30 people, some of whom have special needs and have not been able to get opportunities elsewhere in Redditch as other support groups have closed down. We also offer many opportunities for work experience students; again some have not been able to get placements elsewhere.
- 4) Meeting places for many people who suffer from social isolation and find it very difficult to engage elsewhere: We have spent years building up their trust and confidence. We offer a lifeline for them. Many of them suffer from mental health issues and have very few other places to go to or feel able to. There are a number of people who have attempted suicide who use our shops. It is impossible to second guess what will happen to them if our shops close, but it will certainly be another major blow for them.
- 5) A core community hub: Many people travel from all over Redditch to benefit from the services provided by the shops.

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- 6) A place free of charge for groups to meet for social interaction. Some examples include PACT and knitting groups.
- 7) Low cost tea, coffee and cakes for those people who cannot afford to go to more expensive cafes and coffee shops.
- 8) Partnership with a number of agencies who often ask us to provide clothes, bedding and kitchen items to people who are being rehoused free of charge.
- 9) Reduction to landfill by recycling clothes and bric-a-brac. This helps save the environment.
- 10) Fully finance other projects: One such example is a weekly feeding programme where up to 50 addicts or lonely people have a warm and friendly place to socialise and eat. For a number of them this is the only hot meal they get a week. We also help fund young people's activities, subsidising activities that would otherwise not be affordable.
- 11) Funding for a youth community worker who has worked with children who struggle with school, and also with mental health issues. Some of the children have attempted suicide. The youth worker has also worked with children who have special needs in schools by running one-to-one sessions on the school premises.

It is important to make you all aware that 100 per cent of all the income generated from these shops comes back into Redditch, for the people of Redditch."

d) Mr Tom Rossiter – Redditch Boxing Academy

"I'm here for Redditch Boxing Academy. I've been a coach for five months and realised how important it is. Over 300 people come a week. We cover areas such as self-defence, raising awareness of how to oppose violence and aggression, and different types of boxing.

I have personally experienced the difference it can make. Last year I was over 18 stone and depressed. I found that the only way to address my mental health issues was to lose weight. I went to the boxing club where I wasn't judged but made to feel better about myself. I lost over 7 stone and my self-esteem improved. A lot of people are in similar situations. If this place closed down who knows where they'd be. It would leave a void that for me was filled by Redditch Boxing Academy.

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Young people, if they're out and about with nothing to do, can get involved in anti-social behaviour and crime. By getting involved with Redditch Boxing Academy it's given me an opportunity to be a youth coach."

e) Ms Maureen Hayden – What's Your Point

"I'm representing the people of Woodrow. We work with people in a high area of deprivation. Their voice often isn't heard. When we have to reorganise we have to think of those in communities with the biggest difficulties. We offer people a first port of call and we save the Council a lot of money.

There's high risk mental health issues and lots of self-harm. Mental health services are very limited. Children are falling through the cracks and families are struggling. We need to be mindful of this."

f) Mr Jordan Cooke – Your Ideas

"I'm a Project Manager for Your Ideas. I have been running the project for 11 years. This will directly impact us at a cost of £14,000 per annum. I'd welcome anyone to see the work we do. I'm keen to showcase our story and to talk through our challenges in the building.

I'm disappointed that we did not find out about the proposals directly from Redditch Borough Council but rather from Liz in a campaign email. We have been commissioned by Redditch Borough Council on a number of occasions to provide youth services in the community. Despite these links there was no communication and we never received the letters.

We support over 300 children per week and provide lots of services. For example we provide youth services supporting young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs) and we work with people on the autistic spectrum. Since the news reached the public domain we have had a number of parents and autistic people with anxiety. Parents are worried about losing one of the few organisations they trust.

We'd like to work with Redditch Borough Council."

## 47. CONCESSIONARY RENTS - DISCUSSION

The Head of Community Services presented a position statement in respect of the Council's Concessionary Rents Policy. Members were advised that the item had been withdrawn from the Executive Committee's agenda for the meeting of the Committee that took place on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2019. Officers were proposing to meet with representatives of the VCS. This meeting had not yet been arranged but would provide an opportunity for discussions to take place. A report in respect of the Council's Concessionary Rents Policy would subsequently be considered at a meeting of the Executive Committee due to take place on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management, Councillor David Thain, who was the Portfolio Holder with lead responsibility for the Concessionary Rents Policy, was also in attendance at the meeting for this item. He confirmed the points raised by Officers and advised all those present that the Executive Committee was listening and would continue to listen to information provided by VCS groups in respect of this matter.

