



# Executive Committee

Tue 8 Sep  
2020  
6.30 pm

Skype

**REDDITCH** BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

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

## **GUIDANCE ON VIRTUAL MEETINGS**

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Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic Redditch Borough Council will be holding this meeting in accordance with the relevant legislative arrangements for remote meetings of a local authority. For more information please refer to the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police Crime Panels meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

Please note that this is a public meeting conducted remotely by Skype conferencing between invited participants and live streamed for general access via the link to the Council's YouTube channel.

<https://youtu.be/GD5zrKdFg6k>

You are able to access the livestream of the meeting from the Committee Pages of the website, alongside the agenda for the meeting.

If you have any questions regarding the agenda or attached papers please do not hesitate to contact the officer named above.

### **Notes:**

As referred to above, the virtual Skype meeting will be streamed live and accessible to view. Although this is a public meeting, there are circumstances when the committee might have to move into closed session to consider exempt or confidential information. For agenda items that are exempt, the public are excluded and for any such items the live stream will be suspended and that part of the meeting will not be recorded.



# Executive

Committee

Tuesday, 8th September, 2020

6.30 pm

Committee Room 2 Town Hall

## Agenda

### Membership:

Cllrs:	Matthew Dormer (Chair)	Anthony Lovell Nyear Nazir
	Mike Rouse (Vice- Chair)	David Thain Craig Warhurst
	Greg Chance	
	Brandon Clayton	
	Bill Hartnett	

### 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 - 20)

### 5. Draft Council Tax Support Scheme (Pages 21 - 60)

### 6. Recovery and Restoration Plan (Pages 61 - 98)

This report is due to be pre-scrutinised at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that is scheduled to take place on Thursday, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020. Any recommendations arising from this meeting will be reported to Members in a supplementary pack for the Executive Committee meeting.

### 7. Budget Framework Presentation

### 8. Finance Monitoring Quarter 1 2020/21 (Pages 99 - 114)

### 9. Housing / Housing Revenue Account Strategic Improvement Plan Progress Report (Pages 115 - 164)

This report will be pre-scrutinised at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that is scheduled to take place on Thursday, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020. Any recommendations on this subject arising from that meeting will be reported to the Executive Committee in a supplementary pack for this meeting.

## **10. Overview and Scrutiny Committee** (Pages 165 - 176)

Two sets of minutes from meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> July and Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> July 2020 have been attached for Members' consideration. However, there are no outstanding recommendations requiring a decision.

## **11. 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.

## **12. Advisory Panels - update report**

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

- a) Climate Change Cross-Party Working Group – Chair, Councillor Anthony Lovell;
- b) Constitutional Review Working Panel – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer;
- c) Corporate Parenting Steering Group – Council Representative, Councillor Nyear Nazir;
- d) Member Support Steering Group – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer; and
- e) Planning Advisory Panel – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer.

## **13. To consider any urgent business, details of which have been notified to the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services prior to the commencement of the meeting and which the Chair, by reason of special circumstances, considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting**



## Executive Committee

Tuesday, 4 August 2020

### MINUTES

#### Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), Councillor Mike Rouse (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Greg Chance, Brandon Clayton, Bill Hartnett, Anthony Lovell, Nyear Nazir, David Thain and Craig Warhurst

#### Also Present:

Councillor Debbie Chance, Chair of the Suicide Prevention Task Group

#### Officers:

Derek Allen, Kevin Dicks, Mike Dunphy, Claire Felton, Sue Hanley, Jayne Pickering, Guy Revans and Sarah Sellers

#### Senior Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

#### 1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

#### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mike Rouse declared a pecuniary interest in Minute Item No. 9 – Overview and Scrutiny Committee Minutes – due to his role as a trustee of the Support Redditch Emergency Network, a group that was eligible to receive funding from the Council's community lottery. Councillor Craig Warhurst also declared a pecuniary interest as a Committee member for the Astwood Bank Carnival, which similarly eligible to receive funding from the community lottery. Consequently, they both left the meeting during consideration of Item 9, which detailed a recommendation in respect of the community lottery and they did not take part in the debate or the vote thereon.

#### 3. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised that the Additional Papers 1 pack for the meeting contained an extract from the minutes of the meeting of the

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Chair

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2020 when Members had considered the Suicide Prevention Task Group's final report. It had not been possible to include this minute extract in the main agenda as the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting had taken place after publication of the agenda for the Executive Committee meeting.

Members were advised that an extra item, at Minute Item No. 12 – Urgent Business – Possible E-scooter Trial in Redditch - had been published in an Additional Papers 2 pack. The Chair had agreed that this urgent business should be included on the agenda, following consultation with the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as in order to participate in a national bid process for E-scooters, the Council would need to submit an entry by 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020 and there were no further meetings of the Executive Committee scheduled to take place before that date.

#### 4. MINUTES

**RESOLVED that**

**the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.**

#### 5. SUICIDE PREVENTION TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT

The Chair of the Suicide Prevention Task Group, Councillor Debbie Chance, presented the group's final report. Members were advised that this had been a sensitive and complex issue to review and Councillor Chance thanked the other five members of the group for their assistance with the investigation.

There had been a slight delay in terms of the presentation of the group's findings to the Overview and Scrutiny and Executive Committees due to the Covid-19 pandemic. During the review the group had held 11 meetings and spoken to eight witnesses, both Council Officers and external partners, between June 2019 and June 2020.

The group had learned a lot about the impact that deaths by suicide could have on people's friends and families. Members had discovered that bereaved relatives who had lost a loved one to suicide were at higher risk of death by suicide. A concerning finding had been that many of the deaths were amongst persons not previously known to mental health services, or who had not confided in anyone that they were struggling.

Members had been advised that on average one person died each week as a result of suicide in Worcestershire. In Redditch, for the three-year period from 2015 to 2017, there were 26 deaths by suicide of which 84% were among men.

The investigation had primarily focused on services that were not provided by Redditch Borough Council. Members had reviewed the content of the Worcestershire Suicide Prevention Plan and had been greatly assisted by the county's Public Health team.

The group's recommendations focused mainly on the Council's influencing role. Key objectives of the review had been to review suicide in general and the mental health services available to Redditch residents. This had taken into account services provided by both public sector organisations and the valuable contribution of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations.

The witnesses interviewed by the group had highlighted the need for awareness raising and training and this was reflected in the recommendations. The group were also guided by the Equalities Team to look at how the Council's Equalities Strategy could be updated to include actions that supported suicide prevention. The other recommendations covered the assistance that could be provided to VCS groups to enable those bodies to better publicise their services and generally promoting awareness around suicide prevention.

Following the presentation of the report Members discussed the group's findings and recommendations. Members noted that the report had been dedicated to Mr Mike Lewington, who had been interviewed during the review and had sadly passed away since then. Members also noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had endorsed the group's recommendations unanimously.

Reference was made to the suicides that had occurred in Redditch in recent years, particularly at Musketts Bridge and Members noted that messages of hope that had been secured to the bridge had subsequently been removed. Borough and County Councillors had been working hard in recent years to support people experiencing mental health difficulties and the group's findings would help to inform elected Members about action that could be taken to prevent suicide moving forward.

During consideration of this item Councillor Mike Rouse proposed an additional recommendation. This additional recommendation was seconded by Councillor Matthew Dormer. The additional recommendation proposed the following:

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“Officers be tasked with sending a copy of the Suicide Prevention Task Group’s final report to Worcestershire County Council and the Member of Parliament for Redditch.”

In proposing this recommendation Councillor Rouse commented that it was important for the Worcestershire Suicide Prevention Plan Group and the Worcestershire Health and Wellbeing Board to learn about the group’s findings. This could be achieved by sending a copy of the report to relevant Members and Officers at Worcestershire County Council. In addition, the local Member of Parliament would find the information useful.

There was general consensus amongst Members that this additional recommendation would be helpful.

## **RESOLVED that**

- 1) **that the Redditch Borough Council Equalities Strategy should reflect the Council’s commitment to suicide prevention and supporting good mental health, and that in producing the updated version of the Equalities Strategy for 2020 to 2024 objectives and actions should be included to cover the following:**
  - a) **that officers continue to publicise messages around positive mental health to staff and promote opportunities to participate in training and events;**
  - b) **that officers develop the signposting information available on the intranet to support staff in being able to signpost either service users or colleagues to the relevant support services;**
  - c) **that officers mark suicide prevention awareness day in September 2020 including using this as an opportunity to promote the work of local groups that support suicide prevention;**
  - d) **recognising that not all staff may undertake the Mental Health First Aid training, that officers arrange for some alternative web based training resources to be provided for staff, to be aimed at those working in front line posts;**
- 2) **that officers from the Communications Team work with the Partnership Manager to identify local voluntary sector organisation which offer support around mental health and wellbeing and/ or promote suicide prevention;**



- 3) that the organisations identified be invited to participate in workshop training sessions to be provided by the Communications Team to help them to better publicise the support and services their organisations provide through use of social media and other publicity;
  - 4) that officers be tasked with publicising the outcome of the Task Group in the Wellbeing in Partnership Newsletter and by giving details of the findings to the Worcestershire Suicide Prevention Plan Partnership Group (sub-group of the Health and Well-being Board); and
  - 5) Officers be tasked with sending a copy of the Suicide Prevention Task Group's final report to Worcestershire County Council and the Member of Parliament for Redditch.
6. **AMENITY STANDARDS DOCUMENT FOR PRIVATELY RENTED PROPERTIES IN REDDITCH**

The Housing Strategy Manager presented a report in respect of the Council's proposed amenity standards for private sector housing in Redditch. Members were advised that there were over 4,000 rented properties in the private sector in Redditch, which included Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs). The amenity standards policy would help local landlords and tenants to understand the minimum standards expected for local properties in the private rented sector.

The Council had based the content of the amenity standards document on key guidelines in legislation in respect of expected standards for the private rented sector. Members were asked to note that the majority of local landlords provided good quality private sector housing to tenants. However, there were some landlords who did not comply with expected standards and there might be times when the Council would need to take action against these landlords.

Members subsequently discussed the report and in doing so commented on the importance of deterring homelessness and ensuring that people were housed in good quality properties. There was a particular risk that the standards might not be met for HMOs and the document set out expectations for these properties as well as a definition of what constituted an HMO. Officers advised that the updates to the document since 2015 included reference to more recent legislative requirements, including in respect of fire safety and minimum bedroom sizes.

Reference was made to the need for enforcement action to be taken against landlords who did not comply with the minimum standards. Members also commented that it was important to ensure that tenants were informed about their rights and the minimum standards that they could expect from a property in the private rented sector.

During consideration of this item the following matters were queried:

- The fact that this was a joint amenity standards document for Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District Council and the stage in the process that had been reached in the district. Officers explained that the Bromsgrove Cabinet would consider the report at a meeting on Thursday, 6<sup>th</sup> August 2020.
- The reason why the Council had a joint Amenity Standards document with Bromsgrove District Council. The Committee was informed that due to the geographical location of Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District close to one another there were landlords who owned properties in both areas and it was therefore useful to have a joint policy to ensure a consistent approach.
- The action that could be taken by the Council if a landlord breached the minimum standards required.
- The extent to which consultation had been undertaken in respect of the proposed changes. Officers confirmed that consultation had not taken place.
- The arrangements for inspections and whether the Council had a schedule of inspection. Officers confirmed that there was a schedule and agreed to provide this information to Members outside the meeting.
- The process that would be in place to enable residents to raise breaches of the minimum standards with the Council.
- The action that would be taken by Officers if the minimum standards for properties in the private rented sector were breached by a landlord.
- The extent to which some landlords might be difficult to contact. Officers confirmed that this could sometimes be problematic, though the Council had access to a database of all HMO landlords.
- The potential for the database for HMO landlords to be shared with the Council's out of hours teams for use in the event of an emergency. Members were advised that this would be investigated further, following consultation with the Council's Information Management Team regarding the potential data protection implications.

**RECOMMENDED that**

- 1) **the Amenity Standards Policy be adopted; and**
- 2) **the Head of Community and Housing Services be delegated authority to update and amend the Amenity Standards Policy, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Procurement.**

**7. CREATION OF JOINT WORCESTERSHIRE AND  
HEREFORDSHIRE WASTE PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY  
OFFICER**

The Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services presented a report in respect of the proposed creation of a Joint Herefordshire and Worcestershire Waste Partnership Strategy Officer.

During the presentation of the report the following matters were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- The Government had been reviewing national waste collection and disposal services and was proposing a number of changes. The final details remained to be confirmed as the legislation had not yet been agreed and would be subject to further consultation.
- At present each local authority had a significant amount of flexibility to determine local service delivery arrangements and there were a number of differences between local authority areas in respect of arrangement for waste collection and delivery.
- The Government had been consulting on a range of options that would result in greater consistency across the country in terms of waste services.
- As part of this process the Government was considering requiring Councils to provide garden waste services to residents for free and the potential requirement for all Councils to introduce a food waste collection service.
- Initial proposals to require Councils to have weekly waste collection services, rather than the fortnightly waste collection service that was in place in Redditch, were not being pursued further by the Government.
- However, should the changes suggested by the Government come into effect this would result in a loss of income of approximately £40,000 from the garden waste collection service and a potential increase in costs of waste collection services by approximately £580,000.
- Redditch Borough Council had worked with other Councils in Herefordshire and Worcestershire for a number of years on a

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Joint Municipal Waste Strategy and Waste Partnership. This helped to ensure consistency in local service delivery.

- The Councils in Herefordshire and Worcestershire were aiming to work together to respond to the Government consultation process and to ensure consistency in the delivery of any future additional services required, such as the food waste collection service.
- The proposed postholder would co-ordinate this work on behalf of the local authorities in Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

After the report had been presented the following issues were discussed in more detail:

- The Government review of waste delivery services and the fact that any changes would represent the most significant alteration to the delivery of waste services since 2007.
- The need for the Councils in Herefordshire and Worcestershire to work together to ensure consistency in service delivery locally.
- The requirement for Councils to introduce a food waste collection service by 2023, under the Government's proposals, and the resource implications of this requirement for the Council.
- The risk that a food waste collection service would encourage an increase in the amount of waste that each household disposed of during a month.
- The need for residents to be educated about waste collection services, particularly any new services that the Council might be required to introduce in the future.
- The potential challenge for Councils locally in respect of storage for food waste.
- The food that would need to be collected in a potential food waste collection service. The Committee was informed that this would need to include cooked food, meat and foodstuffs that could have been composted.
- The size of the bin that would be used for a food waste collection service. Members were advised that these would be relatively small 25 litre bins.
- The amount of food waste that tended to be collected nationally. The Committee was informed that the average weight of the food waste collected per household was 2.5 to 4.5 kilos per week.
- The penalties that could be issued to residents who did not dispose of food waste correctly. Members were advised that information had not yet been provided about whether Councils could issue penalties or the nature of those penalties.

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- The challenge that some residents would encounter when trying to accommodate an extra bin for the disposal of food waste.
- The joint communications plan that had been proposed for Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Officers confirmed that Redditch Borough Council would be joining other local Councils in support of this plan.

## **RECOMMENDED that**

- 1) Redditch Borough Council agree to the establishment of a Joint Waste Strategy Officer to work on behalf of the partnership of all 8 Local Authorities in Herefordshire and Worcestershire;**
- 2) Redditch Borough Council allocates £8,000 per annum for a fixed term of three years; and**
- 3) Redditch Borough Council will consider requests for additional funding to support further work which may be identified and proposed via the partnership Senior Waste Officer Group.**

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19**

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented a report in respect of the financial implications of the Covid-19 pandemic for the Council.

Members were advised that Covid-19 had had a particular impact on income to the Council from services. There had been more limited cost implications for the Council, though there had had to be investment in Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and new IT equipment for staff.

The Council was required to provide an update to the Government every month in respect of the financial position of the authority. This had started in April 2020 and data had continued to be collected throughout the lockdown. The loss of income over time had been taken into account, though circumstances kept changing which meant that it was difficult to provide accurate forecasts about future positions based on this data. The economy nationally had not responded as anticipated since elements of the lockdown had been lifted and this had contributed to further uncertainty. Locally, this, combined with the lockdown, had resulted in a reduction in income from business rates.

Officers were anticipating that the Council would not receive the level of income that had been expected from Rubicon Leisure Ltd

when the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) had been set for the 2020/21 financial year. The Council was anticipating a potential loss of £850,000 income from the company, though the position might change within the next few months. The Council owned the company, so the authority had responsibility for any of the organisation's liabilities. The financial costs of delivering Leisure Services was proving problematic for many district Councils, including those authorities which had outsourced services to private sector organisations.

The Shareholders Committee had met on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2020 to discuss the financial position of Rubicon Leisure Ltd. There had been some good news, including that 84 per cent of the membership of the Abbey Stadium had been retained during the lockdown, income from golf services had tripled during the period and there had been an increase in income from the stadium. Social distancing measures had been put in place at all of the leisure facilities managed by the company.

There had been a decrease in the amount of Council Tax that had been paid during the lockdown. Some residents had deferred payments until later in the year so the real impact in lost income from Council Tax would not become apparent until later in the financial year. The Council only received approximately 12 per cent of the Council Tax funds; the fall in revenue from Council Tax would have a greater impact on Worcestershire County Council's financial position as that authority was the main recipient of Council Tax.

At the start of the lockdown there had been concerns about the position of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). However, a dedicated team had been working in respect of rent arrears and the position of the budget was improving.

To date the Council had received just over £1 million from the Government in response to the financial impact of Covid-19. Further funding was being made available nationally by the government for the arts. Unfortunately, Forge Mill Needle Museum would not be eligible to apply for funding, though the Palace Theatre would be eligible. Additional funding for Leisure and Cultural Services was expected from the Government moving forward.

The external auditors had been kept informed about the financial impact of Covid-19 on the Council. Officers had clearly communicated the Council's expectation that the impact of Covid-19 would not be taken into account by the auditors when assessing whether the Section 24 Notice should remain in place for the authority.

Following the presentation of the report Members discussed the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's finances. Reference was made to the different figures that had been included in the report in respect of planning and Officers noted that the Council would not necessarily lose all of the income quoted as being at risk for this department. Members also questioned the basis for the figures that had been quoted in respect of potential financial losses for taxi licensing and Lifeline services and Officers explained that these were based on estimates.

During consideration of this matter Members paid tribute to the hard work of the Financial Services team, particularly the Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources and the Head of Financial and Customer Services. Members noted that the team's response to the Covid-19 pandemic had occurred at a time when officers were already working hard to address the issues that had been raised by the external auditors in the Section 24 Notice. Members also praised all staff for their hard work during the lockdown and for ensuring that frontline services had continued to be delivered. The hard work of staff employed by Rubicon Leisure Ltd was also praised and Members noted that the company had encountered unprecedented circumstances in the first 18 months of operation.

Reference was made to the financial challenges facing the Council, in respect of the Section 24 Notice as well as the impact of Covid-19. As a consequence, it was noted that Members would need to review the Council Plan and it was possible that difficult decisions would need to be taken in order to ensure that the Council had a balanced budget moving forward.

**RESOLVED that**

**the projected budgetary impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic outlined in this report and related actions, both taken so far and planned for the future, be noted.**

**9. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Senior Democratic Services Officer (Redditch) explained that at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020 Members had considered a report in respect of the Council lottery. This report had been designed to focus on the impact of the Council lottery in the first six months since it had been launched. Based on the information provided in the report and subsequent debate the Committee had proposed a recommendation on the subject of the Council lottery for the Executive Committee's consideration.

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Members discussed an extract from the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020 which detailed the debate in respect of the Council lottery. Reference was made to the additional information that had been requested by the Committee and Officers explained that further information would be provided to the Committee at a later date as a further update report had been requested.

During consideration of this item Councillor Bill Hartnett proposed the recommendation that had been submitted by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This was seconded by Councillor Greg Chance.

The recommendation proposed the following:

“the Executive Committee review the financial implications to the Council in terms of costs and viability of continuing with the Redditch Community Lottery.”

The proposal was subsequently discussed and the following points were noted during the debate:

- The timing of the recommendation and the extent to which it was fair to request an assessment of the financial implications of the lottery when the service had been in operation for less than a year.
- The fact that the first six months of the lottery had coincide with the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact that this might have had on residents' capacity to participate in the lottery.
- The value of being open and transparent in respect of all Council services and the potential for a review of the Council lottery to help the authority to achieve this.
- The potential for the effectiveness of the lottery to be reviewed at a later date once the service had been in place for some time.

On being put to the vote the proposal was lost.

(During consideration of this item Councillor Mike Rouse declared a pecuniary interest due to his role as a trustee of the Support Redditch Emergency Network, a group that was eligible to receive funding from the Council lottery. Councillor Craig Warhurst also declared a pecuniary interest as a Committee member for the Astwood Bank Carnival, which was similarly eligible to receive funding from the Council lottery. Consequently, they both left the meeting during consideration of this item and they did not take part in the debate or vote thereon).