Following the presentation of the position statement for the Council's Concessionary Rents Policy a number of points were discussed by Members:

- The reasons why a report had not been submitted for the consideration of the Committee in respect of this matter. Officers explained, that as discussed at the previous meeting of the Committee, it was not possible to provide a report at this stage as the matter was not due to be considered by the Executive Committee until January 2020.
- The Council's approach to communicating with affected representatives of the VCS prior to the publication of the report that had been withdrawn from the 29<sup>th</sup> October 2019 and the reasons why many VCS organisations had reported that they had not received any correspondence. Officers explained that they had understood that letters had been issued to groups and apologised for any cases where letters had not been received.
- The potential for representatives of VCS groups to raise concerns about any potential changes to the Council's Concessionary Rents Policy by speaking at that meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- The value of compassion in making decisions that would impact on VCS groups and the people they served.

- The people who had spoken at the meeting in respect of the Council's Concessionary Rents Policy. Members thanked those who had spoken at the meeting for doing so.

At the end of the debate about this item Members proposed a recommendation. To ensure that the recommendation was considered at the appropriate time Members agreed that this recommendation should be presented for the consideration of the Executive Committee alongside the Concessionary Rents Policy report in January 2020.

### **RECOMMENDED that**

**the Executive Committee abolish the idea of removing concessionary rent relief for Voluntary and Community Sector groups and instead looks at alternative methods of funding the shortfall in the Council's budget.**

(At the end of this item there was a brief adjournment, which lasted from 7.15 pm to 7.23 pm).

### **48. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY - TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION (COMMUNITY HUB AND RAILWAY QUARTER) - TO FOLLOW**

The Head of the North Worcestershire Economic Development Service presented a report in respect of the regeneration of Redditch town centre. During the presentation of this item the following matters were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- The report captured the outcomes of a master planning exercise and the key points of a business case for a public sector community hub. The reports produced by the consultants Dragongate and BDP had been provided in appendices to the report for Members' consideration.
- BDP had focused on a number of site options that might be appropriate and financially viable.
- The documents provided indicative reviews and high level appraisals in order to enable an understanding of the nature and scale of the opportunities available for the regeneration of the town centre.
- The viability of establishing a community hub as a one-stop-shop had been assessed and there had been three key objectives to this review; to deliver a better, user focused public service, provide business efficiencies and to make better use of public land.

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- The Council had held conversations with a number of partners in the public sector, including the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Worcestershire County Council and representatives of the NHS trust.
- The initial feedback that had been received from partners about the potential to work together to introduce a public sector hub had been very encouraging.
- The government had announced that Redditch would be eligible to bid for up to £25 million in funding from the Towns Fund.
- The prospectus for the Towns Fund had been published after the report before Members. This prospectus clarified that the Council would need to prepare an Investment Plan to access funding from the Towns Fund.
- The Council would undertake consultation with the public, in accordance with the requirements of the Towns Fund, in order to establish what residents felt the funding should be allocated to.

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

- The work that had been undertaken in respect of this matter since the One Public Estate report was considered by Members in March 2018 and the reasons why time was needed to progress with the project. The committee was informed that the process was progressing well and at a speed in line with standard practice.
- The options appraisal that had been undertaken by the consultants and why those particular options had been considered. Officers explained that both officers and the consultants were required to consider all viable options in line with professional standards.
- The State of the Area debates that had been undertaken and whether all wards had been consulted. Officers advised that there had been a two-day event held in May 2019 in the Town Hall, which had been attended by senior Officers and 70 members of the public. Officers had also attended a meeting of the Redditch Community Forum to consult about the plans.
- The extent to which small businesses had been consulted about the proposals for the regeneration of the town centre. Members were advised that further consultation had not yet been undertaken as the plans were only at an indicative stage. When specific proposals were brought forward these would be subject to consultation.

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- The potential for the Council to secure funding from the Towns Fund and the amount of funding that might be available. Officers explained that up to £25 million was available to Redditch and the Council would need to submit an Investment Plan to secure this funding.
- The requirements for applications for funding from the Towns Fund. Members were advised that the guidance for the fund did not stipulate that organisations would have to apply for funding on a competitive bidding basis. There was the potential that this might be a requirement set out in future guidance.
- The additional funding that was available from the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP). Members were informed that the LEP could provide funding from the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) Enabling Fund to support feasibility studies for the next stage of the development. A call for applications was expected to be launched in the following weeks.
- The inclusion of the Smallwood House site in the plans for regenerating the town centre and the potential for social housing to be provided either in that building or immediately behind the property. The Committee was advised that any decisions about social housing would be determined in accordance with the Council's planning policy rules.
- The extent to which partner organisations were likely to join the Council in a public sector community hub. Officers advised that conversations had been held with partner organisations and would continue to take place.
- The potential for the town centre regeneration project to be delivered according to budget. Officers explained that the preliminary work that was being undertaken was designed to enable the Council to manage risks and identify constraints. This would help the Council to more accurately assess likely costs when any work commenced.
- The need for Redditch town centre to be regenerated and the benefits that this might have in respect of the impact on the local economy and the community.
- The initial plans to introduce a covered walkway between the railway station and the Kingfisher Shopping Centre and the reasons why this had not been progressed. The Committee noted that this proposal had not been considered financially viable. Furthermore, by not acting on this idea alternative schemes that encouraged people to both visit the shopping centre and other parts of the town centre could be explored.
- The financial assumptions in the report and the extent to which the changes to interest rates announced by the Public Works

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Loans Board (PWLB) impacted on this. Officers explained that the figures had been reviewed since the Dragongate report was published to ensure that the projections were based on realistic expectations that reflected current market arrangements. Further assessment of the figures would be required over time in response to any later changes.

- The potential for funding to be provided by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to support the project.
- The need for developers to invest in the project as part of the regeneration works.
- The hard work that had already been undertaken by Officers. Members thanked officers for their work.

During consideration of this matter reference was made to the redevelopment of Church Hill district centre some years previously and the outcomes of this project. Concerns were raised that ward Councillors had not been consulted as part of this process and that this would have benefited the redevelopment of the centre. It was therefore proposed that the relevant ward Councillors should be consulted as the redevelopment of the town centre progressed. However, in discussing this proposal Members noted that the regeneration of Redditch town centre would be significant to all Councillors, regardless of the ward that they represented, due to the importance of the town centre to all residents. Members also noted that there was the possibility that all Councillors would be consulted as the plans progressed. At the end of the debate Members agreed that the fourth proposal in the report should be amended to require consultation with all Councillors

## **RECOMMENDED that**

- 1) **the Council note the BDP Town Centre Sites report and endorses the concept of a comprehensive regeneration scheme for the station quarter, Church Road sites, the Library site and the outdoor market site;**
- 2) **the Council agrees the content of the Dragongate Community Hub Business Case and BDP's Redditch Town Centre Development Sites Final Report be used as a basis for submitting a proposal to the Towns Fund; and**

- 3) the Council agrees that the content of the Dragongate Community Hub Business Case and BDP's Redditch Town Centre Development Sites Final Report be used as a basis for submitting a bid to the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) Enabling Fund.
- 4) the findings of the state of the area debate are noted, officers are instructed to produce a future consultation plan related to the town centre regeneration programme and that all Councillors are consulted;
- 5) the content of the Dragongate Community Hub business case (appendix 2) be noted and the Executive Committee endorse the concept of a Community Hub within the Public Sector and Culture quarter;
- 6) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive after consultation with the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships to commission an architect-led professional team to draw up feasible and deliverable design proposals supported by viability appraisals for a Community Hub, to include consideration of partners' requirements; and
- 7) subject to the agreement of recommendation 1 above, authority be delegated to the Chief Executive after consultation with the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships to work with key partners on the wider initiatives.

#### **49. RENT ARREARS - BRIEFING NOTE**

The Head of Community Services presented a briefing note in respect of rent arrears for Council properties. This briefing note had been drafted for Members' consideration following a request for further information on the subject that had been made at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2019.

The Council gathered year-end figures for the consideration of the government. The figures indicated that the Council was in the average quartile compared to other local authorities with their own housing stock in terms of rent arrear levels. The rent collection rate was 99.5 per cent at the Council, which was also in line with the

national average. At the Council the trend was downwards in terms of rent arrears and this was monitored by a measure on the authority's dashboard.