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

The Chair confirmed that there were no further recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or any other Committee for consideration on this occasion.

**11. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT**

The following updates were provided on the work of Executive Advisory Panels and other related groups.

a) Climate Change Cross Party Working Group – Chair, Councillor Anthony Lovell

Councillor Lovell explained that there had been no meetings of the Climate Change Cross Party Working Group since the previous meeting of the Executive Committee, though he anticipated that a meeting would take place shortly. Officers were in the process of circulating questionnaires amongst members of the public. Councillor Lovell thanked Councillor Andrew Fry, as the Shadow Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, for his support.

During consideration of this update a question was raised about the achievements of the group in its first year of operation and whether an annual report would be prepared for the 2019/20 municipal year. In responding, Councillor Brandon Clayton, Chair of the group in the 2019/20 municipal year, noted that it was not standard practice to provide annual reports for any of the Executive Advisory Panels but a summary of the group's work would be requested from officers.

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

Councillor Dormer advised that a meeting of the Constitutional Review Working Party (CRWP) was scheduled to take place on 3rd November 2020.

c) Corporate Parenting Board – Council Representative, Councillor Nyear Nazir

Councillor Nazir explained that she had attended the latest meeting of the Board. During the meeting Members had discussed an independent review of contact with young people during the pandemic. Risks were being reviewed and a

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Return to School Plan assessed. The position of children and young people in care had also been discussed.

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

Councillor Dormer commented that a meeting of the Member Support Steering Group was scheduled to take place on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

e) Planning Advisory Panel – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

Members were advised that no meetings of the Planning Advisory Panel were scheduled to take place.

**12. URGENT BUSINESS - POSSIBLE E-SCOOTER TRIAL IN REDDITCH**

The Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager presented a report in respect of the potential for Redditch to take part in a national E-scooter trial. The subject of e-scooters was being investigated by the Government as part of a focus on sustainable transport.

Worcestershire County Council would provide some assistance to Redditch Borough Council in respect of the bid for Redditch but were not taking a lead on the project. Consequently, external advice had been sought by Officers. At this initial stage of the project the Council needed to determine how the trial could operate in Redditch in general terms. At a later stage, subject to the authority's submission being successful, the Council would need to procure an external provider to deliver the trial in Redditch over a 12-month period. Redditch Borough Council would need to submit the bid to the Department for Transport (DfT) for approval and the department would determine whether Redditch would participate in the trial.

Officers were proposing that the e-scooter trial should take place in parts of Redditch town centre. Should the Council's bid be successful there would be approximately 100 e-scooters during the trial. The Council would need to address certain requirements in respect of traffic regulations prior to the launch of a trial. The external provider of the service would be responsible for maintaining the e-scooters and would need to obtain a license to operate. Should the trial be launched and be successful, the Council could consider extending the service to other parts of the Borough.

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) would also be submitting a bid to participate in the trial. There was the possibility that, if Redditch Borough Council's bid was unsuccessful, Redditch might be selected by the WMCA if the combined authority was successful, as a location for the trial.

After the presentation of the report Members discussed the following points in detail:

- The benefits of encouraging residents to use sustainable methods of transport, both in terms of the climate change implications and for people's physical health.
- The potential implications of an e-scooter trial for people with physical disabilities, particularly residents who were blind or partially sighted. The Committee was informed that the e-scooters emitted a noise and were not permitted to travel on footpaths, which would help to ensure the safety of pedestrians.
- The recent press coverage in respect of e-scooters and sustainable transport in Redditch.
- The amount of revenue that the Council could expect to generate from the service. Officers explained that it would be difficult to predict potential revenue prior to the trial taking place. There had only been one e-scooter trial to date in north England so there was not sufficient data available nationally to enable an estimate to be provided at this stage. Data would only begin to emerge once a trial had been launched.
- The role of Worcestershire County Council in respect of the transport infrastructure in the county and the need for partnership working in respect of the Active Travel agenda for Worcestershire.
- The highways infrastructure in Redditch and the benefits of a new town layout for sustainable transport trials.
- The speed limit for e-scooters, at 15.5 miles per hour. Officers confirmed that e-scooters would only be permitted to travel on roads where there was a 30 miles per hour speed limit.

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) **Officers be authorised to submit a bid for an e-scooter trial to the Department for Transport on or around the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020; and**
- 2) **subject to the Council's bid to take part in the e-scooter trial being successful, authority be delegated to the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services and the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services to complete all related legal and administrative documentation.**

(This report had been accepted as a matter of Urgent Business – not on the Executive Committee Work Programme and not having met the publication deadline – and was considered at the meeting as such, with the approval of the Chair and the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in accordance with the Council's constitutional rules and the powers vested in the Chair by virtue of Section 100 (B) (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972 to agree to matters of urgency being discussed by reason of special circumstances.

In this case the special circumstances were that the Council needed to submit a bid to the Government for consideration as a location for an e-scooter trial by 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020. As there were no further meetings of the Executive Committee scheduled to take place prior to that date the Chair had agreed that the item could be discussed by the Committee as a matter of urgency.)

### **13. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED that**

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

**Financial Outturn Report 2019/20 and Reserves (Minute Item No. 14)**

### **14. FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2019/20 AND RESERVES**

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented the Council's Financial Outturn Report 2019/20 and Reserves and in so doing highlighted the following information for Members' consideration:

- The report had been presented to the Executive Committee slightly later in the calendar year than usual due to delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The majority of services were underspent when compared to the budget that had been set in the MTFP for the financial year.
- In part, these savings could be explained because the MTFP had been agreed before the Section 24 Notice had been issued to the Council and therefore significant changes had been made since the budget was set, resulting in the financial savings.

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- The savings that had been secured would be returned to balances, which would help the Council to address one of the concerns that had been raised by the external auditors in the Section 24 Notice.
- The one exception to this was expenditure in respect of the strategic purpose 'help me run a successful business', where there had been an overspend of £486,000. This was largely due to a significant loss of income for Rubicon Leisure Ltd from January 2020 onwards, due primarily to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The Council had budgeted to spend £9.8 million in the capital budget but there had been an underspend of £6.9 million during the year. The Corporate Management Team (CMT) had been concerned that this was not acceptable and therefore Officers were working to ensure that this did not occur again in future.
- Savings had been achieved in relation to the HRA so only £26,000 had been required from balances to balance the budget for the year, meaning that the Council retained more than the minimum level of balances.
- However, there remained concerns about levels of expenditure for the HRA and this would need to continue to be carefully managed moving forward.
- The Council would be putting up to £1.3 million into reserves which would help to ensure the sustainability of services moving forward.
- The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources would be requesting an additional meeting of the CRWP in due course to discuss further delegations to the Section 151 Officer in respect of grants provided to the Council.
- A new fee was proposed for customers undertaking journeys on a Dial a Ride vehicle for medical appointments. This fee had been proposed because the journeys tended to involve delivering and collecting a single customer and therefore were more expensive for the Council.

Members subsequently discussed the report and commented on a number of points in detail:

- The budget that had previously been agreed for the new IT system for Environmental Services and the reasons why additional funding was now required. Officers explained that previously a request had been made for a certain amount of capital funding, based on external advice, but it had since become clear, based on market testing, that additional funding would be required.
- The timeframes for the introduction of a new Environmental Services IT system. Officers explained that it would take at

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least 12 months, after the procurement of a system, to obtain some functionality.

- The length of time that the Council might use the IT system for and the need for the Council to have access to IT systems that would enable the authority to operate as a modern business.
- The potential for this system to be integrated with other Council IT systems and the need to have access to the right type of Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) to achieve this.
- The potential for a section on IT integration to be a mandatory part of Committee reports when Members were discussing documentation relating to IT programmes. Officers explained that the Council's report template was in the process of being reviewed and that this suggestion could be taken into account as part of that process.
- The value of jointly procuring a new IT system for Environmental Services with Bromsgrove District Council, as a consequence of the authorities' shared services arrangements.
- The procurement process for obtaining a new IT system for Environmental Services.
- The need for the new IT system for Environmental Services to enable staff to undertake mobile working.
- The level of overspend on the strategic purpose 'help me run a successful business'. Members noted that there was a typographical error in the report and the actual figure was £486,000.

At the end of the debate Members noted that this would be the last meeting of the Executive Committee that the Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources would attend before leaving the organisation. Members thanked the Executive Director for all her hard work over the previous years, particularly in respect of responding to the Section 24 Notice and Members passed on their best wishes for the future.

## **RESOLVED that**

- 1) **the current financial position in relation to revenue and capital budgets for the year April 2019 – March 2020 as detailed in the report be noted.**

## **RECOMMENDED to Council**

- 2) **approval of the movement of £1,105k in existing reserves;**
- 3) **the addition of new reserves of £1,380k;**

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- 4) the carry forward to the 2020/21 capital programme of £6,749k;
- 5) approval of the inclusion of the Town Deals fund revenue grant of £173k in 2019/20 together with all associated costs;
- 6) an increase to the revenue budget for 2020/21 due to receiving £40k SEP Grant (Strategic Economic Plan);
- 7) a capital grant to Worcestershire County Council for improvement works at Holly Trees Children's Centre leased by Redditch Borough Council (Parenting Support) of £15k in 2019/20;
- 8) an increase in the 2020/21 Capital Programme of £839k for Disabled Facilities Grants. This is due to the budget allocations having now been announced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG);
- 9) the following additional new fees for Dial A Ride be introduced for 2020/21:
  - a) Dial A Ride Medical journey £4 with concessionary bus pass
  - b) Dial A Ride Medical journey £5 without concessionary bus pass
- 10) to increase the management fee to Rubicon Leisure by £413k from other service savings in 2019/20. This is to offset the shortfalls in income that the company has faced in 2019/20;
- 11) an increase in the 2020/21 Capital Programme of £12k for the HMO (House in Multiple Occupation) Lifetime Loans Budget. This is due to the growing need for HMO type accommodation across the Borough to meet the need of single persons and those on low incomes; an
- 12) an increase in the 2020/21 Capital Programme of £119k for additional funds towards the already approved capital project for Environmental services new IT system.

(During the consideration of this item, Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to move to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person

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(including the authority holding that information). There is nothing exempt, however, in this record of proceedings.)

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm  
and closed at 8.51 pm



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**DRAFT COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr David Thain
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Christopher Forrester
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	No
Key Decision / Non-Key Decision	Yes

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to request permission to undertake a consultation with both the public and the Major Precepting Authorities in respect of proposed changes to the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021.
- 1.2 Each year the Council is required to review its Council Tax Reduction Scheme in accordance with the requirements of schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and to either maintain the scheme or replace it.
- 1.3 Council Tax Reduction (CTR) was introduced from 1 April 2013 when it replaced the Central Government funded Council Tax Benefit regime. From its inception, the funding available to the council from government has reduced year on year.
- 1.4 As with the majority of authorities within England, the Borough Council needs to make changes to the CTR scheme for working age applicants - the scheme for pension age applicants is prescribed by Central Government - in order to reduce the significant administrative burden placed on the Council by the introduction of Universal Credit.
- 1.5 This report requests permission to consult on changes required to the scheme and makes recommendation to members for the 2021/22 scheme.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

**The Council will consult with the public and major precepting authorities on the introduction of a new income banded council tax support scheme for working age applicants to be implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021.**

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**KEY ISSUES****Financial Implications**

- 3.1 The current Council Tax Reduction scheme costs approximately £5.08m which is borne by the Council's Collection Fund. Costs are shared between the Council and the Major Precepting Authorities in the following proportions:

Borough Council 13%

Worcestershire County Council 70%

West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner 12%

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service 5%

- 3.2 The approach and 'shape' of the scheme is changing, and the overall approach will be to provide additional support to those households on the very lowest incomes. There is no intention to reduce the level of support available to other households. Based on current modelling, were the new scheme to be in place at the current time, the costs would be £5.404m.
- 3.3 Financial modelling has been undertaken and will continue to be undertaken throughout the project and this will be particularly important given the effect of the COVID-19 crisis on the incomes of households within the Borough Council's area.
- 3.4 Whilst the expected costs of the scheme for 2021/22 are slightly higher, the overall level of Council Tax Reduction as a proportion to Council Tax Base has reduced significantly year on year since 2013 as follows:

Tax Year	Maximum % Reduction	Gross Council Tax £000s	Total CTR awarded £000s	CTR as % Gross CTax
2013/14	100	42,374	6,166	14.55
2014/15	80	43,571	5,272	12.10
2015/16	80	44,735	5,138	11.49
2016/17	80	46,487	5,088	10.94
2017/18	80	47,777	4,969	10.40
2018/19	80	50,312	4,913	9.77
2019/20	80	53,088	4,974	9.37
2020/21	80	55,290	5,082	9.19

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**Legal Implications**

3.5 Schedule 1A(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, states:

Before making a scheme, the authority must:

- a) consult any major precepting authority which has power to issue a precept to it,
- b) publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit, and
- c) consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme.

3.6 In addition, in order to set a new scheme, the Council is required to make a resolution by 11<sup>th</sup> March of the year prior to the scheme coming into place.

3.7 The purpose of this report is to seek permission to commence the statutory consultation process.

**Background / Service Implications**

3.8 Council Tax Reduction (CTR) was introduced by Central Government in April 2013 as a replacement for the Council Tax Benefit scheme administered on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). As part of the introduction, the Government:

- Placed the duty to create a local scheme for **Working Age** applicants with billing authorities.
- Reduced initial funding by the equivalent of ten per cent from the levels paid through benefit subsidy to authorities under the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme; and
- Prescribed that persons of **Pension age** would be dealt with under regulations set by Central Government and not the authorities' local scheme.

3.9 Since that time, funding for the Council Tax Reduction scheme has been amalgamated into other Central Government grants paid to Local Authorities and also within the Business Rates Retention regime. It is now generally accepted that it is not possible to identify the amount of funding actually provided from Central Government sources.

3.10 The current Council Tax Reduction scheme administered by the Council is divided into two schemes, with pension age applicants receiving support under the rules prescribed by Central Government, and the scheme for working age applicants being determined solely by the local authority.

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- 3.11 Pensioners, subject to their income, can receive up to 100 per cent support towards their council tax. The Council has no power to change the level of support provided to pensioners and therefore any changes to the level of CTR can only be made to the working age scheme.
- 3.12 When Council Tax Reduction was introduced in 2013, for working age applicants, the Council broadly adopted the previous means tested Council Tax Benefit scheme as the basis of awarding support. Due to the reduction in funding from Central Government, the Council also required all working age applicants, even those on the lowest income, to pay a minimum payment of 20%.
- 3.13 Since that time, other slight changes have been made to bring the scheme into line with Housing Benefit and Universal Credit.

**The main issues with the current scheme**

- 3.14 There are a number of issues with the current scheme that will need to be addressed if the system is to continue to provide effective support to low income taxpayers and also if the Council is able to provide the service in an efficient manner. The main issues are as follows:
- The need to assist low income households and assist in the collection of Council Tax
  - The introduction of Universal Credit for working age applicants; and
  - The need for a simplification of the scheme;
- each of the issues are examined in detail below.

**Low Income Households and Council Tax Collection**

- 3.15 Since 2013, the introduction of Council Tax Reduction, the majority of authorities, including the Borough Council have required all working age applicants to pay a minimum payment. Under the previous scheme (Council Tax Benefit) almost 75% of working age applicants would not have been required to pay any Council Tax and would have received full (100%) support.
- 3.16 As with a large number of authorities, there is a strong view that there should be an increase in the level of support to those households on the lowest incomes. This view has gained momentum over the past few years but has been reinforced since the COVID-19 crisis which has had a major effect on incomes generally.
- 3.17 Whilst the principle of all working age households paying 'something' was initially thought to be an approach that would be central to the design of Council Tax Reduction, the reality is, since its introduction, low income taxpayers in the poorest households, have been unable to pay the balance leading to additional costs, and

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court and enforcement action. In some cases, the amounts demanded have been written off as uncollectable. For information, in 2019, Council Tax of £1.094m has been demanded working age Council Tax claimants and an amount of £0.412m, 37% of the amount demanded.

3.18 The costs of administration of these cases by the District Council has increased significantly over the years. These costs are borne solely by the Borough Council. With the difficulties experienced, the relatively low level of payment and the high administration costs incurred, it no longer makes the amounts economically viable to collect. Notwithstanding the negative effects to those poorest households.

**Universal Credit**

3.19 The introduction of Universal Credit within the area has, as experienced in all other areas, brought a number of significant challenges to both the administration of Council Tax Reduction and also the collection of Council Tax. All Councils have experienced the following:

- The difficulties for Universal Credit claimants to make a prompt claim for Council Tax Reduction leading to a loss in entitlement;
- A high number of changes to Universal Credit cases are received from the Department for Work and Pensions requiring a change to Council Tax Reduction entitlement. On average 40% of Universal Credit claimants have between eight and twelve changes in entitlement per annum. These changes result in amendments to Council Tax liability, the re-calculation of instalments, delays and the demonstrable loss in collection; and
- The increased costs of administration through multiple changes with significant additional staff and staff time being needed.

3.20 It is clear that the existing means tested Council Tax Reduction scheme, which is too reactive to change, will not be viable in the longer term now that Universal Credit has been rolled out fully within the area and with the significant increase in Universal Credit claimants due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The move to a new more efficient scheme from 2021 is now imperative.

**Simplified Council Tax Reduction Scheme.**

3.21 Notwithstanding the introduction of Universal Credit, the existing scheme is based on an 'old fashioned;' means tested benefit scheme. It has major defects namely:

- It is difficult for customers to understand and is based on a complex calculation of entitlement;
- The administration for staff is complicated and lengthy, with staff having to request significant amounts of information from applicants;
- Staff have to undergo significant training to be proficient in processing claims;
- The timescales for processing applications is lengthy, mainly due to the complexity and evidence required to support the applications; and

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- The administration of the scheme is costly when compared to other discounts for Council Tax.

3.22 There is a need now to simplify the scheme, not only to mitigate the effects of Universal Credit, but also make it easier for customers to make a claim and to significantly reduce the costs of administration.

**Proposed Approach for the 2021/22 Scheme**

3.23 In view of the problems being experienced with the current scheme, it is proposed that an alternative approach be taken from 2021/22. The approach has been to redesign the scheme to address all current issues in particular;

- The level of support available to the poorest households;
- The problems with the introduction of full-service Universal Credit; and
- The significant increase in administration costs due to the high level of changes received in respect of Universal Credit;

3.24 Work has been ongoing since early this year on a proposed new scheme which is now ready for consultation.

3.25 Consultation now needs to be undertaken with the public and the precepting authorities. If accepted by the Council, the new scheme will take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021

3.26 The proposed new scheme has a number of features as follows:

- More support shall be given to those households on the lowest of incomes than in the current scheme;
- The changes can **only be made to the working age schemes** as the current schemes for pensioners is prescribed by Central Government;
- The current means tested schemes will be replaced by a simple income grid model as shown below:

Discount Band	Discount	Single Person	Single person with one child	Single person with two or more children	Couple	Couple with one child	Couple with two or more children
<b>Income Ranges</b>							
<b>Band 1</b>	<b>100%</b>	£0 to £95.00	£0 to £150.00	£0 to £210.00	£0 to £140.00	£0 to £195.00	£0 to £255.00
<b>Band 2</b>	<b>75%</b>	£95.01 to £115.00	£150.01 to £180.00	£210.01 to £240.00	£140.01 to £160.00	£195.01 to £225.00	£255.01 to £285.00

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<b>Band 3</b>	<b>50%</b>	£115.01 to £135.00	£180.01 to £210.00	£240.01 – £270.00	£160.01 to £180.00	£225.01 – £255.00	£285.01 to £315.00
<b>Band 4</b>	<b>25%</b>	£135.01 to £155.00	£210.01 to £240.00	£270.01 – £300.00	£180.01 to £200.00	£255.01 to £285.00	£315.01 to £345.00
	<b>0%</b>	Over £155.00	Over £240.00	Over £300.00	Over £200.00	Over £285.00	Over £345.00

- It is proposed that the highest level of discount will be at a maximum level of liability (100%), Band 1, and all current applicants that are in receipt of a 'passport benefit' such as Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance (Income Based) and Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related) receive maximum discount:
- All other discount levels are based on the applicant's, and where applicable their partner's, net income;
- The scheme allows for variation in household size with the levels of income per band increasing where an applicant has a partner, and/or dependants
- There will be no charges made where an applicant has non-dependants living with them. This is a significant change and means that the administration of the scheme will be more straightforward whilst also protecting low income families where adult sons and daughters remain at home;
- To encourage work, a standard £25 per week disregard will be provided against all earnings This will take the place of the current standard disregards and additional earnings disregards.
- Disability benefits such as Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Allowance will continue to be disregarded;
- Where any applicant, their partner or dependant child(ren) are disabled, a further disregard of £40 will be given, thereby maintaining the current level of support to those with disabilities;
- Carer's Allowance and the Support Component of Employment and Support Allowance will be disregarded;
- Child benefit and Child Maintenance will continue to be disregarded;
- The total disregard on war pensions and war disablement pensions will continue;
- Extended payments will be removed;
- Second Adult Rebate will be removed; and
- The capital limit will be reduced to £6,000.

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**Addressing the Issues of the Current Scheme**

3.27 With the simplicity of the proposed new scheme and by taking a more 'Council Tax discount approach', it will address the problems associated with the increased administration caused by failings in the current scheme and Universal Credit as follows:

- **The scheme will require a simplified claim process.** Applicants will see a significant reduction in the claiming process and, where possible, Council Tax Reduction will be awarded automatically. For Universal Credit applicants *any* Universal Credit data received from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will be treated as a claim for Council Tax Reduction. Where information is received from DWP, the entitlement to Council Tax Reduction will be processed automatically without the need to request further information from the taxpayer. These changes will have the following distinct advantages namely:
  - **Speed of processing** – all claims will be able to be calculated promptly and largely automatically without the need to request further information which inevitably leads to delays;
  - **Maximising entitlement to every applicant.** As there will be no requirement for Universal Credit applicants to apply separately for Council Tax Reduction, the claiming process will be simplified significantly. Entitlement to Council Tax Reduction will be maximised with a reduced risk of loss of discount or the need for backdating;
  - **Maintenance of collection rates** – the new scheme will avoid constant changes in discount, the need for multiple changes in instalments and therefore assist in maintaining the high collection rates. The increased level of discount will assist all those applicants on the lowest levels of income, again improving the overall collection rate;
  - **The income bands are sufficiently wide to avoid constant changes in discount.** The current Council Tax Reduction scheme is very reactive and will alter even if the overall change to the person's liability is small. This is leading to constant changes in Council Tax liability, the need to recalculate monthly instalments and the requirement to issue a large number of Council Tax demands. The effect of this is that Council Tax collection is reduced. The new scheme, with its simplified income banding approach will have the following advantages:
    - Only significant changes in income will affect the level of discount awarded;
    - Council Taxpayers who receive Council Tax Reduction will not receive multiple Council Tax demands and adjustments to their instalments; and



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- The new scheme is designed to reflect a more modern approach, where any discount changes it will be effective from the day of change rather than the Monday of the following week;

**Transition to the new scheme and Exceptional Hardship Scheme**

- 3.28 The Council must be mindful that any change in scheme or a transition to a new scheme may result in a change to the entitlement of certain applicants.
- 3.29 Inevitably, with any change in scheme, there will be some winners and losers although the proposed scheme has been designed to protect the most vulnerable. It is proposed that the new scheme will contain additional provisions to protect individuals who experience exceptional hardship. Where any applicant is likely to experience exceptional hardship, they will be encouraged to apply for an exceptional hardship payment. The Council will consider all applications for exceptional hardship on an individual basis, taking into account available income and essential outgoings. Where appropriate further support will be given to the applicant.
- 3.30 This approach will enable individual applicants to be dealt with in a fair and equitable manner. The Exceptional Hardship Scheme will form part of the Council Tax Reduction scheme and fall to be paid through the Collection Fund.

**Other Options**

- 3.31 The alternative to introducing a new scheme for Council Tax Reductions to maintain the existing scheme. This would be a short-term option; lead to increasing costs of administration; and in the longer term, significantly affect the collection of Council Tax and the effectiveness of the scheme to support households within the Borough Council's area.

**Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 3.32 A stage one Equality Impact Assessment is attached within Appendix 1 of this report.

**4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 4.1 The following risks are associated with the project:

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
<b><i>Property</i></b> <i>No risk</i>	N/A	N/A
<b><i>Community Support</i></b> <i>Potential Changes to the support of some working age applicants</i>	Where an applicant may receive less Council Tax Reduction, they may apply for additional support under the	There is an opportunity to: Modernise the current scheme; Enable a scheme that will be fit for purpose; and

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Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
	<p>Council's Exceptional Hardship Fund</p> <p>In cases, where applicants have the lowest income, they may receive more support under the proposed scheme.</p>	Reduce administration.
<p><b>Timescales</b> <i>It will be essential to meet project timescales if the new scheme is to be introduced for the 2021/22 financial year.</i></p>	The majority of the work has already been completed with scheme design and extensive modelling.	
<p><b>Project capacity</b></p>	Resources have already been allocated to the project which are sufficient	
<p><b>Financial / VfM</b> <i>Changes to the scheme could potentially lead to changes in overall scheme costs</i></p>	Extensive modelling has been undertaken to estimate the costs of the scheme. This will continue throughout the life of the project.	The Council has indicated that it is not looking to make savings from scheme changes. The Council will provide additional support to those households on the very lowest of incomes
<p><b>Legal</b> <i>Failure to set the scheme in accordance with the legislation and failure to comply with the legal requirements for developing a new CTR scheme</i></p>	The project is being undertaken strictly in accordance with legislative requirements	
<p><b>Innovation</b> <i>Failure to maximise the potential of change and automation</i></p>	Throughout the project, we will look to take advantages of the latest automation of claims and the gathering of data	There will be more opportunity to enhance customer's online experience by receiving immediate decisions of discounts being granted.

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<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
<b>Reputation</b> <i>Failure to implement the new scheme on time or failure to deliver a comprehensive and robust scheme</i>	The project is following previous successful implementations by other Local Authorities	There is an opportunity for the Council to enhance its reputation by developing an up to date an effective Council Tax Reduction scheme

**5. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 - First Stage Equality Impact Assessment  
Appendix 2 – Proposed public consultation document

**6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

6.1 Council Tax Support Scheme Modelling Reports

**7. KEY**

**CT: Council Tax**  
**CTR: Council Tax Reduction**  
**DWP: Department for Work and Pensions**  
**HB: Housing Benefit**  
**UC: Universal Credit**

**AUTHOR OF REPORT**

Name: Lisa Devey  
email: [lisa.devey@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk](mailto:lisa.devey@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk)  
Tel.: (01527) 64252 Ext: 2323

Name: David Riley  
email: [david.riley@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk](mailto:david.riley@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk)  
Tel.: (01527) 64252 Ext: 3282

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## Equality Assessment Record

Title of Service, Policy, Procedure, Spending Review being Proposed	Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2021/22
Name of Service Area	Revenues and Benefits
Name of Officer completing this assessment	Lisa Devey & David Riley
Date Assessment Started	19 <sup>th</sup> August 2020
Name of Decision Maker (in relation to the change)	
Date Decision Made	

<p><b>Overview</b></p> <p>Provide a clear overview of the aims of the service/policy/procedure and the proposed changes being made. Will the current service users' needs continue to be met? Why is the change being proposed? What needs or duties is it designed to meet?</p> <p>To introduce a simplified Council Tax Reduction scheme with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and to increase the level of support to the poorest households.</p> <p>In addition, the implementation of Universal Credit within the area requires the Council to change its approach to Council Tax Reduction, given the high administrative burden of monthly changes and alterations to applicants' income.</p>
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There is a requirement to introduce a simplified, more supportive scheme which can be easily administered without significant additional costs being placed on the Council. The current scheme is too reactive to minor changes in applicant's income leading to constant changes in Council Tax liability.

The scheme changes will only apply to working age applicants, pension age applicants are covered by the Prescribed Requirement Regulations determined by Central Government.

The move to an income-based scheme (without the complexities of a full means tested as required by the current scheme).

The changes will provide the following:

- An increased level of support to households with the lowest income;
- Simplified claiming arrangements for all working age applicants;
- Certainty, at present, multiple changes are leading to some taxpayer's receiving a large number of Council Tax bills per year as their Council Tax Reduction is constantly amended;
- The maximisation of applicant's entitlement with clear straightforward messages to claim;
- Speed of processing - applications will be dealt with more efficiently and without the need for significant levels of evidence; and
- Reduced administration costs. The changes will prevent the administration costs from rising year on year which would be inevitable under the current scheme.

It should be noted that the overall costs of the scheme will increase however the overall level of Council Tax Reduction as a proportion of the overall Council Tax base, will be less than when Council Tax Reduction was introduced in 2013. The costs to the Borough Council will be in proportion to the Council's share of Council Tax.

Who is the proposal likely to affect?	Yes	No
All residents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specific group(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All Council employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specific group(s) of employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other – Provide more details below	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Details

Outline who could be affected and how they could be affected by the proposal/service change. Include current service users and those who could benefit from but do not currently access the service.

Working age applicants who are currently in receipt of Council Tax Reduction or those who apply on or after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. Pension age applicants will not be affected as their scheme remains unchanged.

## Evidence and data used to inform your equality impact assessment

What data, research, or trend analysis have you used? Describe how you have got your information and what it tells you.

Modelling of the new scheme has been undertaken throughout and will continue to be undertaken until such time as the 2021/22 scheme is approved.

The current modelling data is shown below:

	Existing Scheme			New Scheme			Average weekly Gain (loss)
	Numbers	Expenditure	Average Weekly Amount	Numbers	Expenditure	Average Weekly Amount	
Single Person	1724	£1,267,558.01	£14.92	1602	£1,437,065.30	£18.15	3.23
Couple no children	270	£254,923.55	£19.60	242	£289,915.16	£24.74	5.14
Single Person 1 Child	466	£326,657.48	£14.82	453	£372,323.01	£17.32	2.50
Single Person 2 or more children	590	£434,864.97	£15.61	540	£470,380.98	£18.21	2.61

Couple with 1 child	141	£120,838.32	£18.61	126	£131,884.55	£22.82	4.21
Couple with 2 or more children	273	£238,138.53	£18.78	234	£243,806.45	£22.50	3.73
Applicant Gender – Male	1277	£979,674.37	£15.84	1190	£1,082,653.89	£18.73	2.89
Applicant Gender - Female	2205	£1,678,541.07	£15.86	2007	£1,862,721.57	£19.23	3.37
		£2,658,215.44			£2,945,375.46		

- The scheme is designed to protect the households with the lowest incomes and will redistribute the levels of support available in a fairer manner. The overall costs of the scheme are marginally higher, and this will allow up to 100% support to those applicants on the lowest incomes and those who receive DWP legacy benefits including Income Support, Job Seeker's Allowance (Income Based), Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related).
- The scheme will protect applicants who are disabled or where any member of their household is disabled;
- The scheme will be more generous to carers and those who have non dependants;
- The scheme will however limit the maximum capital allowable to £6,000 and restrict the calculation to a maximum of two dependants in line with the changes to Universal Credits, Tax Credits and Housing Benefit; and
- All existing income and capital disregards will apply in the new scheme; and
- **All** applicants, if they are detrimentally affected by the new scheme, will be able to apply for an Exceptional Hardship Fund payment from the Council's new Exceptional Hardship Fund which will be effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021.

## Engagement and Consultation

The Council will need to decide, after consultation, whether to proceed with this new scheme. Should it not proceed then the existing scheme will remain in place in accordance with the legislation.

Consultation with the Major Preceptors (Fire and Rescue, Police and the County Council) will commence on **dd/mmm/yyyy**.

A full public consultation will be undertaken **from dd/mmm/yyyy to dd/mmm/yyyy**.



All consultation documentation can be viewed at the following link:

[Redditch to provide link](#)

Further EIA and analysis will be provided after all consultations have been completed

## Public Sector Equality Duty

Equality Duty Aims	Evidence
<p><b>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation</b> How does the proposal/service ensure that there is no barrier or disproportionate impact for anyone with a particular protected characteristic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The new scheme has been designed to support all low-income taxpayers and has been created strictly in accordance with the legislative requirements.</li><li>• The new scheme provides <b>more</b> support to those on the lowest incomes</li><li>• Existing 'protected' categories or persons who are currently determined as vulnerable within the existing scheme, will continue to be protected in the new scheme.</li><li>• A new Exceptional Hardship Scheme has been created to assist any applicant who feels that they require additional support.</li></ul>
<p><b>Advance equality of opportunity between different groups</b> How does the proposal/service ensure that its intended outcomes promote equality of opportunity for users? Identify inequalities faced by those with specific protected characteristic(s).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All working age are covered by the scheme and any taxpayer who meets the criteria will be able to apply for support.</li><li>• The scheme will allow easier access to support; maximisation of assistance whilst at the same time maintaining the protections from the current scheme;</li><li>• There will be some applicants with higher levels of capital or higher levels of available income that may receive less support through the new scheme.</li></ul>
<p><b>Foster good relations between different groups</b> Does the service contribute to good relations or to broader community cohesion objectives? How does it achieve this aim?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Yes, the scheme is designed to:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Be easily accessible by all applicants;</li><li>○ Avoid multiple changes to entitlement (and Council Tax) throughout the year;</li><li>○ Be less complicated and more easily understood.</li></ul></li></ul>

**Is there evidence of actual or potential unfairness for the following equality groups?**

- Does the proposal target or exclude a specific equality group or community?
  - **No, all working age applicants are treated in the same way;**
- Does it affect some equality groups or communities differently and can this be justified?
  - **No**
- Is the proposal likely to be equally accessed by all equality groups and communities? If not, can this be justified?  
 (It may be useful to consider other groups, not included in the Equality Act, especially if the proposal is specifically for them e.g. lone parents, refugees, unemployed people, carers)
  - **Yes**

**Impact of proposal**

Describe the likely impact of the proposal on people because of their protected characteristic and how they may be affected. How likely is it that people with this protected characteristic will be negatively affected? What are the barriers that might make access difficult or stop different groups or communities accessing the proposal? How great will that impact be on their well-being? Could the proposal promote equality and good relations between different groups? How?

- **Details of the impact of the change have been provided above**

**If you have identified any area of actual or potential unfairness that cannot be justified, can you eliminate or minimise this?**

What mitigating actions can be taken to reduce or remove this impact? (Include these in the action plan at the end of the assessment) Equal treatment does not always produce equal outcomes; sometimes you will have to take specific steps for particular groups to address an existing disadvantage or to meet differing needs.

Protected Group	Impact of proposal	Justification for any actual or potential unfairness identified	If you have identified any area of actual or potential unfairness that cannot be justified, can you eliminate or minimise this?
Age	Affects working age applicants only (pension age applicants are dealt with under		

	Central Government Prescribed Scheme)		
Disability	Protected		
Transgender	N/A		
Marriage and Civil Partnership	N/A		
Pregnancy and Maternity	N/A		
Race	N/A		
Religion or Belief	N/A		
Sex (Male/ Female)		The scheme provides a higher level of support to both male and female applicants. As with the existing scheme, more female applicants will be in receipt of Council Tax Reduction	
Sexual Orientation	N/A		

**How will you monitor any changes identified?**

The scheme will be constantly monitored by the service throughout 2021 /22 to ensure that its objectives are met.

It should be noted that a final decision on the new policy has yet to be made and will only be taken **after** consultation with Major Preceptors and the Public.

**The actions required to address these findings are set out below.**

Action Required	By Whom	By When	Completion Date
To be determined after public consultation			

Sign off on completion	Name	Signature	Date
Lead Officer completing assessment			
Equalities Officer			

**When you have completed this assessment, retain a copy and send an electronic copy to the Policy Team (Equalities) attaching any supporting evidence used to carry out the assessment.**

# Redditch Borough Council - Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2021/22 Consultation

## 1. Background to the Consultation

### **What is this consultation about?**

Each year the Council has to decide whether to change the Council Tax Reduction scheme for working age applicants in its area. This year the Council has decided that changes should be made to significantly change the Council Tax Reduction scheme so that the overall level of support can be increased for those applicants on the lowest incomes and due to the full roll out of Universal Credit within the Worcestershire area. In effect the traditional link between Housing Benefit (which will no longer be available to new working age claimants) and Council Tax Reduction will no longer exist and it is essential that the scheme is changed to meet future requirements, to reduce administration costs and to ultimately prevent any additional costs being added to the Council Tax.

### **What is Council Tax Reduction?**

Council Tax Reduction is a discount for Council Tax. The level of discount is based on the income of the household. Currently the maximum discount is 80% of Council Tax for most working age households and 100% for pensioners.

### **Why is a change to the Council Tax Reduction scheme being considered?**

In April 2013 the Council Tax Benefit Scheme was replaced by a new Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Council Tax Benefit had been funded by the Department for Work and Pensions and supported people on low incomes by reducing the amount of Council Tax they have to pay.

The Council Tax Reduction scheme is determined locally by Redditch Borough Council rather than the Department of Work and Pensions. Although the Government initially provided funding for the scheme, the funding has reduced each year in line with the reduction in Revenue Support Grant provided to councils.

Applicants in receipt of income-based Jobseekers Allowance, Income Support and Income Related Employment and Support Allowance receive the maximum level of support. Others receive a level of Council Tax Reduction based on their income and other factors.

A separate Central Government scheme is retained for people of pension age and Councils are only able to vary their schemes for people of working age.

Each Council is required to review their schemes each year and decide if they want to make any changes. Before any changes can be implemented, they must be subject to public consultation.

Redditch Borough Council is proposing a number of changes to its existing scheme and, in line with legislation, we have a duty to consult you and provide you with the opportunity to tell us your views on the proposed changes to our Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

The Council is consulting on the following changes to its scheme for 2021/22:

Introducing an income 'grid' scheme for all working age applicants replacing the current scheme which was based on the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme. This will provide up to 100% support in certain cases (currently there is a maximum of 80%) **(Option 1)**;

Limiting the number of dependent children used in the calculation of support to two for all working age applicants **(Option 2)**;

Removing Non-Dependant deductions **(Option 3)**;

Disregarding Carers Allowance, the Support Component of the Employment and Support Allowance and the housing element of Universal Credit in the calculation of income **(Option 4)**;

Reducing the capital level to £6,000 from £16,000; **(Option 5)**;

Removing all of the current earnings disregards and replacing them with a standard £25 disregard for all applicants where they are in work **(Option 6)**;

Where a person is disabled and in receipt of certain disability benefits, allowing a further deduction from their income before calculating any entitlement to Council Tax Reduction **(Option 7)**;

Removing the Extended Payment provision **(Option 8)**;

Removing the Second Adult Reduction provision **(Option 9)**;

Making all new claims and changes in circumstances which change any entitlement to Council Tax Reduction on a daily basis rather than the current (benefit based) weekly basis **(Option 10)**; and

Allowing the discretion to backdate any discount to the commencement of the financial year where a good reason is provided (**Option 11**).

In the Redditch area, over xxxx people currently receive Council Tax Reduction. The gross cost of the scheme is £x.x million which is spread across the Borough Council (x%), the County Council (xx%), Fire (x%), and the Police (xx% in accordance with the proportion of Council Tax which each organisation levies (which is shown in brackets).

**Who will this affect?**

Working age households in the Borough Council's area who currently receive or will apply for Council Tax Reduction.

Pension age households will not be affected as Central Government prescribe the scheme.

**Are there any alternatives to changing the existing Council Tax Reduction scheme?**

We have also thought about other ways to make the administration simpler. These have not been completely rejected (including maintaining the current scheme) and you are asked about them in the Questionnaire, but, at the moment we do not think we should implement them for the reasons given.

**We have considered:**

• **Continuing with the current scheme**

This would mean less support and higher administration costs generally. Not making these changes would significantly increase the administration of Council Tax Reduction. The current scheme will not work effectively with the Government's Universal Credit system. The multiple changes in Universal Credit inevitably lead to multiple changes in Council Tax Reduction. This would increase the costs for all council tax payers in the Borough paying towards the scheme. The decision to increase Council Tax may need to be made by voting in a local referendum; or

**Reduce funding to other Council services to pay for additional administration costs**

Keeping the current Council Tax Reduction scheme will mean an increase in administration costs and less money available to deliver other Council services.

**1. I have read the background information about the Council Tax Reduction Scheme: This question must be answered before you can continue. \***

Yes

No

**2. Paying for the Scheme**

2. Should the Council keep the current Council Tax Reduction scheme? (Should it continue to administer the scheme as it does at the moment?) \*

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

3. Please use the space below to make any comments you have on protecting the Council Tax Reduction Scheme from these changes.

### 3. Option 1 – The introduction of an Income Grid scheme to replace the current scheme for all applicants of working age

As explained in the background information, the Council is primarily consulting on the following proposals to change the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme from 1st April 2021, which will increase the overall level of support to those households on the lowest income and also reduce the administration cost of the scheme generally. The changes will also make the scheme simpler. Please note that whilst the changes are intended to reduce the level and cost of administration, the Council is not looking to reduce the total overall level of support available in fact for the lowest income households, the changes may increase the amount of reduction received. Your responses are a part of this consultation.