Members noted that in the last 18 months significant progress had been made in reducing the time spent on processing void properties for new tenants which had had a positive impact on income. Officers were anticipating that these faster times for processing void properties would continue as standard practice for the Council.

During consideration of this item reference was made to the fact that tenants were required to pay rent over a 48 week period rather than for the full 52 weeks of the year and the potential to extend the timescales was briefly debated. However, Members were advised that research undertaken by the Council had discovered that the 48 week rent payment period was useful as it provided tenants with an opportunity to catch up with their rent payments.

Reference was also made to the decision that had been taken some years previously to require local authorities to reduce rent for Council tenants by 1 per cent per annum over a four year period. Officers confirmed that 2019/20 was the last year in which this requirement applied and the Council would therefore have the ability to increase rents in future years.

**RESOLVED that**

**the report be noted.**

**50. WASTE SERVICES - PRESENTATION**

The Head of Environmental Services and the Environmental Services Manager delivered a brief presentation in respect of waste management. During the delivery of this presentation the following points were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- The presentation that had been included in the agenda for the meeting had been presented for the consideration of the Leaders and relevant Portfolios Holders for Herefordshire and Worcestershire Councils earlier in the year.
- Historically there had been good partnership working across Herefordshire and Worcestershire in respect of waste management.
- Waste prevention was at the heart of the approach to waste management adopted by the local authorities in both counties.

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- Prevention was the main priority of the Council, followed by reuse. Disposal of waste at landfill was a last resort.
- The amount of waste disposed of per household in Redditch was slightly higher than the national average.
- The level of recycling per household was slightly lower in Redditch than the national average but levels of dry recycling were slightly higher.
- All of the district Councils in Worcestershire had a system of fortnightly waste collections and a chargeable garden waste service as of 2019.
- Kerbside recycling was delivered to Envirosort in Norton, Worcestershire where materials were mechanically sorted. Garden waste was delivered to Pershore in Worcestershire.
- The cost of waste collection services across Herefordshire and Worcestershire each year was £61 million.
- The government was in the process of consulting on a new national waste strategy.
- Earlier in the year the government had consulted on a waste responsibility scheme.
- As part of this process the government was considering requiring all responsible local authorities to collect the same items for recycling so that there would be a consistent approach across the country.
- The government had also consulted on the potential to introduce weekly food waste collections.
- A further consultation had been held in respect of the potential to introduce a plastic tax on packaging and to introduce a requirement for all packaging to be recyclable.
- The Council had responded to the majority of consultation processes, except for that in relation to packaging which was less relevant to the work of the local authority.
- The consultation outcomes had been published.
- In the published results it had been revealed that there was overwhelming support across the country for the introduction of a core collection service as this would help to provide clarity to the public in respect of the materials that should be recycled. This had also featured in the Environment Bill that had been progressing through legislative stages until the general election had been called.
- In total 80 per cent of people had thought that a free garden waste collection service would be helpful but only 20 per cent of Councils had welcomed the idea of a free garden waste collection service. The government had announced that this would be reviewed further.

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- In respect of weekly food collections, 80 per cent of people had supported the idea, as had 68 per cent of Councils, though 46 per cent of local authorities already provided this service. The Councils in Herefordshire and Worcestershire had responded to the consultation by suggesting that it would be better to prevent the food waste. The Environment Bill that had been progressing through parliament prior to the announcement of the general election was going to legislate for a weekly food waste collection service.

Once the presentation had been delivered Members discussed the following matters in detail:

- The Envirosort centre and the potential for Members to visit this facility in order to learn more about the Council's waste management service.
- The possible financial costs to the Council arising from providing a weekly food collection service and how this would be funded. Officers explained that the government had announced that it would cover the net costs of this service but it was uncertain how this would be arranged or how long that funding would be available for in the future. It was anticipated that a weekly food waste collection service in Redditch would cost between £600,000 and £1 million to deliver.
- The levels of reuse in Redditch and how this compared to recycling levels. Members were advised that there were 120 tonnes of waste that was reused each year.
- The history in terms of fortnightly recycling and waste collection services in Redditch.
- The potential for a weekly food waste collection service to encourage waste. The Committee was advised that there were 50,000 tonnes of food waste generated in the area every year.
- The benefits of encouraging residents to reduce the amount of waste generated by each household and the value of taking preventative action. Officers explained that the Council contributed to events arranged by Worcestershire County Council where residents were encouraged to reduce waste. There was also a website that was promoted by the Council entitled "Lets Weigh Less".
- The extent to which food waste collection services had been successfully trialled by other councils. Members were advised that Wychavon District Council had had a food waste collection service some years ago but there had been low take up and this had ceased to be provided.