The current scheme for Council Tax Reduction is largely based on the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme which was assessed alongside Housing Benefit. Housing Benefit for working age applicants is being phased out and it is largely now not possible to make new claims. Whilst Housing Benefit was the main provider of housing support for working age persons, it was logical to maintain a Council Tax Reduction scheme that mirrored the approach. Now that Universal Credit is being rolled out, it gives the Council the opportunity to significantly simplify what is in effect a Council Tax Discount.

It is proposed that a simplified income 'grid' scheme will be introduced with some slight differences where applicants fall within a 'protected group'. For 'non-protected' groups, Table 1 shows the level of discount available.



Table 1

Discount Band	Discount	Single Person	Single person with one child	Single person with two or more children	Couple	Couple with one child	Couple with two or more children
<b>Income Ranges</b>							
<b>Band 1*</b>	<b>100%</b>	£0 - £95.00	£0 - £150.00	£0 - £210.00	£0 - £140.00	£0 - £195.00	£0 - £255.00
<b>Band 2</b>	<b>75%</b>	£95.01 - £115.00	£160.01 - £180.00	£210.01 - £240.00	£140.01 - £160.00	£195.01 - £225.00	£255.01 - £285.00
<b>Band 3</b>	<b>50%</b>	£115.01 - £135.00	£180.01 - £210.00	£240.01 - £270.00	£160.01 - £180.00	£225.01 - £255.00	£285.01 - £315.00
<b>Band 4</b>	<b>25%</b>	£135.01 - £155.00	£210.01 - £240.00	£270.01 - £300.00	£180.01 - £200.00	£255.01 - £285.00	£315.01 - £345.00
	<b>0%</b>	Over £155.00	Over £240.00	Over £300.00	Over £200.00	Over £285.00	Over £345.00

\*Where any applicant or their partner are in receipt of Income Support, Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance or Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance, a Band 1 discount will be given (unless they have savings or capital over £6,000).

The key principles of the scheme are as follows:

The level of discount (shown in the grids) will be based on the total net income (determined by the Council) of the applicant and their partner;

Income levels can vary in accordance with household size;

Certain aspects of the current scheme will be carried forward into the new scheme namely:

Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payments, Child Benefit and Child Maintenance will continue to be disregarded from the calculation;

Applicants receiving income support, income related employment and support allowance and income-based jobseeker's allowance. Where applicants are not in receipt of those benefits and their income is above the levels specified in Band 1, Council Tax Reduction shall be awarded at the appropriate level (Bands 2, 3 & 4)

The grid will be limited to a maximum of two dependants (**see Option 2**)

No charges will be made for non-dependants who live with the applicant (**see Option 3**)

Disregarding Carers Allowance and the Support Component of the Employment and Support Allowance and the Housing elements of Universal Credit (**see Option 4**);

Reducing the capital level to £6,000 from £16,000; (**see Option 5**);

Removing all of the current earnings disregards and replacing them with a standard £25 disregard for all applicants where they are in work (**see Option 6**);

Where a person is disabled and in receipt of certain disability benefits, allowing a further deduction from their income before calculating any entitlement to Council Tax Reduction (**see Option 7**);

Removing the Extended Payment provision (**see Option 8**);

Removing the Second Adult Rebate provision (**see Option 9**);

Making all new claims and changes in circumstances which change any entitlement to Council Tax Reduction on a daily basis rather than the current (benefit based) weekly basis (**see Option 10**); and

Allowing the discretion to backdate any discount to the commencement of the financial year where a good reason is provided **(see Option 11)**.

It is inevitable that there may be both winners and losers; however, the Council is keen to protect as many applicants as possible. The Council is minded to increase the level of support to those on the lowest incomes.

The majority of applicants will receive the same or more support next year. In particular, parents and those in low paid jobs will often have less Council Tax to pay. Inevitably some households will have a little more to pay. Where an applicant experiences exceptional hardship, they will be able to apply for additional support from the Council under its new Exceptional Hardship Fund.

**The benefits of changing the scheme:**

It provides more support to those on the lowest incomes;

It provides a simpler scheme, easily understood by all applicants;

It will save significant increases in administration costs due to the introduction of Universal Credit; and

It should prevent applicants receiving multiple Council Tax demands during the year and prevents multiple changes to monthly instalments.

**The drawbacks of doing this are:**

Whilst the Council will look to protect applicants as far as possible, there may be a few winners and losers; and

Some households with more than two children or high capital may receive less support.

**4. Do you agree with this change to the scheme? \***

Yes

No

Don't Know

**5. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?**

#### **4. Option 2 - To limit the number of dependant children within the calculation for Council Tax Reduction to a maximum of two for all applicants**

Within the current scheme, applicants who have children are awarded a dependant's addition within the calculation of their needs (Applicable Amounts). From April 2017 the Government scheme limited dependant's in Universal Credit, Housing Benefit and Tax Credits to a maximum of two. Some applicants were protected where they made a claim for reduction before that date and already had more than two dependants. The new scheme will be based on an income grid system which takes into account the number of dependants within the household; however, it will be limited to two, for all applicants.

Child benefit continues to be paid for every dependant and this will not count towards the applicants' income for the purpose of calculating Council Tax Reduction

##### **The benefits to the Council of doing this are:**

Council Tax Reduction will be brought into line for all applicants; and

It is simple and administratively easy to incorporate within the scheme

##### **The drawbacks of doing this are:**

Applicants who have three or more dependants may receive less Council Tax Reduction. However, this is offset by the Child Benefit not being counted and, if the applicants face exceptional hardship they may apply for additional support through the Council's Exceptional Hardship Scheme.

#### **6. Do you agree with this change to the scheme? \***

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

#### **7. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?**

## 5. Option 3 – To remove Non-Dependant Deductions from the scheme

Currently, where an applicant (and their partner if they have one) has other adults living with them such as adult sons, daughters etc., their Council Tax Reduction may be reduced. Any charge made is called a Non-Dependant Deduction. The Council currently makes a range of deductions depending on the circumstances of the non-dependant. In theory, the applicant should look to recoup this deduction from those adults. The Council cannot recover these charges from the non-dependant and must seek payment from the applicant, who will be in receipt of a low income or benefits.

### The benefit of this option is:

Applicants will not be penalised for having additional adults living with them (other than if they are living there commercially); and

The change is simple and administratively easy to incorporate within the scheme.

### The drawbacks of doing this are:

There may be an overall cost to the scheme with no non-dependant charges being made.

### 8. Do you agree with this change to the scheme? \*

Yes

No

Don't Know

### 9. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?

## 6. Option 4 – Disregarding Carers Allowance, the Support Component of the Employment and Support Allowance and the housing element of Universal Credit

By moving to an income-based grid scheme it is essential that certain benefits are disregarded from the calculation of income. In order to protect the most vulnerable applicants, it is proposed that the following are not counted when assessing a person's income. These are:

Carer's Allowance;

The Support Component of Employment and Support Allowance; and

Any amount determined by the authority as being awarded for the Housing Element of Universal Credit;

**The benefit of this option is:**

It will assist and support the most vulnerable; and

The change is simple and administratively easy to incorporate within the scheme

**The drawbacks of doing this are:**

There may be a slight increase in the overall cost of the scheme.

**10. Do you agree with this change to the scheme? \***

Yes

No

Don't Know

**12. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?**

## **7. Option 5 - To reduce the maximum level of Capital from £16,000 to £6,000**

The current scheme has a capital limit of £16,000. It is proposed that the capital limit is reduced to a level of £6,000.

**The benefit of this option is:**

It will make the administration of the scheme simpler as there will be no requirement to calculate a 'tariff' or assumed income from capital; and

The change is simple and administratively easy to incorporate within the scheme.

**The drawbacks of doing this are:**

Some applicants who have capital above £6,000 will no longer qualify for Council Tax Reduction.

**13. Do you agree with this change to the scheme? \***

Yes

No

**14. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?**

## **8. Option 6 – Removing the current earnings disregards and replacing them with a standard £25 disregard for all working applicants**

Currently, where applicants (or their partner if they have one) have earnings and work over 16 hours per week, an earnings disregard is applied depending on their individual circumstances. The standard disregards (only one is awarded) are £5 per week for a single person, £10 per week for a couple, £20 per week if they meet certain conditions such as disablement or part time special employments or £25 for lone parents. If they work additional hours, in some circumstances they may receive an additional £17.10 disregard per week. Also, if child care is paid by the applicant above that received free from Central Government, then further disregards can be made against earnings for monies paid out.

The proposed change to the scheme would introduce a standard, single disregard of £25 for the applicant where they work. The disregard will apply against earning only. All other disregards will be removed.

**The benefit of this option is:**

The change is simple and administratively easy to incorporate within the scheme.

**The drawbacks of doing this are:**

There may be applicants with larger families and who have high child care costs (not met by Government schemes) who may see a reduction in support. (It should be noted that this is offset

by the Child Benefit not being counted and that all applicants that face exceptional hardship may apply for additional support under the Council's Exceptional Hardship Scheme)

**15. Do you agree with this change to the scheme? \***

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

**16. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?**

## **9. Option 7 - To allow further income disregards where an applicant, their partner or any dependant is in receipt of a disability benefit**

Where an applicant, their partner or any dependant who resides with them is disabled and in receipt of certain disability benefits, the Council will allow a further deduction from their income before calculating any entitlement to Council Tax Reduction.

This option replicates the rules which exist within the current scheme where by a person who is entitled to a Disability Premium, Enhanced Disability Premium, Severe Disability Premium or Disabled Child Premium will have their income reduced (for calculation purposes) by an amount of up to £40 per week.

**The benefit of this option is:**

The change is simple and administratively easy to incorporate within the scheme; and

It protects the most vulnerable applicants.

**The drawbacks of doing this are:**

There are no drawbacks

**17. Do you agree with this change to the scheme? \***

- Yes

- No
- Don't Know

18. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?

## 10. Option 8 – Removing the Extended Payment provision

In certain cases, where applicants have been in receipt of prescribed benefits (such as Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance) and move into work which ends their entitlement, Council Tax Reduction can be paid for an additional 4 weeks after commencing work or increasing their hours. Similar provisions do not exist for Universal Credit claimants. As Universal Credit is to replace those existing (legacy) benefits, the Council feels that these provisions are no longer appropriate.

### The benefit of this option is:

It will treat all applicants in receipt of DWP benefits equally; and

The change is simple and administratively easy to incorporate within the scheme.

### The drawbacks of doing this are:

Applicants who are still in receipt of legacy benefits and who move into work before being transferred to Universal Credit may lose any potential extended payment.

19. Do you agree with this change to the scheme? \*

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

20. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?



## 11. Option 9 - Removal of Second Adult Reduction from the scheme

The current Council Tax Reduction scheme can grant a reduction up to 25% in certain cases where the income of a 'second adult' (not the applicant's partner) who resides with the applicant is unemployed or has a low income. The reduction is not based on the applicant's or their partner's income but is purely based on the income of the 'second adult'.

### The benefit of this is:

It removes an element of the current scheme where the reduction bears no relationship to the income of the applicant or their partner (if they have one);

It is administratively simple; and

### The drawback of this is:

A very small number of people who currently receive Second Adult Reduction will receive less support.

### 21. Do you agree with this change to the scheme? \*

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

### 22. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?

## 12. Option 10 – Any new claim or change in circumstances which changes Council Tax Reduction entitlement will be made from the date on which the

## change occurs, (rather than on a weekly basis as at present)

New claims and changes in circumstances that affect entitlement to Council Tax Reduction, under the current scheme, are largely effected on a weekly basis. This is a 'throwback' to previous benefit schemes that were weekly based. As Council Tax is a daily charge, the Council believes it makes more sense to change entitlement to Council Tax Reduction on a daily basis. It should be noted that, the proposed new scheme is designed to reduce the number of changes that will affect entitlement in any event.

### The benefit of this option is:

It is in line with the way that Council Tax is charged and operated; and

The change is simple and administratively easy to incorporate within the scheme.

### The drawbacks of doing this are:

There are no draw backs to this option.

### 23. Do you agree with this change to the scheme? \*

Yes

No

Don't Know

### 24. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?

## 13. Option 11 – Extending the 'backdating' provisions within the scheme

The current scheme limits the backdating of any application for Council Tax Reduction to 1 month before the date of application where 'continuous Good Cause' is proven.

The Council is of the opinion that the backdating of applications should allow for better alignment with the date that the applicant's circumstances changed and that the Council be given a general discretion to backdate any claim where a good reason is provided.

**The benefit of this option is:**

This option will allow the Council more flexibility in granting support where the applicant has a good reason for not claiming earlier; and

The change is simple and administratively easy to incorporate within the scheme.

**The drawbacks of doing this are:**

There are no drawbacks to this change. It is unlikely to increase the costs of the scheme significantly.

**25. Do you agree with this change to the scheme? \***

Yes

No

Don't Know

**26. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?**

## **14. Alternatives to changing the Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

If the Council keeps the current scheme, it will be less supportive to low income households and administratively more complex. The proposals set out in this consultation will deliver more support and administration savings. The alternatives are set out in the background information.

Do you think we should choose any of the following options rather than the proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme? Please select one answer for each source of funding.

**27. Increase the level of Council Tax to cover the additional administration costs \***

Yes

- No
- Don't Know

**28. Find the additional administration costs by cutting other Council Services \***

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

**29. Please use this space to make any other comments on the proposed scheme.**

**30. Please use the space below if you would like the Council to consider any other options (please state).**

**31. Please use the space below if you would like the Council to consider any other options (please state).**

**32. If you have any further comments or questions to make regarding the Council Tax Reduction scheme that you haven't had opportunity to raise elsewhere, please use the space below.**

## 15. About You

We ask these questions:

To find out if different groups of people in the Council's population have been able to take part in the consultation and identify if any groups have been excluded. This means it is not about you as an individual but to find out if people with similar characteristics have had their say.

To find out if different groups of people feel differently about the options and proposals in comparison to each other and all respondents. This means it is not about you as an individual but to find out if people with similar characteristics have answered in the same way or not.

This information is completely confidential and anonymous. Your personal information will not be passed on to anyone and your personal details will not be reported alongside your responses.

**33. Are you, or someone in your household, getting a Council Tax Reduction at this time?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

**34. What is your sex?**

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

**35. Age**

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74

- 75-84
- 85+
- Prefer not to say

**36. Disability: Are your day to day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

**37. Ethnic Origin: What is your ethnic group? Select each that apply.**

- Prefer not to say
- White British
- White Irish
- White Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Any other White background
- Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White & Black African
- Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White & Black Caribbean
- Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White & Asian
- Any other multi mixed background
- Asian or Asian British Pakistani
- Asian or Asian British Indian
- Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi
- Asian or Asian British Chinese
- Any other Asian background

- Black African
- British Caribbean
- Black British
- Any other Black background

### 38. Other Ethnic Group

## 16. Next steps....

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

Progress reports on the consultation will be added to our website.

You may submit further evidence, ideas, comments or questions (marked CTR consultation) by email to [Lisa.devey@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk](mailto:Lisa.devey@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk)

The consultation closes on dd/mm/yyyy

We will listen carefully to what you tell us and take the responses into consideration when making a final decision on the 2021/22 scheme.

Following the decision, the full results from the consultation will be available on the Council's website.

The new scheme will start on 1 April 2021. The Council will consider the impact of the scheme annually and consult again if it thinks further changes need to be made.

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**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL****EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE****8th September 2020****REPORT TITLE: RECOVERY AND RESTORATION PLAN 2020/21**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Matt Dormer
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Kevin Dicks – Chief Executive Officer Deb Poole – Head of Transformation, OD & Digital Services
Ward(s) Affected	N/A
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	N/A
Key Decision / Non-Key Decision	

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 The Covid-19 pandemic has required an unprecedented response from the Council. Even though the requirement to respond to the pandemic is still ongoing it is important to look towards recovery and to the return of business as usual, whenever that may be. The purpose of this report is to update Members on the proposed approach to recovery and to ask Members to consider and endorse the attached Recovery and Restoration Plan 2020 – 2021.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Executive Committee is asked to RECOMMEND**

- 2.1 **That the proposed Recovery and Restoration Plan 2020 -2021, as set out in Appendix 1, be endorsed.**
- 2.2 **That the Executive Committee monitor the council's recovery actions against the plan and that the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Leader, be authorised to make amendments to the plan as required.**

**The Executive Committee is also asked to NOTE**

- 2.3 **The attached Corporate Peer Challenge Report 2020.**

**3. KEY ISSUES****Background Information**

- 3.1 Whilst the delivery of essential council services has been maintained during the pandemic we have seen major changes in the way officers work and the way councillors carry out their duties. Our local and national economies have been adversely impacted by the unprecedented suspension of trading for most of our local businesses who were unable to operate as normal. Members should be aware that a county wide, multi-agency economic recovery plan is being produced and this will sit alongside our own Recovery and Restoration Plan. It

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE****8th September 2020**

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should also be noted that the Head of Planning and Regeneration and the Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration are also developing a Redditch specific economic recovery plan.

- 3.2 In line with government guidance at the beginning of the pandemic, a number of council staff were classified as key workers. Whilst we have been able to successfully implement a more agile approach to allow everyone who can to work from home, we have also continued to provide all core services with as little disruption to our community as possible.
- 3.3 As Members will have experienced, normal governance and decision making procedures have changed. The introduction of new emergency legislation to allow for the provision of virtual meetings, has seen the process of decision making continue, albeit in a very different way to our usual approach. In light of the pandemic, Members role as community leaders has become increasingly important and appreciated by our community.
- 3.4 It is acknowledged that whilst the initial 'first wave' of infections now appears to be in decline, it is possible that a 'second wave' or local outbreaks may occur over the coming months. In order to plan for these eventualities, the Senior Management Team and Corporate Management Team have taken key learning points from the first outbreak to develop a number of actions to prepare for this situation. The actions include: a further review of Business Continuity Plans, development of a revised Communications Plan, development of a list of employees who live outside the borough who may be impacted by local outbreaks, discussions with existing local support networks to understand their preparedness, discussions with partner agencies regarding the sharing of data and the identification of any staff who may be able to assist with Track and Trace activities.
- 3.5 Whilst the ongoing pandemic still requires some officers to continue to focus on response, the Council as a whole now needs to start planning for recovery and restoration and all that will entail. Whilst the recovery will, no doubt, take some time to implement; it is appropriate that we start to plan our way forward towards 'business as usual'.
- 3.6 To this end, officers have produced the attached Recovery and Restoration Plan. The Recovery and Restoration Plan is built around the five strategic purposes within the current RBC Council Plan and includes some of the priority areas from the Council Plan alongside key recovery actions. The Strategic Purposes in the RBC Council Plan are:
- Run and Grow a Successful Business
  - Finding Somewhere to Live
  - Aspiration, Work & Financial Independence
  - Living Independent, Active & Healthy Lives
  - Communities which are Safe, Well Maintained & Green
- The recovery plan also includes a section for our Corporate Priorities which focuses on the internal business of the council.

- 3.7 It is recognised that the RBC Council Plan was developed prior to the Covid pandemic and as such the focus of some of the previous priorities may have changed as a result of the current crisis. A review of the RBC Council Plan will be undertaken in early 2021 to ensure the priorities are refreshed and remain relevant in a post Covid environment. The Recovery and Restoration Plan also incorporates the main recommendations from the recent Corporate Peer Challenge Review which can be found in Appendix 2.

**Legal Implications**

- 3.8 None.

**Service / Operational Implications**

- 3.9 Whilst the continuation of services to our community remains the focus of the councils activities, it is anticipated that service areas will also begin to implement the high level actions outlined in the attached recovery plan.

**Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 3.10 None.

**4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 4.1 None.

**5. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Recovery and Restoration Plan 2020 – 2021  
Appendix 2 – Corporate Peer Challenge Report 2020

**6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

**7. KEY**

None

**AUTHOR OF REPORT**

Name: Deb Poole – Head of Transformation, OD & Digital Services  
email: d.poole@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk  
Tel.: 01527 881256

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**Redditch Borough Council COVID-19 Recovery & Restoration  
Plan DRAFT**

**2020 – 2021**

**Version 1.3**

Purpose	Original Council Plan Commitments	Recovery & Restoration Issues and Actions	New or Modified Actions (what we will do...who with/partners)	By When	Owner
<b>Run and Grow a Successful Business</b>	<b>Economic development &amp; regeneration</b>	Consult businesses to understand current needs, recovery and growth plans, working with partners to support business recovery and growth	North Worcestershire Business Advisor appointed by GBSLEP to engage with businesses in North Worcestershire	On-going	NWEDR
		For many strategic purposes the planning system can play a key role in contributing to recovery and restoration. For all strategic purposes, where relevant, there will be support through the timely determination of planning applications and the implementation, evidence gathering and review of the Local			
		Continue with the regeneration of the Town Centre, including the train station	Prepare a Town Centre Masterplan and Feasibility Study	Nov 2020	NWEDR
		Ensure businesses access Government's Coronavirus Support Grants.	Ensure all appeals are responded to robustly	End Aug 2020	DR
		Provide businesses entering Recovery Cycle for Non-Domestic Rates with information relating to support mechanisms	Advise businesses of support available via comms	Aug – Dec 2020	DR
		Provide businesses with information on recovery support available internally and nationally. Revisions made to letters that are going out to businesses to explain debt recovery processes	Advise businesses of support available via comms	Weekly / On-going	NWEDR
		Liaise with internal partners to provide information in relation to business in arrears and delaying payments of liabilities.	Work with recovery teams to ensure all businesses are provided with support and advice on debt management	Aug – Dec 2020	DR
	Work with other recovery officers across the Councils to ensure debt is managed holistically to provide the customer with the correct level of support	Ongoing	CFor		

			Continue to circulate the weekly Business Bulletin and provide further updates from partners as appropriate.	Nov 2020	NWEDR
		Look to provide incubator units or the like through the investment programme to give businesses spaces to open and operate in	Town Centre Masterplan and Feasibility study to assess the feasibility and viability of creating a Digital Innovation Centre in Redditch as part of the Enterprise & Education Quarter	Jan 2021	NWEDR
		Secure a Town Deal for Redditch as part of the Towns Fund government programme	Submit a Town Investment Plan, which will form the basis of the Town Deal	Jan 2021	NWEDR
	<b>Develop an economic development strategy, to include stimulating the growth of low carbon industries</b>	Develop a local economic recovery framework	Work with the Worcestershire Economic Recovery Group to ensure Redditch economic recovery needs are addressed in the county wide economic recovery plan.	Oct 2020	NWEDR
Develop and deliver a Redditch Economic Recovery Strategy			Oct 2020 and ongoing	NWEDR	
There are a number of disparate programmes of support to help businesses diversify into the low carbon sector. Pull these together and promote as a cohesive whole			Oct 2020	NWEDR & Kath Manning	
Consider holding a local jobs fair, focusing on reskilling, including carbon friendly skills.			Dec 2020	NWEDR	

<b>Work with partners to improve digital &amp; physical connectivity (to include broadband, 5G &amp; transport infrastructure)</b>	Ensure that adequate digital infrastructure is in place to support the accelerated adoption of digital technologies by local businesses as a result of Covid-19	Work with the West Midlands 5G Company and the GBSLEP and WLEP on a 5G roll-out programme for Redditch	On-going	NWEDR
<b>Support local businesses to embrace new technologies in order to maximise business growth, particularly in the knowledge &amp; creative industries</b>	Identify local businesses that plan an accelerated adoption of digital technologies	<p>Work with Betaden Tech Accelerator to promote opportunities to learn about innovative technologies being developed in the county</p> <p>Promote the new Business Recovery Grant, being administered by the Growth Hubs, which is designed to support businesses affected by Covid-19 to access new technology. Grants from £1k-£5k, available for a limited time</p> <p>Promote learning and training opportunities for businesses - courses and workshops delivered by GBSLEP Growth Hub and Worcestershire Business Central</p>	<p>On-going</p> <p>Due to be launched late Sept</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>NWEDR</p> <p>NWEDR</p> <p>NWEDR</p>
<b>Look to stimulate adequate supply of land &amp; premises to enable existing &amp; new businesses to grow</b>	Identify brownfield sites and long term empty premises that could be redeveloped	Continue to work with the Worcestershire LEP Land supply group and private landowners and landlords to identify development opportunities in the borough	On-going	NWEDR
<b>Strengthen the vibrancy &amp; viability of our towns &amp; district centres</b>	<p>Make the town centre a more attractive place/space to do business</p> <p>Make the town centre a more attractive place to spend free time (leisure, arts &amp; culture, well-being)</p>	Prepare a Town Centre Masterplan and Feasibility study	Nov 2020	NWEDR



<b>Undertake a comprehensive review of Council owned assets and assess opportunities for investment privately in land and premises within the Borough with a particular focus on business centre and industrial estates</b>	Investigate alternate sources of funding to PWLB to ensure best value borrowing can be achieved to maximise the range of investment opportunities and returns to the council	Ensuring that the council is compliant with guidance when accessing these funds	Ongoing	CFor
	Identify partners to invest with	Revise the treasury management policy to enable all options to be made available to the council	Mar 2021	CFor
		Review the property structure to enable asset reviews to be undertaken	Mar 2021	CFe
		Develop asset management strategy	Mar 2021	CFe
<b>Support development at the Redditch Eastern Gateway</b>	Continue to support the development at Redditch Eastern Gateway	Work with developer / businesses / college to ensure opportunities for Redditch	Ongoing	NWEDR
<b>Strengthen the vibrancy &amp; viability of our town &amp; district centres</b>	Work in partnership with the BID to ensure improvements in the Town	Support Revitalise Redditch in collection of BID Levy	Ongoing	NWEDR
<b>Supporting businesses to start and grow within the Borough</b>	Consult businesses to understand current needs, recovery and growth plans, working with partners to support business recovery and growth	North Worcestershire Business Advisor appointed by GBSLEP to engage with businesses in North Worcestershire	Ongoing	NWEDR
<b>Regenerating our Town Centre</b>	Continue with the regeneration of the Town Centre, including the train station	Town Centre regeneration interventions to be included in the Town Investment Plan (Town Deal)	Ongoing	NWEDR
	Consider what support could be provided to businesses to encourage them to the area	Investigate providing low cost loans to businesses to encourage growth and attract them to the area	Ongoing	CFor

Purpose	Original Council Plan Commitments	Recovery & Restoration Issues and Actions	New or Modified Actions (what we will do...who with/partners)	By When	Owner
<b>Finding Somewhere To Live</b>	<b>Rough Sleepers</b> To continue the legacy of having no rough sleepers in the Borough	To review and adapt work to the Housing First Model in partnership with the voluntary sector, the Police and mental health services.	To identify funding from MHCLG grants and completed claims for those helped.	Dec 2020	DA
		To work with WCC and other district colleagues on the submission of a County Next Accommodation Programme Bid.	To identify how needs can be best met to support Redditch rough sleepers and to deliver against the bid	Sept 2020	DA
		To identify suitable accommodation from within RBC's housing stock and ensure no-one helped in crisis returns to streets	Establish impact on the HRA	Mar 2021	DA HK
		Capacity around support of all providers – financial health check to ensure continued support available	Write to agencies concerned and ask them to contact the Council with any issues	Sept 2020	DA AG
	<b>Supporting the delivery of appropriate housing in the Borough</b>	Deliver a Housing Strategy for the Borough to address the housing needs now and in the future giving consideration to the impact of Covid 19 and how the impact of crisis on the economy will impact on housing supply and demand	To work with new Govt guidance/ legislation issued in response to Covid 19 To include the impact of Covid in the strategy and associated actions over the next 12/18 months.	Oct 2020	DA
		Use the Local Plan to drive development and use the Council's Housing Growth Programme to increase affordable housing.	Contribute to the countywide housing delivery strategy.	Mar 2021	DA
			Work with development agents Bailey Garner and review and agree revised timelines.	Ongoing	DA MB
	<b>Deliver the three year Housing Strategic Improvement Plan</b>	As part of the 'Change Programme' the R&M Business Support Team trial of working differently was originally planned to start in March 2020. Due to Covid 19 restrictions the trial is planned to restart in September 2020.	The trial is expected to resume in Sept (Covid situation allowing)	6 months  Mar 2021	IR LP SD HM

			<p>Deliver the Housing, Tenancy &amp; Advisory Service improvement plan including structure, approach and process to housing and neighbourhood management and housing options</p> <p>Consideration of the impact of rent arrears on the HRA due to Covid and identify actions to redress the impact.</p> <p>Development of an effective HRA 30 year financial plan for stock investment and work programme that will keep all RBC properties in good condition and compliant with statutory legislation.</p> <p>Ensure an active asset management regime is in place, that identifies properties which have poor social, economic or environmental performance and either improve them or replace them with properties which are fit for purpose.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Apr 2021</p> <p>Apr 2021</p>	<p>JW</p> <p>HK</p> <p>JS</p> <p>JS</p>
	<b>Support people to help prevent homelessness</b>	<p>Look at any newly emerging homelessness prevention initiatives across West Midlands and explore new ways of working locally</p> <p>Develop the proactive Rent Management system.</p> <p>Develop a cross cutting and end to end pre tenancy and tenancy sustainment service across social and private rented sectors</p> <p>Develop strategy to prevent recourse to legal enforcement options for rent arrears except for</p>	<p>Utilise new ways of working to change working practices</p> <p>Procure and implement the new system</p> <p>Identify potential funding from grants</p> <p>Identify funding from grants</p>	<p>Oct 2020</p> <p>Jan 2021</p> <p>Dec 2020</p>	<p>DA</p> <p>HK</p> <p>HK DA</p> <p>HK DA</p>

		the most serious cases where all other interventions have failed		Dec 2020	
	<b>Work with tenants across sectors to understand their needs</b>	To consider the findings from the community survey	To develop actions in response to the survey results	Dec 2020	DA HK
	<b>Work with developers to deliver more homes utilising renewable technologies</b>	<p>To continue to work with developers to promote upfront investment for long term savings and acknowledging that developers may focus on must-haves and reduce spend on energy efficiency</p> <p>Work with the LEP and other national organisations to ensure maximum grant funding for these areas is accessed to make it more affordable for developers to do this</p> <p>Government guidance on improved green credentials</p>	<p>Monitor post Covid 19 development proposals for new build and influence to achieve this priority</p> <p>Consider and bid for new energy grant schemes as they are announced including the Green Homes Grant</p> <p>Implemented by Building Control and advised upon wherever possible staffing resources</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Now</p>	<p>DA MB</p> <p>DA MB</p> <p>AW</p>

Purpose	Original Council Plan Commitments	Recovery & Restoration Issues and Actions	New or Modified Actions (what we will do...who with/partners)	By When	Owner
<b>Aspiration, Work &amp; Financial Independence</b>	<b>Skills for the future</b>	Undertake a skills audit with partners & work together with them to address any gaps	Work with WCC who are leading on the “Creating our Future Workforce” campaign including the skills show and Careers & Enterprise Company  Work with partners to see what the needs are in terms of skills	Ongoing  End Nov 2020	NWEDR and Partners  NWEDR
	<b>Supporting young people to gain the skills they need</b>	Support schools & HOW College to link students to local employers (Note a number of schemes have been launched to help address the effect of the economic downturn on Young People – apprenticeship grants, traineeship grants and kickstart (6 month placements)  Understand the partnerships that are already in place	Work to promote the availability of schemes and, in addition, continue to deliver the ‘Opening Doors to Business’ initiative alongside partners  Arrange meetings with high schools and HOW to establish their current links with schools	Ongoing  End Nov 2020	NWEDR and Partners  NWEDR
	<b>Support schools &amp; HOW College to link students to local employers</b>	Support schools & HOW College to link students to local employers	Work to promote the availability of schemes and, in addition, continue to deliver the ‘Opening Doors to Business’ initiative alongside partners	Ongoing	NWEDR and Partners
	<b>Work with businesses to utilise the apprenticeship levy &amp; increase the number of apprenticeships</b>	Ensure that the council maximises the levy by taking on the full cohort of apprentices which can be funded through the levy the council pays. In addition, review if the council wants to utilise other organisations levy payments to further increase this number	4 <sup>th</sup> tier and HOS to undertake a session to identify how training can be funded from the levy in the future	End Dec 2020	BT PS (HR)

<b>Provide support to people to enable them to access employment opportunities in digital &amp; low carbon industries</b>	Promote the support available through the Worcestershire Jobs Match programme and GBSLEP Employment triage programme	Promote GBSLEP skills hub, when launched	Ongoing	NWEDR and Partners
<b>Support residents to manage their finances, including working with schools on money management</b>	<p>Development of rent management system and tenancy sustainment team to include money advice and debt relief</p> <p>Promote the work that the FIT team do, as part of this create stronger partnership working with CAB</p> <p>Improve website to include budgeting tips and tools. Get greater awareness to residents.</p> <p>Work with DWP to identify support to jobseekers/ advice re benefits</p> <p>Provide Taxpayers in arrears and failing to maintain CT payments with information in relation to support available</p>	<p>Procurement and implementation of the new system</p> <p>Undertake full service review to ensure posts are in place to deliver support</p> <p>Utilise accessibility project to improve website and improve information available on line</p> <p>Liaise with partners (eg CAB) to identify the support and signposting that they can give</p> <p>Develop script of support advice to customer service teams</p>	<p>Jan 2021</p> <p>Mar 2021</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>HK</p> <p>LD</p> <p>LD</p> <p>LD</p> <p>DR</p>
<b>Ensure people get the benefits they need</b>	<p>Development of rent management system and tenancy sustainment team to include money advice, financial inclusion and debt relief</p> <p>Develop a communications plan so Council tenants are aware of what benefits and support they are entitled to.</p>	<p>Procurement and implementation of the new system</p> <p>Implement the communications plan Liaise with comms to ensure the signposting and social media is up to date</p>	<p>Jan 2021</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>DA HK</p> <p>LD</p>

		Be prepared for potential spike with regards to furloughed workers – unemployment, UC claims, HB/CTR claims.	Arrange quarterly meetings with DWP to understand impact of Covid on benefit take up and unemployment Restructure to be implemented to ensure staff resource is sufficient to meet demand.	Oct 2020	LD
		Optimise spending of DHP budgets to those in need.	Regular meetings with Housing officers to monitor level of spend Staffing	Ongoing	LD
		Liaise with foodbanks on their capacities and demand, can we assist through ELF and Food Vouchers	Partnerships in place to provide food and essential items- funding to be secured from County	Ongoing	LD
		Simplify CTR scheme for 2021/22	Present revised scheme to Exec, O&S & Council	Sep 2020	LD

Purpose	Original Council Plan Commitments	Recovery & Restoration Issues and Actions	New or Modified Actions (what we will do...who with/partners)	By When	Owner
<b>Living Independent, Active &amp; Healthy Lives</b>	<b>Improving health &amp; well-being</b>	To promote the Lifeline well-being checks	To work with communications to promote the benefits of the Lifeline Well-Being checks	Nov 2020	RN
	<b>Continue to support the Redditch &amp; Bromsgrove Dementia Friendly Communities initiative</b>	Continue to support this work		Ongoing	JW
	<b>With partners, enable targeted activities &amp; initiatives to support mental well-being</b>	Work with WCC on the legacy of Here2Help to support vulnerable residents post Covid  To identify projects to support young people during Covid 19 pandemic through the Redditch Youth Providers Forum research project (£10k funding: Lottery, Worcs CC, Worcs Community Foundation)	To promote and support local communities to access the legacy of Here2Help and link this with the work of the Redditch Partnership around the 'deal' approach.	Dec 2020	JW
			Discuss with Partnership officer the demand / need for activities. Liaise with Sports Development and Rubicon to enable community activities to take place	End Oct 2020	Dev Service
			To support the work of Support Redditch and BARN's Volunteer Bureau to increase the number of volunteers working with VCS mental wellbeing services.	Ongoing	JW
<b>Support improved access to services that reduce social isolation (including Lifeline)</b>	Promote the Lifeline service locally and through partner agencies including self-installation during the pandemic.  Develop and promote a new range of digital equipment and sensors to enhance the service user experience, including devices that will work outside of the home, encouraging independence and peace of mind when going out.	To develop a communications/marketing plan.	Nov 2020	RN	
		Monitor conversion rates to establish how many of those, that have the service for free, choose to retain the service and pay for it ongoing.	Ongoing	RN	



		<p>Continue to work with WCC and Amica24 installing complex technology enabled care solutions on their behalf in Redditch. Expand the 6 week free scheme to all health and care professionals.</p> <p>To consider the impact of Covid 19 on the Dial A Ride and Shopmobility services</p>	<p>Review opportunities with County and health colleagues on new tele health technologies post Covid</p> <p>To review the sustainability of Redditch Dial A Ride and Shopmobility with income projections and plans to work towards self- financing/ commercially viable services being severely affected by Covid 19</p>	<p>June 2021</p> <p>Dec 2020</p>	<p>RN</p> <p>TD</p>
	<b>Develop a Parks &amp; Open Spaces Strategy (including increased physical activity &amp; cycling)</b>	Provide a clear brief on what the detail of the strategy will be	<p>Phased approach to the work to fine tune the technical documents that would feed into the overall strategy.</p> <p>Produce financial breakdown</p>	Mar 2021	RB IKF JC
	<b>Enhance sport &amp; cultural opportunities offered by the Council</b>		Discuss with Partnership officer the demand / need for activities. Liaise with Sports Development and Rubicon to enable community activities to take place	Oct 2020	JC
	<b>Working with partners, including Rubicon Leisure, to increase activity levels in the Borough</b>	<p>To deliver a range of activities to target the insufficiently active :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. High and low impact exercise and creativity sessions through <u>referral pathway</u> routes GPs, physios, health stakeholders.</li> <li>2. Funded Positive Activities projects being delivered in partnership with community organisations including Your Ideas, RYCE, YMCA, PAZ (RSA Arrowvale), Whats Your Point, Redditch Self Defence, UP Foundation, Redditch Wheels Project.</li> </ol>		Ongoing	Dev Service

		<p>3. Short Breaks disability projects for disabilities being delivered in partnership with Your Ideas and Redditch Road &amp; Path Cycling Club.</p> <p>4. Sport England funded Active Families programme to encourage children 5-11 and their families to get active.</p> <p>Working with partners to run Active Kitchen to provide food and activity to reduce holiday hunger and tackle the drop in physical activity levels in holiday periods.</p> <p>Support targeted activities for healthy lifestyles</p>			
	<b>Work with partners to address smoking &amp; substance misuse levels in the Borough</b>	Work ongoing through the partnerships		Ongoing	HB

Purpose	Original Council Plan Commitments	Recovery & Restoration Issues and Actions	New or Modified Actions (what we will do...who with/partners)	By when	Owner
<b>Communities which are Safe, Well Maintained &amp; Green</b>	<b>Reducing crime &amp; disorder</b>	<p>To consider the impact on society of Covid 19 and work with partners and service areas to ensure the Community Safety Partnership action plan reflects this.</p> <p>Support targeted initiatives to reduce anti-social behaviour and embed the corporate anti-social behaviour policy into wider service delivery utilising available ASB tools and powers</p>	<p>To review and update the Community Safety Partnership action plan to contribute to the recovery of consequences from Covid 19</p> <p>Establish a procedure to implement the new ASB Policy and to train teams accordingly</p>	<p>Mar 21</p> <p>Oct 20</p>	<p>BH</p> <p>BH / HK</p>
	<b>Work with partners, schools &amp; communities to reduce crime &amp; the fear of crime</b>	<p>Env Services to support Community Safety/Housing etc in addressing issues relating to crime/disorder/ASB by managing the built environment and soft landscaping appropriately.</p> <p>Ensure effective Parking Enforcement, via the SLA with Wychavon, covering both On and Off Street contraventions.</p> <p>Through the Community Safety Respect Schools Programme, continue to work with partners and provide additional support for young people affected by the impact of Covid 19</p> <p>Establish &amp; maintain regular partnership meetings to discuss at risk tenants including police and mental health.</p>	<p>Review capital programme for potential future capital investment for improvements.</p> <p>Continue working with County Highways, Police &amp; Schools.</p> <p>Identify funding opportunities to sustain and continue to deliver the Respect Programme</p> <p>Develop an ASB case management system &amp; improvement performance management. Deliver a structure with smaller patch sizes for Neighbourhood Officers to increase visibility and stake holder on local neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Jan 2021</p> <p>Dec 2020</p>	<p>GR CW DK</p> <p>GR KH</p> <p>BH</p> <p>HK</p>
	<b>Review services to understand how we can adapt to</b>	To consider the impact of Covid 19 on this commitment	Review the priorities for Climate Change across the Borough	Dec 2020	SH, GR JW

	<b>address the implications of climate change</b>		Review of technologies, innovation and funding	Dec 2020	GR JW
	<b>Improve targeted environmental enforcement</b>	<p>Define Council priorities regarding environmental enforcement, and then review existing arrangements and alternative models available either through partnership with adjacent LA's, or Private Sector as a commercial arrangement.</p> <p>Identify effective responses to environmental crime activity to identify perpetrators and take appropriate enforcement action to reduce/prevent further offences, utilising available ASB tools and powers.</p>	Review enforcement arrangements and impact of Covid 19, e.g. on fly tipping, and new resources/new model of working may be required. Review of council enforcement arrangements, across priority areas.	April 2021	SH GR JW RB
	<b>Understand the different needs of our local areas in order to keep them clean &amp; tidy</b>	<p>Fully utilise demand data to understand local/community needs and priorities enabling a continuous review of resource requirements and to develop suitable work programmes.</p> <p>Deliver a structure with smaller patch sizes for Neighbourhood Officers to increase visibility and stake holding on local neighbourhoods.</p> <p>Work with capital and programmes / environment teams to deliver a comprehensive neighbourhood management service with full regard to maintenance services and health and safety</p>	<p>To procure and implement new Environmental Services IT system</p> <p>Additional resources may be required to address ASB reports that do not fit into specific service areas enforcement remit.</p> <p>Implement service charging to maximise the income streams to HRA</p>	<p>Sept 2021</p> <p>Dec 2020</p> <p>Dec 2020</p>	<p>GR CW</p> <p>GR KH MG</p> <p>HK</p>
	<b>Explore the options to reduce residual waste, increase recycling &amp; maximise the efficiency of waste collection services</b>	<p>Campaign to increase recycling quality and quantities with residents, but suspended due to staffing pressures and Lockdown pressures for residents related to Coronavirus.</p>	Restart recycling quality project from Sept 2020 with direct mail to households in targeted areas	Ongoing	MA AM