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At the end of the debate the Committee

**RESOLVED that**

**the report be noted.**

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

The Committee discussed the content of the latest edition of the Executive Committee's Work Programme and identified the following items for pre-decision scrutiny:

- Fees and Charges 2020/21
- Housing / Housing Revenue Account Strategic Improvement Plan Progress Report
- Concessionary Rents Policy
- Members' ICT Policy. The Committee noted that this item was also due to be considered by the Member Support Steering Group and outlined requirements in respect of elected Councillors' ICT provision.

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2019 be noted; and**
- 2) the items identified from the Executive Committee's Work Programme, as detailed in the preamble above, be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme.**

**52. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

Officers advised that the items that had been identified for pre-scrutiny earlier in the meeting would be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme.

It was confirmed that an extra meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been booked to take place on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2019. This would provide Members with an opportunity to pre-scrutinise reports that were due to be considered by the Executive Committee on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2019. There was also a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee due to take place on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2019. As there were a number of items

scheduled for consideration on this date Members agreed that this meeting should take place.

**RESOLVED that**

**the report be noted.**

**53. TASK GROUP REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS**

Officers confirmed that there were no draft scoping documents for consideration on this occasion.

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

The following updates were provided in respect of the work of scrutiny Task Groups and Working Groups:

- a) Budget Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Jenny Wheeler

Councillor Wheeler explained that the group had held a number of meetings since the last meeting of the Committee. During these meetings the group had considered information about the Section 24 Notice. Members had concluded that at a challenging time financially for the Council the Budget Scrutiny Working Group had an important role to play in terms of providing assurance to the Executive Committee and scrutinising any plans that might have significant financial implications for the Council.

Redditch Borough Council had an Investment and Acquisition Strategy. Under the terms of this strategy it had been agreed that the Executive Committee should have delegated powers to approve any proposed investments and acquisitions, to ensure that decisions could be taken swiftly in a competitive commercial environment. So far two investments had been approved by the Executive Committee but neither of these had been subject to budget scrutiny. The PWLB had increased borrowing costs and the Council was in a challenging financial position. Councillor Wheeler suggested that in this context the Budget Scrutiny Working Group could add value by scrutinising proposed investments to ensure that the financial projections for each option were sound.

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The group had also noted that, following the publication of the Section 24 Notice, difficult decisions would need to be made in order to balance the Council's budget. To enable Members to make financially viable decisions the group was proposing that additional information needed to be provided in the financial implications of reports to Committee. Officers noted that it would be helpful for this additional information to be required where appropriate and this suggestion was endorsed.

b) Parking Enforcement Task Group – Chair, Councillor Mark Shurmer

Officers explained that it was unlikely that any further meetings of the group would take place until after the general election had occurred on 12th December 2019. The Chair had therefore requested that the deadline for completion of the review be moved back to 2020.

c) Performance Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Andrew Fry

Councillor Fry advised that there had been no meeting of the group since the previous meeting of the Committee.

d) Suicide Prevention Task Group – Chair, Councillor Debbie Chance

Councillor Chance explained that there were two meetings of the group due to take place in November. It was unlikely that the group would hold any meetings in December. Therefore, the review was likely to be completed in early 2020.

## **RECOMMENDED that**

- 1) **business cases for new investment and acquisition opportunities for the Council should all be considered by the Budget Scrutiny Working Group before a decision is taken by the Executive Committee;**
- 2) **the financial implications detailed in reports to the Executive Committee should address the following points as a minimum where appropriate:**
  - a) **the financial costs of the proposed action;**
  - b) **the source of funding for the proposed action;**

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- c) potential alternative options and the financial costs of each alternative option; and
- d) the financial costs to the Council where the proposed action deviates from previous Council policy; and

**RESOLVED that**

- 3) the deadline for completion of the Parking Enforcement Task Group be postponed to early 2020.

## **55. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS**

Members noted that Councillor Chalk had provided a written update in respect of the latest meeting of the WMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

There had been no meetings of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) since the previous meeting.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm  
and closed at 8.19 pm