	Original Council Plan Commitments	Recovery & Restoration Issues and Actions	New or Modified Actions (what we will do...who with/partners)	By when	Owner
<b>Corporate Priorities</b>	<b>Financial Sustainability</b>	Produce & deliver sustainable financial plans	Development of General Fund 4 year plan to ensure financial impact of Covid assessed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarify impact of Covid</li> <li>Assess prior year underspends</li> <li>Review Capital Programme</li> <li>Identify savings plans</li> <li>Review fees and charges</li> </ul> Work with managers to better understand budget implications Recruit additional technical capacity within the finance team Restructure of financial services team	Feb 2021  Oct 2020 Oct 2020 Jan 2021 Nov2020 Dec2020  Sept 2020  Aug 2020 Dec 2020	CFor
		Improved commerciality: maximising every opportunity to generate income, including review of fees & charges	Ensure that all Housing chargeable work and service charges are billed for.  Review of fees and charges  Maximising income from more commercial services, such as Lifeline, trade waste	Dec 2020	HK IR JS CFor
		Review services currently delivered to determine if they offer VFM, and if not and not legally required then consider discontinuing.	Work with Members to understand priority services and assess those that are not as a priority against benchmarking to fully understand value for money and associated costs	Sept 2020	CFor
		Undertake effective contract management	Ensure that the Asprey IT asset management system, contract module is	Mar 2021	JS

		fully implemented to ensure effective contract management		
		Continue to work through corporate training and development programme. Work internally to maximise efficiency and economy of scale.	Mar 2021	JS
		Develop comprehensive contracts register and effective contacts management through new finance system	Mar 2021	CFe
		Targeted and bespoke departmental training and development	Mar 2021	CFe
		Social responsibility policy with focus on local suppliers	Mar 2021	CFe
	Manage our assets to get the best outcomes for our residents	Ensure that data validation of the stock condition survey is completed and to inform the 30 year business plan.	Mar 2021	JS
		Determine non-performing stock which may require alternative solutions like demolition or remodelling.	Mar 2021	JS
		Review use of buildings, facilities and assets	Mar 2021	CMT
		Develop comprehensive assets management strategy and in line with the Council Plan	Mar 2021	CFe
		Review resource within property services to enable additional support to be secured to develop an asset management strategy for the future	Mar 2021	CFe

		Make financially viable strategic acquisitions & investments	Assess all opportunities against the financial modelling we have in place	Ongoing	CFor
		Undertake a self-assessment against CIPFA's new Financial Management Code (CPC)	Undertake the self-assessment online	Feb 2021	CFor
		Encourage all levels of the organisation to articulate their role clearly and succinctly in delivering financial sustainability (CPC)	Workshops and training on the new ERP system Restructure in the financial services team	Feb 2021 Dec 2020	CFor
	<b>Sustainability</b>	Review alternative delivery models.	Will be outlined in Service Business Plans. Assess business plans future models to enable overall council model to be established	Nov 2020	SMT CMT
		Exploit digital technologies, enabling more automation of services through the implementation of the Digital and Customer Strategy to ensure both technology and process change. (CPC)	Develop a delivery action plan for the Digital Strategies. Internal resource.	Oct 2020	DP MH
		Invest in leadership development to reinforce culture change and lay foundations for the future. ILM programme will be started later in 2020 (CPC)	Start the ILM programme later in 2020 Ensure the Apprenticeship Levy is used to cover training costs. Ensure the first cohort focuses on 5 <sup>th</sup> tier level employees.	Oct 2020	DP BT
		Utilise external commercial expertise to ensure delivery of agreed priorities (CPC)	Ongoing support via remote working/virtual meeting	Ongoing	GR DP
		Review key risks on the Corporate Risk Register	Regular review of the added Covid risk – financial and service	Oct 2020	CFor

		Review alternative delivery models	Following development of the business plans assess the new model for the council	Jan 2021	CMT
<b>Review Resources and Services</b>		Review services to understand how we can adapt to climate change	A review of priorities and actions based on service plan proposals.	As above	As above
		Prioritise clearly and resource accordingly (CPC)	Review post Covid	Feb 2021	SMT CMT
		Ensure that budget manager engagement and ownership is invested in to make self-service a success (CPC)	Workshops and training on the new ERP system Restructure in the financial services team	As above	As above
		Workforce planning – employee skills, gap analysis, workforce profile, succession planning etc	Create a workforce strategy in light of the 'new normal' after the Covid crisis. To consider the impact of remote/agile working on employee numbers/skills.	Dec 2020	DP BT
			Develop improved management information for services through a renewed corporate dashboard.	April 2021	DP BG
		Support workforce recovery and transition to 'new normal'	Determine what 'new normal' means and understand what policy changes will be needed to support new ways of working.	Dec 2020	DP BT
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver a remote working policy.</li> <li>• Arrange management training to develop skills for remote working and performance management.</li> <li>• Review working arrangements of whole organisation.</li> <li>• Explore flexible work arrangements.</li> </ul>	May 2021	DP BT
	Capture lessons learned/details from surveys in order to assess impact of remote working.	Analyse data and pass this out to service areas.	Sept 2020	DP BT	
	Review appetite for agile working post-crisis		Feb 2021	SMT	



			Services to use the data to determine what their service reviews may look like. To include the future operating model, agile working etc		CMT
		Review HR&OD Strategy to ensure recognition and reward are encompassed within it.	Link the strategy to the business planning cycle, development of 'new normal' and workforce planning.	Dec 2020	DP BT
	<b>Review the Council Plan</b>	Review the delivery of priorities in light of the impact of the pandemic.	Review during 2021 for the next 3 years to link in with the MTFP	April 2021	CMT
	<b>Community Leadership</b>	Explore the development of "Deal" approaches (based on the concepts / principles of the Wigan Deal).  Continue to work with the support networks (Support Redditch and Support Bromsgrove) and partnerships to underpin future economic and community recovery (CPC)	Consider the legacy of the Covid volunteers and how they and the VCS organisations can support the "Deal" approach in terms of community assets.  Undertake / co-ordinate work across Council departments and with partner organisations to create a better understanding of our most vulnerable and in need residents. Bring together data and information the Council and partners hold about vulnerable residents which can be utilised to target future resources, support, and opportunities to those most in need in our communities. This data to also be used for future planning and response in emergencies e.g. any	Aug/ Sept 2020  Sept 2020	HoS/ 4th Tier Managers/LSP Managers/ Policy Team  4th Tier Managers/LSP Managers/ Policy Team

			<p>future waves of the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>To deliver the three consortium based projects :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reimagine Redditch Consortium bid to Creative People &amp; Places Arts Council England fund (£1.5m) post covid recovery</li> <li>2. Redditch Youth Providers Forum projects provided through £10k covid recovery fund</li> <li>3. Delivery of consortium based approach to deliver contract with Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP Cultural Capacity Development Fund (CCDF)</li> </ol>	<p>RYPF: End Oct 20</p> <p>ACE fund tbc</p> <p>CCDF: End of March 2021</p>	Dev Serv
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Corporate Peer Challenge: Follow Up Visit  
**Bromsgrove District Council and  
Redditch Borough Council**

June 2020

Feedback Report

## 1. Introduction and purpose

Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils received an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge in January 2018. Feedback from the Peer Challenge concluded the two councils had delivered over £7.5m of savings since 2010/11 through joint working and are continuing to deliver around £1.5m per annum. In 2018 the team identified further scope for efficiencies and service improvements. The Peer Challenge process recommended that the councils should focus on ensuring improved corporate ownership of financial management with tighter control of budget savings and guarantee that expenditure is directed only towards agreed priority areas.

The peer team suggested more rigour should be introduced into developing and analysing business cases, and to their impact on priority setting. The Peer Challenge recommended the councils should be clearer about how they will track progress on key projects and savings and report against them. This should include identifying the consequences and mitigation if delivery does not progress as planned.

In 2018 the peer team invited the councils to re-assess what they are seeking to achieve from the shared services partnership moving forward. Whilst it had delivered savings, resilience and a greater opportunity to lever influence it had not in 2018 established a single workforce or culture.

The purpose of the follow up visit on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020 was to help the councils take stock of progress made against the areas of improvement identified in 2018. This report provides a written summary of the key observations made by the peer team during their visit in February 2020. This report was finalised in June 2020 having been delayed whilst the councils responded to the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Peer review and challenge

Peer challenges are improvement-focussed and tailored to meet individual councils' needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement focus. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read. The process is not designed to provide a technical assessment or due diligence on specific proposals. Neither is it intended to provide prescriptive recommendations. The peer challenge process provides feedback, observations and insights from experienced practitioners that will help validate, reality check and further develop the councils' current plans, proposals and evolving thinking about the future.

### Scope and focus

The peer team were asked to consider the progress made since January 2018 and provide recommendations for continued improvement. In doing so peers considered the areas for

improvement identified by the original peer review and the key recommendations made at that time:

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

A further 22 recommendations were made within the five core themes of corporate peer challenge. These are set out in Annex A.

### Peer team

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

- Matt Prosser, Chief Executive, Dorset Council
- Cllr Paul James, Former Leader, Gloucester City Council
- Cllr John Kent, Former Leader, Thurrock Council
- Bindu Arjoon, Director, Exeter City Council
- Claire Taylor, Corporate Director Customers & Organisational Development, Cherwell DC and Oxfordshire CC
- Karen Iveson, Chief Finance Officer Selby DC and Assistant Director North Yorkshire CC
- Raj Khara, LGA membership engagement officer
- Clare Hudson, LGA Peer Challenge Manager

Seven of the team had been involved in the original peer challenge in 2018. The team spent two days onsite at Bromsgrove and Redditch councils on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> February during which they spoke to more than 40 stakeholders including councillors, senior

managers, frontline staff, and partners. Peers prepared for their visit by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the councils, their current challenges and recent progress.

## **2. Key findings and observations**

### **2.1 Progress since the Peer Challenge**

In 2019 Redditch BC changed political control and became Conservative controlled. This change in political balance and leadership means both councils are Conservative controlled and provides an opportunity to make progress on some fundamental issues facing the councils. The councils continue to benefit from a dedicated workforce and there has been significant effort in the senior officer core put into identifying what culture change might best support the workforce going forward. There is now a stronger sense of a single workforce serving two councils at the senior officer level. The councils now need to work to embed culture change from the bottom up to ensure all parts of the councils are engaged in moving towards a more dynamic and financially accountable culture.

This emerging culture change has been facilitated through the harmonisation of terms and conditions for the two councils. Several key steps have also been taken to address the recommendations made by the peer team, and the section 24 notice that was served to Redditch BC in 2019. A new finance system is in the process of being introduced which will be fundamental to delivering the financial control and accountability needed. The scheme of delegation in Redditch BC has been revised and this is having a positive impact in empowering officers to be more innovative.

Partners continue to value working with the councils, both individually, and collectively and the councils' leadership have continued determined effort to underpin this. There remains significant scope for collaboration with partners to improve outcomes for the communities in Redditch and Bromsgrove and the councils need to carefully consider how to harness this without necessarily always leading it.

### **2.2 Shared services – direction of travel**

There were mixed views expressed to the team, particularly by members, on whether shared services has reached its maturity within these two organisations. Senior leaders need to be clear about their understanding of this maturity and whether the full benefits have been realised. Leaders should explore whether or not shared services will be actively pursued with others – and be clear with staff where future efforts will be placed. The councils should also establish regular benchmarking to understand if services are providing value for money and if further efficiencies could be realised within the current shared services framework.

Given progress made and the maturity of the shared services partnership the councils should now be considering how they can translate the benefits that operating a long running shared service has bought to drive further collaboration.

### 2.3 Understanding of local place and priority setting

The leaders of both councils are well respected for their energetic passion for place. Through collaborative working this can be harnessed to help shape the delivery of future growth, regeneration and economic prosperity respectively. The regeneration plans in Redditch are ambitious and have the potential to be transformative. Redditch BC must now consider how it will bring together exciting individual projects and schemes into single vision that can galvanise the resources and capability of partners.

Bromsgrove DC is seeking to deliver on its vision for an economically vibrant and sustainable district within the constraints of its green belt. The Government's Review of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) may well result in the Council no longer being able to maintain membership of two LEPs. This will mean a major strategic decision about where Bromsgrove DC wishes to align itself economically.

There is evidence of speculation about future local government arrangements for Worcestershire. Without wishing to comment on the merits or otherwise of change, the peer team would encourage the councils not to be distracted by this and to concentrate on collaboration and partnership working for the benefit of residents and businesses. The need for Worcestershire County Council to complete a strategic transport assessment could be considered to be a practical example of this.

Having focused effort on instigating culture change the councils must now focus on strengthening approaches to prioritisation and associated delivery plans. The councils are continuing to commit to too numerous priorities and need to be clearer about when something is no longer a priority and what that means for the organisations, and how this is reflected in corporate plans. Plans to deliver agreed priorities are not as embedded as they need to be resulting in lower levels of rigour on project delivery than are needed in the current financial climate.

The councils are well versed in transformation principles but these would benefit from a more clearly articulated and agreed transformation programme and governance being updated and fully aligned to refreshed – and fewer – priorities. These refined priorities and delivery plans should then be resourced accordingly. The councils should bear in mind that agreeing a priority does not mean the councils always have to be the deliverer of services. There is a history of providing services to the community that are not the traditional role of district councils. This feels more prominent in Redditch, such as the Connecting Families project. Whilst these projects may have received external funding the council should also consider the wider resources implications of committing to non-statutory service delivery.

## 2.4 Political and managerial leadership

The Chief Executive continues to lead from the front and remains a visible presence for partners and staff. Since the original peer challenge in 2018 there has been constructive action to change the behaviour and conduct of political debate in Bromsgrove Council meetings. This is positive and the Council should build upon these improvements to overcome the historic legacy of negative political debate in public.

Group leaders are now invited to meet together informally, and this more regular engagement is welcome amongst councillors and officers alike. There has been a management restructure which is still embedding and senior officers must work to ensure that managerial approaches are consistent and managers are well supported to deliver priorities. Having invested in clarifying the culture the councils want staff to operate in consideration should now be given to what accountability and positive challenge means for everybody in the organisation as part of the culture change programme – and how it influences decision and behaviours.

## 2.5 Financial planning and viability

A clearer understanding of what financial accountability means for individuals is progressing at the corporate management team level and this now needs testing with wider staff and members. A self-assessment against CIPFA's new Financial Management Code will provide a focus for further improvement.

The finance system that has been committed to will provide a catalyst for improved financial management and accountability. It is critical that this is delivered to deadline to and becomes quickly embedded in a strengthened culture of financial accountability. Given the financial challenges it is important that robust forecasting is embedded with budget managers in order to build greater confidence in financial management.

The peer team heard that there has been a solid response to the s24 notice issued to Redditch and substantial work has been done on identifying savings and clarifying the council's approach to financial sustainability. Future savings plans need rigorous testing and there is a particular need for more work to be done on the financial sustainability of Redditch's Housing Revenue Account.

The revised budget reports are more consistent between the two councils and provide detailed analysis. The overarching MTFS has the opportunity to set the wider context for the budget reports but needs to be more widely articulated across the organisations. Staff working to deliver services against planned budgets are not always clear when they are seeking to make changes what are efficiencies and what are savings and cuts to services.



The focus on continual service review and redesign for efficiencies and improved outcomes could be clearer. The councils have developed a substantive approach to commercialisation including using property investment to generate income as well as selling services and expertise. However, the councils' approach to borrowing to finance commercial property investment also needs careful consideration in light of the latest MHCLG and CIPFA code and guidance.

The concept of commercialism as 'part of the day job' seems embedded for those colleagues that have advanced it. There is however, a need for a clear risk assessment to ensure that both savings delivery plans and income generation plans are built on the foundations of tested and robust delivery plans and that services provided for other parties, such as Lifeline for Cannock, are genuinely contributing to financial sustainability.

## 2.6 Capacity to deliver

The councils are operating a high number of live programmes and projects. In our brief time there the peer team noted at least seven major change programmes that officers were working on. The councils have also established property investment funds but progress on this has not been as expected, with limited viable commercial opportunities coming forward. There is significant breadth in what the councils are seeking to achieve but they do not always achieve the depth of their planned project/intervention. This is having a negative impact on organisational resilience with projects not always seeming to have been closed down before a new one is started. It is also not clear how the organisation learns from the projects it has delivered and how this can influence project design and service delivery as well as organisational culture.

The councils have set out a comprehensive approach to programme management and should ensure this is oriented towards generating pace and momentum in delivery of savings including identifying opportunities for improving productivity and reducing costs as well as delivering savings and service redesign.

The councils have embraced the need for change and have developed processes for setting up new programmes and projects. As this matures and the councils clarify their future operating models there will need to be a focus on how to allocate resources towards redesigned services ensuring that costs are regularly benchmarked and efficiencies sought out. The workforce is generally very long-serving and opportunities should be sought out for officers at every level to 'get out' and find out about practice elsewhere in order to bring in new ideas and promote an open and innovative culture.

### 3. Recommendations 2020

The councils have made solid progress since 2018, particularly in solidifying the concept of a single workforce and responding appropriately to the section 24 notice in Redditch. The peer team recommend the councils now focus on:

1. Prioritise clearly and resource accordingly
2. Invest in leadership development to reinforce culture change and lay foundations for the future
3. Consider how and when you can be the convenor/enabler of services and change within your communities. The Councils through the Bromsgrove Partnership and Redditch Partnership (at the time of the visit) were exploring possible “Deal” approaches (based on the concepts / principles of the Wigan Deal). During the pandemic response two support networks have been established (Support Redditch and Support Bromsgrove) – the Councils could seek to work with these networks and the partnerships to underpin future economic and community recovery.
4. Be consistent in internal communications and explore opportunities for two-way internal communications
5. Develop a clear action plan to implement your digital and customer strategy, recognising that a focus on digital and customer experience requires both technology and process change. Make this a clear element of your plans to improve effectiveness and efficiency.
6. Undertake a self-assessment against CIPFA’s new Financial Management Code
7. Ensure that budget manager engagement and ownership is invested in to make self-service a success
8. Strengthen financial forecasting to underpin the refreshed approach to financial management
9. Encourage all levels of the organisation to clearly and succinctly articulate their role in delivering financial sustainability
10. Utilise external commercial expertise to ensure delivery of agreed priorities

#### 4. Next steps

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

As part of the peer review/challenge process, there is an offer of further activity to support this. The Local Government Association (LGA) is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this. Helen Murray is the main contact between your authority and the LGA. Her contact details are: Tel. 07884 312235 and Email [helen.murray@local.gov.uk](mailto:helen.murray@local.gov.uk).

In the meantime, we are keen to continue the relationship we have formed with the councils throughout the peer challenge. We will endeavour to provide additional information and signposting about the issues we have raised in this report to help inform ongoing consideration.

Clare Hudson

On behalf of the peer team:

- Matt Prosser, Chief Executive, Dorset Council
- Cllr Paul James, Former Leader, Gloucester City Council
- Cllr John Kent, Former Leader, Thurrock Council
- Bindu Arjoon, Director, Exeter City Council
- Claire Taylor, Corporate Director Customers & Organisational Development, Cherwell DC and Oxfordshire CC
- Karen Iveson, Chief Finance Officer Selby DC and Assistant Director North Yorkshire CC
- Raj Khera, LGA membership engagement officer
- Clare Hudson, LGA Peer Challenge Manager

**Annex A****Further Recommendations from original Peer Challenge report - 2018**

1. Be clear about how you identify when something is no longer a corporate priority – and what it means
2. When change is introduced guarantee that it is introduced with greater pace and rigour – with clear lines of accountability at the officer and political level
3. Invest more time in considering what role all levels of the organisation contribute towards corporate aims – transformation is everyone's role. Ensure that transformation is adequately resourced with clear programme and project governance, and appropriate skills.
4. Management approaches need more consistency to support the development of a single corporate culture
5. Establish greater consistency in the foundations of shared services – ICT, HR, Finance should all be enablers of change
6. Re-examine your existing commitments and have an honest conversation about whether they are sustainable, relevant or appropriate
7. Evaluate the opportunities for maximising your influence – and focus your energy and leadership on where you can be most effective
8. Take action at Bromsgrove District Council to raise the conduct of political debate so that it is constructive and does not undermine the council's reputation, as well as the local government sector
9. Review processes for supporting members at council meetings, and where necessary, implement change to ensure members are well supported
10. Ensure that boundaries between officers and members are publicly clarified and that their implementation is regularly reviewed
11. Review Council Procedures to ensure that they can support constructive debate
12. Ensure that report proofing procedures are 'watertight' and errors are not published
13. Establish clearer lines of accountability for the leadership and delivery of major programmes and projects – that is appropriately dispersed throughout the organisation to mitigate potential risk in investing too much in one role.

14. Financial accountability needs greater ownership across the organisation
15. Budget planning needs to be more focused on future financial sustainability and not simply meeting service needs and short term demands
16. Be clearer about how you track progress and manage risk – on delivering savings and key projects
17. Establish a transparent, regularised and proportionate system of reviewing and amending recharges between the two councils – rather than leaving it to specific service areas
18. Expedite the business case and implementation of a new finance system
19. Consider how to meet customer need and expectation within your financial options using the systems thinking approach. This will help you identify what matters to the customer and design efficient processes to meet this need, removing service boundaries where required.
20. Consider how to re-align your customer strategy to most effectively meet customer need within your identified priorities.
21. Consider the impact that digital transformation of services can have, releasing capacity whilst improving the customer experience – develop and implement a single digital strategy.
22. Develop a clear plan to assess what high volume low complexity transactions can be directed towards more cost effective channels. There is no tension between this and a systems thinking approach - many customers expect and are happy to access council services by means other than face- to-face- as indeed they do for services from other public and private organisations.

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**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**8<sup>th</sup> September 2020**Finance Monitoring Quarter 1 2020/21**

<b>Relevant Portfolio Holder</b>	Councillor David Thain, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management
<b>Relevant Head of Service</b>	Jayne Pickering, Executive Director Finance and Corporate Resources
<b>Non Key Decision</b>	

**1. Purpose and summary**

To report to Executive on the Council's financial position for Revenue and Capital for the financial period April 2020 – June 2020.

**2. Recommendations****The Executive Committee is asked to resolve**

- 2.1 The current financial position in relation to revenue and capital budgets for the period April 2020 – June 2020 as detailed in the report.

**That Executive recommend to Council**

- 2.2 Approval that the training budgets held within the service Human Resources Service are combined and therefore operating in a shared services environment meaning that any training provided to our staff is beneficial to both councils as we upskill our workforce. (See 3.4)

**3. Revenue budgets**

- 3.1 This report provides details of the financial performance of the Council. The report reflects the finances across all of the New Strategic Purposes to enable Members to be aware of the level of funding attributed to each area and how this compares to budget. The summary below shows the financial revenue position for the Council for 2020/21.
- 3.2 Financial reports are sent to budget holders on a monthly basis. As part of this process a detailed review is undertaken with support from the finance team to ensure that all issues are considered and significant savings or cost pressures are addressed. This report explains the key variances to budget for 2020/21.

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

8<sup>th</sup> September 2020

3.3 The £9.702m original budget as included in the table below is made up of the budget approved in February 2020.

In addition the Latest Budget 2020/21 of £10.127m includes transfers from reserves of £425k which is shown in appendix 2.

**Revenue Budget Summary – Overall Council  
 Financial Year 2020/21**

Please note figures have been rounded

<b>Strategic Purpose</b>	<b>Original Budget 2020/21</b>	<b>Revised budget 2020/21</b>	<b>Budget to date 2020/21</b>	<b>Actuals to date 2020/21</b>	<b>Variance to date 2020/21</b>
	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>
<b>Aspiration, work &amp; Financial independence</b>	663	672	406	449	43
<b>Communities which are safe, well maintained and green</b>	4,203	4,490	1,112	966	-146
<b>Enabling the Authority</b>	2,731	2,705	573	581	8
<b>Finding somewhere to live</b>	1,055	1,055	264	256	-7
<b>Living independent, active &amp; healthy lives</b>	664	666	-137	-120	17
<b>Run and grow a successful business</b>	386	540	240	315	244
<b>Totals</b>	<b>9,702</b>	<b>10,127</b>	<b>2,458</b>	<b>2,617</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>Corporate Financing</b>	<b>-9,702</b>	<b>-10,127</b>	<b>-4,542</b>	<b>-2,544</b>	<b>-2</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-2,084</b>	<b>-1,927</b>	<b>158</b>

**Financial Commentary:**

There are a number of variances across the strategic purposes. The summary above shows the 2020/21 revenue position for the Council for the first quarter and the main variations are as a result of:

**Aspiration, work & Financial independence (£43k overspend)**



**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**8<sup>th</sup> September 2020

The strategic purpose includes all costs relating to the support of benefits and the administration and delivery of Council Tax services in the Borough.

- There have been some additional costs required within Benefits subsidy for Benefit payments on B&B's due to the Covid pandemic **£70k**.
- Revenues have some salary savings due to a pending service review **£21k**.

**Communities which are safe, well maintained and green (£146k saving)**

These budgets include those relating mainly to Environmental Services, Planning, CCTV and other activities to deliver against the purpose to ensuring an area is a safe and attractive place for the community.

The variances to report are :

- There is a saving within the Anti-Social behaviour team budgets due to salary vacancies which are being addressed in a service review. The underspend, however, will be offset against the overhead recharge to the HRA (shown in enabling services) due to the service being 100% attributable to the HRA of £24k.
- Core Environmental operations have an underspend in quarter 1 due the strategic routes teams having low vehicle costs as a result of restricted work due to Covid **£11k**.
- The place teams are also showing savings which is due to salary savings on temporary vacant posts and small underspends on supplies and services as a result of Covid **£22k**.
- There are some salary savings in the tree management team following a services delivery review **£37k**.

**Enable others to work/do what they need to do (to meet their purpose) (£8k overspend)**

All support services and corporate overheads are held within the enabling purpose. These include; IT, HR, Finance, Management team and other support costs.

- There is an underspend within Asset & Property Management due to sites being closed as a result of Covid **£40k**.
- Corporate services are currently showing an overspend due to vacancy management and enabling savings targets held within this service. These will be dealt with going into quarter 2 as detailed in the savings monitoring see point 4 below **£80k**.
- Customer Services have savings on salaries and secondments and this is currently being reviewed **£38k**.
- Human resources also have underspends on salaries which will also reviewed going into the second quarter of 2020/21 **£21k**.

**Finding somewhere to live (£7k saving)**

The costs associated with homeless prevention, housing strategy and land charges are all included in this strategic purpose. It is worth noting that these costs solely relate to those charged to the General Fund not the Housing Revenue Account

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- There are no material individual variances in quarter 1 to report.

**Living independent, active & healthy lives (£17k overspend)**

There are a number of budgets relating to the delivery of the strategic purpose including; Lifeline and Community Transport.

- There is a shortfall in income within community transport/Dial-a-ride and shopmobility due to the impact of Covid **£43k**
- Parks and events have savings as events have not taken place also due to Covid along with also having some temporary salary savings **£29k**

**Run and grow a successful business (£244k overspend)**

The budgets within the strategic purpose include management fee to Rubicon Leisure, economic development, all licenses and costs associated with the town and other Properties within the Borough.

- Assets & Facilities management have a reduction in income in the first quarter and will review this going into quarter 2 **£19k**
- Business development have seen reduced income from their learning online services which is a due to the Impact of Covid **£29k**
- Licenses income has also seen reduced income stream in the first quarter of 2020/21 which they hope will increase going into the second and third quarter of the year **£15k**.
- There is currently a variance within the client payment to Rubicon Leisure of **£170k** to quarter 1. This is as a result of the net loss of income following the forced closure of the sites due to the Government legislation during the Covid pandemic. The Shareholder Committee receives financial and performance reports to enable the Council to understand the Company financial position.

**Corporate Financing (£2k saving)**

- There are no material individual variances in quarter 1 to report.

**3.4 Training Budgets – Human Resources**

The request that the training budgets are shared will ensure a smoother delivery of our current training programme.

Currently the training budgets are held separately at each authority requiring resources from both Finance and HR to administer and recharge every course undertaken by an employee based on a percentage split. As the head count is comparable at each authority and the training budgets are similar in size, it is proposed to move to a shared services arrangement for the training budget,

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mirroring how employee salaries are managed. It is proposed that the training budgets are combined and held by Redditch as the HR service is hosted by Redditch.

The budget allocations currently are: (excluding the HRA and Worcestershire Regulatory Services)

BDC £133,412

RBC £106,720

It is proposed that each authority will have £106,000 in a shared training budget. The remaining £27k from BDCs allocation will be retained separately by BDC.

**4. Savings Monitoring**

The medium term financial plan included £467k of savings identified to be delivered during 2020/21 the breakdown of these savings is attached at appendix 3. £45k of these identified savings is in relation to reductions in enabling costs.

To quarter 1 £52k identified savings have been realised against the budgeted April to June savings of £117k

Officers are working through the vacancy savings targets and reductions in enabling costs to enable these to be shown from quarter 2 in addition to any further savings that can be delivered.

**5. Cash Management****5.1 Borrowing**

As at the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020 there is no short term borrowing and £103.929m in long term borrowing with associated costs in the quarter of £888k. All long term borrowing costs relate to the HRA.

An interest payable budget has been set of £341k for 2020/21 due to expenditure relating to current capital projects.

**5.2 Investments**

At of the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020 we had placed £5.5m in investment accounts to generate an income for the Council.

An interest receivable budget has been set of £209k for 2020/21 for any investments we make.

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**6. Capital Budgets**

**Capital Budget Summary – Overall Council  
 Financial Year 2020/21**

Please note figures have been rounded

Strategic Purpose	Original Budget 2020/21 £'000	Revised budget 2020/21 £'000	Budget to date 2020/21 £'000	Actuals to date 2020/21 £'000	Variance to date 2020/21 £'000
Communities which are safe, well maintained and green	1,447	1,447	378	117	-261
Enabling the Authority	2,038	2,038	2,009	2,050	41
Living independent, active & healthy lives	40	40	10	16	6
Run and grow a successful business	250	250	62	65	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3,775</b>	<b>3,775</b>	<b>2,460</b>	<b>2,249</b>	<b>-211</b>

**Financial Commentary:**

- *Please note capital carry forwards from 2019/20 are not included in the above figures – please see appendix 4 – these budgets now approved will be loaded for quarter 2 monitoring.*

**Communities which are safe, well maintained and green**

The main variances for this strategic purpose relate to the following projects;

- One of the main projects within this strategic purpose is the capital budget for the Vehicle replacement. Whilst some spend has commenced there are final specifications with service areas for remaining vehicle orders to be placed by the end of September 2020.
- The capital budget for the Locality scheme whilst it has progressed they have now been temporarily delayed due to Covid issues.

**Enabling the Authority**

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- The variance for this strategic purpose relates to the New Finance Enterprise System in Financial services which has now commenced. The project is expected to be completed by December 2020 a request has made to re-profile some of the budget into the first quarter of 2020/21 from the last financial year.

**Living independent, active & healthy lives**

- The slight overspend relates to the upgrading of the hardwired lifeline schemes however the budget has been requested to be carry forward from last financial year.

**Run and grow a successful business**

- This capital budget is for the public buildings project which has commenced in the first quarter of 2020/21.

**7. Housing Revenue Account**

Appendix 1 details the financial position for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the period April 2020 – June 2020.

**8. Earmarked Reserves**

The position as at 30th June 2020/21 is shown in Appendix 2.

**9. General Fund Balances**

The General Fund Balance as at the 31st March 2020 is £1.599m. A balanced budget was approved in February 2020 to include identified savings which have been built into individual budget allocations. This also included a planned return to balances for 2020/21 of £82k. The current level of balances will therefore increase to £1.681m with recommended level of balances of £750k.

**10. Legal Implications**

No Legal implications have been identified.

**11. Service/Operational Implications**

Managers meet with finance officers on a monthly basis to consider the current financial position and to ensure actions are in place to mitigate any overspends.

**12. Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications**

No direct implications as a result of this report.

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**13. Risk Management**

The financial monitoring is included in the corporate risk register for the authority.

**APPENDICES**

**Appendix 1 - HRA Outturn April – March 2020/21**

Appendix 2 - Earmarked Reserves 2020/21

Appendix 3 - Savings Monitoring 2020/21

Appendix 4 – Capital carry forwards 2019/20

Appendix 5 - Strategic Purpose detail (for PHB)

**Author of the report**

Name: Kate Goldey – Senior Business Support Accountancy Technician

E-mail: [k.goldey@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk](mailto:k.goldey@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk)

Tel: (01527) 881208

## Appendix 1

**HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)****REVENUE 2020/21 Quarter 1**

	2020/21 Full Year Budget £'000	2020/21 Budget to Date Apr - Jun £'000	2020/21 Actuals Apr - Jun £'000	2020/21 Variance Apr - Jun £'000
<b><u>INCOME</u></b>				
Dwelling Rents	23,083	6,252	6,233	19
Non-Dwelling Rents	537	412	415	-3
Tenants' Charges for Services & Facilities	667	220	204	16
Contributions towards Expenditure	44	11	19	-8
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>24,331</b>	<b>6,895</b>	<b>6,871</b>	<b>24</b>
<b><u>EXPENDITURE</u></b>				
Repairs & Maintenance	6,038	1,495	867	-628
Supervision & Management	8,249	863	634	-229
Rent, Rates, Taxes & Other Charges	294	74	0	-74
Provision for Bad Debts	182	0	0	0
Depreciation & Impairment of Fixed Assets	5,715	0	0	0
Interest Payable & Debt Management Costs	4,179	0	0	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>24,657</b>	<b>2,432</b>	<b>1,501</b>	<b>-931</b>
<b>Net cost of Services</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>-4,463</b>	<b>-5,370</b>	<b>-907</b>
<b>Net Operating Expenditure</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>-4,463</b>	<b>-5,370</b>	<b>-907</b>
Interest Receivable	-118	0	0	0
Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay	0	0	0	0
Use of Balances	-208	0	0	0
Transfer to Earmarked Reserves	0	0	0	0
<b>(Surplus)/Deficit on Services</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-4,463</b>	<b>-5,370</b>	<b>-907</b>

**Financial Commentary:**

Appendix 1 details the financial position for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the period April - December 2020

The major variances are due to the following:

- Repairs & Maintenance: Due to covid restrictions the R&M teams have had limited access to properties. Consequently, expenditure is lower than normal.
- Supervision & Management: the variance is predominantly due to vacant posts pending the ongoing review of the Housing function and professional fees yet to be incurred/invoiced
- Rents, rates & taxes: Awaiting insurance premium costs

For items where budgets to date show as zero this is due to these costs being allocated as part of the year end accounting processes

**HRA CAPITAL 2020/21 Quarter 1****Strategic Purpose****Help Me to Find Somewhere to Live in my Locality**

	<b>2020/21 Full Year Budget £'000</b>	<b>2020/21 Budget to Date Apr - Jun £'000</b>	<b>2020/21 Actuals Apr - Jun £'000</b>	<b>2020/21 Variance YTD £'000</b>
1-4-1 Housing Replacement	3,200	636	469	-167
Bathroom Renewals	105	26	0	-26
Kitchen Renewals	180	45	1	-44
Catch Up Repairs	0	0	4	4
Asbestos Removal	400	100	39	-61
Structural	30	8	6	-2
Roofing	270	68	0	-68
Electrics	888	222	9	-213
Gas Central Heating	416	104	23	-81
Windows	100	25	5	-20
Balcony Replacements	150	38	0	-38
disabled adaptations	700	175	7	-168
Water Supply	50	13	0	-13
Excellent Estates	350	88	14	-74
FRA Works	0	0	21	21
Stock Condition Survey	0	0	21	21
Fencing Replacements	90	23	0	-23
New Housing System	469	117	80	-37
Door Access Systems	72	18	0	-18
Electric Heating	42	11	0	-11
Electrics - Catch up works	624	156	0	-156
Door Renewals	20	5	0	-5
Hard Wire Smoke Detector Installation	378	95	0	-95
Damp & Mould	38	10	0	-10
Fire Safety	82	20	0	-20
works on buy backs	270	68	0	-68
Compartmentation Works	1,800	450	0	-450
Bin Stores	200	50	0	-50
Design & Supervision	300	0	0	0
	<b>11,224</b>	<b>2,571</b>	<b>699</b>	<b>-1,872</b>

**Financial Commentary:**

The projects form the basis of an interim capital improvement plan pending the outcome of a comprehensive stock condition survey. The survey will be used to inform the budgets required for the 30 year business plan.

Works are also currently being undertaken on a needs only basis pending the survey outcome

1-4-1 Housing Replacement: properties built or purchased using 1-4-1 capital receipts generated from Right to Buy sales



Description	Balance b/fwd 1/4/2019	Budgeted Release 2019/20	Revised Balance b/fwd 1/4/2019	Transfers in existing reserve 2019/20	Transfers out existing reserve 2019/20	New Reserve 2019/20	C/fwd 31/3/2020	Planned use for 2020/21 Budget	Comment
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000		
<b>GF Earmarked Reserves</b>									
Community Development	(66)	0	(66)	0	0	0	(66)	0	To support the costs associated with community projects
Community Safety	(302)	0	(302)	0	272	0	(30)	0	External grant funding to be released over a number of years on Community Safety Projects ongoing
Corporate Services	(150)	0	(150)	0	0	0	(150)	0	Funding to support potential costs of future service reviews.
Economic Growth Development	(330)	0	(330)	0	0	0	(330)	0	To fund the Economic Development opportunities across the District
Electoral Services	(44)	0	(44)	0	0	0	(44)	0	To support the delivery of individual electoral registration and to set aside a reserve for potential refunds to government
Equipment Replacement	(48)	0	(48)	0	0	0	(48)	0	ICT equipment reserve
Financial Services	(132)	0	(132)	0	0	0	(132)	0	Brexit reserve and also funds to support the new enterprise system
Corporate Financing	(1,997)	0	(1,997)	0	0	0	(1,997)	0	The reserve has been created to offset the loss on Business rates collection and appeals in 2019/20.
Housing Benefits Implementation	(269)	0	(269)	0	0	0	(269)	0	Specific welfare reform grant received
Housing Support	(746)	0	(746)	0	0	0	(746)	50	Government Specific Grant - annual funding
Land charges	(9)	0	(9)	0	0	0	(9)	0	To fund potential litigation in relation to Land Charges
Land Drainage	(129)	0	(129)	0	0	0	(129)	0	To support costs associated with health and safety issues within the environment
Parks and Open spaces	(8)	0	(8)	0	0	0	(8)	0	To fund a review of the local allotments.
Planning	(669)	0	(669)	0	153	0	(516)	0	Custom build grant to provide support to the council towards expenditure lawfully incurred in relation to the provision and maintenance of a self-build register. Along with grants for One Public estates, Business Improvement district grant and Town deals grant.
Sports Development	(68)	0	(68)	0	0	0	(68)	0	Ringfenced grants for a number of sports development activities to improve Health and Wellbeing in the Borough
Town Centre	(2)	0	(2)	0	0	0	(2)	0	To support improvements in the Town Centre High Street
Warmer Homes	(12)	0	(12)	0	0	0	(12)	0	To support the costs associated with community projects (repair)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>(4,981)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(4,981)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(4,556)</b>	<b>50</b>	
<b>HRA Capital Reserve</b>									
Capital Reserve-HRA	(15,324)	0	(15,324)	0	0	0	(15,324)	0	Reserve to enable the debt repayment on HRA, and future repairs and maintenance along with support for the Housing Growth Programme.
<b>Totals</b>	<b>(15,324)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(15,324)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(15,324)</b>	<b>0</b>	

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**SAVINGS & ADDITIONAL INCOME - RBC**

**APPENDIX 3**

Department	Service	Strategic Purpose	Description of saving	2020-21 £'000	2020-21 Apr - June £'000	Quarter 1			
						On target Y/N	Additional (add to in yr savings) £'000	below target Y/N	Pressure £'000
Business Transformation	Human Resources	Enabling	Savings on car mileage budget	-2	-0	Y			
Community Services	Lifeline	Living independent, active & healthy lives	Additional income for digitalised systems	-17	-4	N		Y	4
Community Services	Community Services - Shopmobility	Living independent, active & healthy lives	Savings arising from a new model of working the shopmobility service	-1	-0	N		Y	25
Community Services	Community Transport	Living independent, active & healthy lives	Dial - a Ride savings	-90	-23	N		Y	15
Corporate Services	Communications & Print	Enabling	Additional Saving from New Print Contract	-10	-3	Y			
Corporate Services	Corporate Services	Enabling	Management Review	-54	-14	Y			
Corporate Services	Corporate Services	Enabling	Reduction in enabling costs - 1% per annum	-45	-11	N		Y	11
CAFS	Customer Access & Financial Support	Aspiration, work & financial independence	Service restructure	-30	-8	N		Y	8
Environmental Services	Core Environmental Operations	Communities which are safe, well maintained & green	Inflation on income from WCC for underpass maintenance	-2	-0	Y			
Environmental Services	Engineering	Communities which are safe, well maintained & green	Inflation on income from WCC for land drainage	-2	-0	Y			
Environmental Services	Transport	Enabling	Additional income from MOTs.	-3	-1	N		Y	1
Environmental Services	Place Teams	Communities which are safe, well maintained & green	Inflation on income from WCC for verge maintenance	-3	-1	Y			
Environmental Services	Engineering	Communities which are safe, well maintained & green	Income from WCC for design services provided by Engineering & Design Team	-3	-1	N		Y	1
Environmental Services	Bereavement Services	Communities which are safe, well maintained & green	Additional income from changes in structure re commercialism	-11	-3	Y			
Finance & Resources	Finance	Enabling	Insurance contract saving	-80	-20	Y			
Family support	0-19 Prevention and Early Intervention Service	Enabling	Income for new contract for Prevention and Early Intervention service	-32	-8	Y			
Legal & Democratic Services	Democratic Services	Enabling	Budget no longer required	-3	-1	Y			
Legal & Democratic Services	Democratic Services	Enabling	Budget no longer required	-10	-3	Y			
Legal & Democratic Services	Legal Services	Enabling	Additional income from HRA recharge	-34	-9	Y			
Leisure & Cultural	Business Development - Business	Run and grow successful business	Community centre no longer in use - Hawthorn Road	-1	-0	Y			
Leisure & Cultural	Business Development - Cultural	Communities which are safe, well maintained & green	Additional income from civic suite	-1	-0	Y			
Leisure & Cultural	Business Development - Cultural	Communities which are safe, well maintained & green	Reduction in advertising budget civic suite	-1	-0	Y			

Department	Service	Strategic Purpose	Description of saving	2020-21 £'000	2020-21 Apr - June £'000	On target Y/N	Additional (add to to in yr savings) £'000	below target Y/N	Pressure £'000
Leisure & Cultural	CMT	Enabling	Professional fees budget saving	-17	-4	Y			
Planning & Regeneration	Development Management	Communities which are safe, well maintained & green	Savings on car mileage budgets	-2	-1	Y			
Planning & Regeneration	Planning Policy	Communities which are safe, well maintained & green	General supplies and services budget savings	-5	-1	Y			
Planning & Regeneration	Building Control	Communities which are safe, well maintained & green	General supplies and services budget savings	-1	-0	Y			
RBC Reg Client	Licensing	Run and grow successful business	Inflationary increase on income	-1	-0	Y			
RBC Reg Client	Licensing	Run and grow successful business	Inflationary increase on income	-3	-1	Y			
Rubicon Client	Rubicon Client	Run and grow successful business	Saving due to AVVC being run by Rubicon	-4	-1	Y			
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>-467</b>	<b>-117</b>		<b>0</b>		<b>65</b>

Description	Department	Strategic Purpose	Funding	Full Year Budget 2019-20	Full Year expenditure 2019-20	Full Year Variance 2019-20	Request for Carry Forward into 2020/21	Comments
				£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Public Building	CAFS	keep my place safe and looking good	borrowing/capital receipts	374	198	-176	176	The project has had delays and a service restructure therefore a request is made to roll forward of the balance £176,308
Small Area Improvements	Community Services	keep my place safe and looking good	borrowing/capital receipts	40	0	-40	40	A request is made to roll forward the budget as there has been no requests this financial year for help with community safety/security project this year
Upgrade hardwired lifeline schemes	Community Services	help me live my life independently	borrowing/capital receipts	29	16	-13	13	The project has commenced and will be ongoing and will therefore require the balance carried forward into 2020/21.
Home Repairs Assistance	Community Services	help me live my life independently	borrowing/capital receipts	60	12	-48	48	Discretionary home repairs assistance is underspent which is due to a lack of applications being received despite advertising so a request to roll forward is made to 2020/21.
Disabled Facilities Grant	Community Services	help me live my life independently	DFG grant	1,381	663	-718	718	It is to be requested to carry forward an underspend on the Disabled Facilities Grants due to delays in referrals from occupational therapists.
HMO Grants	Community Services	help me live my life independently	borrowing/capital receipts	43	25	-18	18	Small underspend requested to be rolled forward due to a growing need now required for these grants. A request for an increase in the capital budget for next year has also been made in the outturn report.
Energy & Efficiency Installs.	Community Services	help me live my life independently	borrowing/capital receipts	110	20	-90	90	This fund has been unable to be spent this year due to the need to procure the energy advice service prior to restarting the Bromsgrove Energy Efficiency Fund. However the energy advice service has now been procured and has commenced in the final quarter of the financial year and will continue through to March 31st 2022
Camera Replacement programme	Community Services	keep my place safe and looking good	borrowing/capital receipts	139	94	-44	44	part of the bigger CCTV project part funded by PCC ongoing works roll forward last year spend funded from Pcc (£83,904)
Improved Parking Scheme ( includes locality funding)	Environmental Services	keep my place safe and looking good	borrowing/capital receipts	240	159	-81	81	The Improved Parking Schemes were all completed except for Ashton Close. Extensive Gas diversion works were required in advance of the main construction works commencing on site. However, due to Cadent's extensive lead-in period to undertake such gas diversion works, no construction works have been possible on site, to date.
Vehicle replacement	Environmental Services	keep my place safe and looking good	borrowing/capital receipts	231	108	-122	122	£40k – dial-a-ride decided that this additional bus was not required. Carry forward - £25k orders placed for the new Luton van delivery expected March 2020 but delayed due to COVID 19. £36k unfortunately by the time the specification was agreed with the service area there was not time to undertake the correct procurement exercise. £45k orders placed for the new mowers delivery expected March 2020 but delayed due to COVID 19. £3.5k order placed for trailer with expected March 2020 but delayed due to COVID 19. £26k – Due to the reduction in Forestry Crews and spare chippers available it was not necessary to purchase this at this time requested by service area to carry forward.
Locality Capital Projects	Environmental Services	keep my place safe and looking good	borrowing/capital receipts	325	231	-94	94	There is an underspend due to delays on certain schemes and therefore only a few Locality Schemes commencing on site. Such schemes have been completed, those being Batchley Shops Infrastructure Improvements, and the submission of the Planning Application for Green Lane, Studley - Highway Improvement Scheme. Unfortunately, Stratford DC have to refused the first application as they were against the residential development element of the scheme. Therefore, the scheme has been withdrawn, and is to be re-submitted when design revisions are complete with the residential development elements being omitted, and the proposal will only cover the removal of the bridge structure and embankments and providing an at-level pedestrian and cycle crossing.
Wheeler Bin purchase	Environmental Services	keep my place safe and looking good	borrowing/capital receipts	115	76	-39	39	The original budget for 2019/20 was £74,500, which is closely in line with our actual expenditure, but we had carry forward of approx. £37,000 from the 2018/19 financial year. This was as a result of some costs for the Garden waste service being incurred in the 2017/18 financial year rather than the 18/19 year as originally expected, and less of the new developments coming online than expected during 2017/18. We had expected higher take up of our garden waste service in 2019/20, and we seem to have remained at a steady level on new development rather than seeing a double hit with development expected in 2018/19 completing in 2019/20 alongside the other developments we had forecast for 2019/20. The money put in to be carried over into 2020/21 is effectively the money brought forward from 2018/19. We are reviewing our existing stock of large communal bins at Flats across Redditch housing stock in 2020, and expect to have higher costs in replacing damaged stock during the 2020/21 financial year as a result, so expect to utilise this carried forward funding on that.
Replacing the fixed four post vehicle lift within the workshop with a mobile four column lift	Environmental Services	keep my place safe and looking good	borrowing/capital receipts	25	0	-25	25	The workshop four poster ramp is being replaced by mobile column lifts from Totalkare, delivery expected March 2020 but delayed due to COVID 19. New delivery date now for August 2020.
Car Park Maintenance	Environmental Services	keep my place safe and looking good	borrowing/capital receipts	26	21	-5	5	Resurfacing to Kenilworth Close car park planned to take place by Contractor for last week in March. Unfortunately works cancelled due to COVID-19 shut down procedures being implemented.
New Finance Enterprise system	Finance	Enabling	borrowing/capital receipts	455	237	-218	218	New Finance Enterprise System in Financial services which has now commenced. The project is expected to be completed by December 2020 and a request is made to re-profile some of the budget into the first quarter of 2020/21.
Regeneration Fund	Finance	keep my place safe and looking good	borrowing/capital receipts	4,125	899	-3,225	3,225	There have been limited opportunities for investment properties during the year and therefore the budget will be requested to be carried forward into 2020/21.
Sports Contributions to support improvements to Outdoor facilities at Terry Field	Leisure & Cultural Services	Provide good things, for me to see, do and visit	S106 - 2014/311/FUL	30	0	-30	29	The works are now expected to be completed Spring / summer 2020
Investment into Health and Fitness Facilities	Leisure & Cultural Services	Provide good things, for me to see, do and visit	s106 / Reserve £10k	29	0	-29	29	The spec is being developed to get quotations to spend in Q1 20/21
Arrow Valley Country Park - Play, Open Space and Sports Improvements.	Leisure & Cultural Services	Provide good things, for me to see, do and visit	S106 Funding	172	0	-172	172	Following consultations the spec is now developed and works are expected to commence in Autumn 2020
Arrow Valley Country Park - Play, Open Space and Sports Improvements.	Leisure & Cultural Services	Provide good things, for me to see, do and visit	S106 Funding	184	0	-184	184	Following consultations the spec is now developed and works are expected to commence in Autumn 2020
Terry's Field - Sports Contribution to support existing approved funding at	Leisure & Cultural Services	Provide good things, for me to see, do and visit	S106 - 2014/323/FUL. Former Swimming Baths, Hewell	9	0	-9	9	The works are now expected to be completed Spring / summer 2020

Description	Department	Strategic Purpose	Funding	Full Year Budget 2019-20	Full Year expenditure 2019-20	Full Year Variance 2019-20	Request for Carry Forward into 2020/21	Comments
				£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Maintenance and improvements to playing pitches and sports facilities in Feckenham Cricket ground	Leisure & Cultural Services	Provide good things, for me to see, do and visit	S106 2016/347/FUL - The Paddocks astwood lane	18	15	-3	3	The works are now expected to be completed Spring / summer 2020
Improvement to Morton Stanley -Play Area for toddler and junior play	Leisure & Cultural Services	Provide good things, for me to see, do and visit	S106 Funding	80	0	-80	80	This project should be started summer 2020 following consultations and bid for funding for café and toilets
Improvement to Morton Stanley Open Space	Leisure & Cultural Services	Provide good things, for me to see, do and visit	S106 Funding	26	0	-26	26	This project should be started summer 2020 following consultations and bid for funding for café and toilets
Improvement to Sports Pitches infrastructure in Morton Stanley Park	Leisure & Cultural Services	Provide good things, for me to see, do and visit	S106 Funding	99	0	-99	99	The works are now expected to be completed Spring / summer 2020
Improvement to original Pump Track at AVCP	Leisure & Cultural Services	Provide good things, for me to see, do and visit	S106 Funding	61	0	-61	61	This project will start Autumn 2020 after bid to sport england for additional contribution
Improvement of 'Green Parking' at Arrow Valley South	Leisure & Cultural Services	Provide good things, for me to see, do and visit	S106 Funding	17	0	-17	17	The project has been delayed by bad weather and Covid and therefore will now be completed summer 2020
Hedgerow Mitigation measures by restoration and hedge laying with associated fencing and gates at AVP SHM and AVP North	Leisure & Cultural Services	keep my place safe and looking good	S106 Funding	22	0	-22	22	The contractors are to be appointed and works are therefore to take place during 20/21
Grassland Mitigation measures- recreating and monitoring grassland habitats in MS and AVCP	Leisure & Cultural Services	keep my place safe and looking good	S106 Funding	147	0	-147	147	The contractors are to be appointed and works are therefore to take place during 20/21
Pitch or sports facilities improvements at the Abbey Stadium	Leisure & Cultural Services	Provide good things, for me to see, do and visit	S106 Funding	17	0	-17	17	The works are now expected to be completed Spring / summer 2020
POS/Play Improvements to Forge Mill (24,528 POS and 26,700 Play) and Bordesley Abbey Visitor Centre.	Leisure & Cultural Services	Provide good things, for me to see, do and visit	S106 Funding	51	0	-51	51	The works are now expected to be completed Spring / summer 2020
Removal of 5 weirs through Arrow Valley Park	Leisure & Cultural Services	keep my place safe and looking good	borrowing/capital receipts	437	0	-437	437	The works are now expected to be completed Spring / summer 2020
Morton Stanley Play, Sport and Open Space Improvements (General)	Leisure & Cultural Services	Provide good things, for me to see, do and visit	S106 Funding	333	0	-333	333	The works are now expected to be completed Spring / summer 2020
Open space improvements - North Moons moat	Leisure & Cultural Services	keep my place safe and looking good	S106 Funding	3	0	-3	3	We are currently working with the moons moat community group and the project is now expected to be finalised in the spring and summer 2020/21
Improvements at Business Centres	Planning & Regeneration	help me run a successful business	borrowing/capital receipts	80	6	-74	74	It was hoped the project to be 50% complete by year end but unfortunately due to covid-19 this has slowed down the progress. Therefore due to the circumstances it is requested this to be rolled forward into the new financial year.
			<b>Total</b>	9,531	2,782	-6,749	6,748	

**EXECUTIVE**8<sup>th</sup> September 2020**HOUSING STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – PROGRESS REPORT**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Craig Warhurst
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Sue Hanley, Deputy Chief Executive
Wards Affected	ALL
Non-Key Decision - Yes	

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

This report to Executive Committee provides a further progress report two years into the approved three year Housing Strategic Improvement Plan.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Executive Committee are asked to resolve:

- 2.1 Executive consider the content of the report and endorse the progress reports detailed in the Improvement Plan (Appendix 1).**
- 2.2 That Executive agree that authority be delegated to the relevant Head(s) of Service for the revision/amendment and creation of new housing policies to ensure compliance with revised legislation and working practices/procedures, with the exception of any policy where there is a discretion or fundamental change in policy. All revisions/amendments to be undertaken following consultation with the Portfolio Holder Housing & Procurement.**

**3. KEY ISSUES****3.1 Financial Implications**

3.1.1 There are no new financial implications as a result of the Improvement Plan however the current pandemic 'Covid 19' has had a profound financial impact on the Housing Revenue Account.

3.1.2 The Medium Term Financial Plan for the Housing Revenue Account 2020/21 to 2023/24 was endorsed by Council on the 24<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

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- 3.1.3 Details of the actions required in both the short and medium term are contained within Section 2 of the Improvement Plan.
- 3.1.4 For 2019/20 the HRA outturn was a balanced position. £144k less reserves were used than was budgeted for. This was driven by an increase in the amount of interest received, vacancies in supervision and management and higher rental income than was predicted. These more than offset the overspend in repairs and maintenance and depreciation charges which were driven by an increase in property values. As part of budget setting for 2020/21 a four year budget was approved at Council on the 24<sup>th</sup> February 2020. This is currently being reviewed in light of the impact of Covid and a new three year budget is currently being developed which it is anticipated will be completed by the end of November in time for rent setting.
- 3.1.5 In light of the Covid pandemic monthly returns have been submitted to Government to report the income losses that are projected across the Council. A figure of £2M has been included in terms of projected income lost as a result of an increase in tenants moving to Universal Credit and the potential loss in rental income for the year for the HRA.
- 3.1.6 Whilst the 30 year business plan will be fully reviewed and prepared, priority is being given to the preparation and delivery of our financial recovery plan for the HRA as a result of the ongoing pandemic.
- 3.1.7 The collection of income from rents of £23.7M per annum is fundamental to the stability of the Housing Revenue Account as is the proactive management of rent arrears. Council has agreed to a new software system, which is currently being procured to enable the team to manage arrears more effectively.
- 3.1.8 In March 2020 rent arrears were being maintained at approximately 3% of the total annual rent debit, however during April 2020 there was a 'sevenfold' increase in Universal Credit claims due to lockdown, furlough, the self-employed being unable to work, alongside many tenants experiencing redundancy. We anticipate that there will be further impacts in relation to redundancy numbers, and financial hardship experienced by many families during the remainder of the financial year.
- 3.1.9 Universal Credit is ordinarily challenging to manage, however the total value of arrears debt where the method of payment is Universal Credit rose from 50% to 60%. In response to the Coronavirus Act 2020 directing all landlords to shift the focus from enforcement to financial support to tenants, our response has been proactive and supportive of our tenants:-
- The Housing Services team were reorganised to provide additional capacity and to focus on early intervention and financial support.



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- Strong collaboration with Customer Services and Revenues and Benefits to maximise payments, minimise escalation of low level arrears and referral to specialist benefit advisors in complex cases.
- Council have recently approved the business case to purchase analytical caseloads where 'technical' arrears present and supporting those cases requiring intensive weekly intervention. We are currently procuring the system.
- The initial reorganisation of staff/ teams was not as effective as originally anticipated so a specialist rent team with one dedicated team leader has been established over the last eight weeks and is now achieving a positive effect on performance.
- As of the beginning of August 2020 rent arrears were £1.2M.
- Arrears as a percentage of the rent debit has continued to rise from 3.5% when reporting began at the start of April 2020 to 5.22% as at 10<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

**3.2 Legal Implications**

- 3.2.1 The Council operates as a social landlord and is therefore required to comply with corporate policies, financial regulations, contract procedure rules, statutory returns and regulatory standards set by the Government.
- 3.2.2 There are a significant number of our housing policies which require amendment alongside recommended new policies as we implement our improvement programme, the new housing management system and revised ways of working.
- 3.2.3 Authority is sought for the relevant Head(s) of Service to have delegated authority to amend/update or create such policies in order to meet our legislative duties and new working arrangements in consultation with the Portfolio Holder. Anything where there is a discretion or fundamental change in policy will be duly brought to Executive/Council as required for Member consideration.

**3.3 Background Information**

- 3.3.1 Members of the Executive Committee originally endorsed a three year Strategic Improvement/Action Plan in September 2018 (2018-2021).
- 3.3.2 This report and updated plan provides Members with a comprehensive update and overview to date on all aspects of the plan, two years into our three year plan.

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3.3.3 The pandemic (Covid 19) has wrought profound impacts across all aspects of housing services and of course Council services delivered in Redditch. Our tenants and communities have been faced with unprecedented challenges and in many instances have relied greatly upon us as a landlord. Our managers, staff and teams have responded in a positive, proactive way. Despite the many challenges, emergency and essential services have been maintained alongside key front line services wherever possible, albeit by different and revised ways of working and delivery.

3.3.4 Whilst inevitably there has been a need to prioritise and revise our plans, including the Improvement Plan, we have remained focused on our fundamental purpose(s) and priorities, established and endorsed by members right from the outset of our improvement journey:-

- Key delivery towards our Strategic Purposes and predominantly “Finding Somewhere to Live”.
- Focus on making sure our tenants are safe (Compliance).
- Reduce the time our properties remain empty so we can allocate them to provide homes (Voids).
- Ensure repairs and maintenance is done quickly to a good standard, first time, to provide good homes (Repairs & Maintenance).
- Ensure tenants are housed in appropriate properties (Allocations).
- Deliver excellence in managing and supporting tenants (Tenancy/ Locality).
- Support and protect those most vulnerable (Homelessness).
- Engage and listen to our tenants.
- Rebalance the landlord/tenant relationship – the right balance of independence rights and responsibilities.

3.3.5 Not every aspect of the Improvement Plan is referred to in this covering report however the key issues/components are highlighted including significant actions which have, by necessity, been taken.

**3.4 Section 1: Corporate**

3.4.1 All actions have been delivered, however the Leadership/Management Development Programme has been delayed since February 2020 and is due to be launched September/October 2020 by an external provider.

3.4.2 The Cultural Change Programme is to be reviewed by the Corporate Management Team in August 2020 to incorporate the learning and revised ways of working over the last five months and build on the major programme undertaken throughout the whole organisation.

**EXECUTIVE**8<sup>th</sup> September 2020**3.5 Section 4: Voids**

3.5.1 The improvement plan sets out all of the elements and actions taken in reviewing and improving voids processes to improve performance and turnaround times.

3.5.2 The following actions have been taken to ensure momentum has been maintained:-

- A comprehensive analysis of voids was undertaken in January 2020 with the remapping of processes to further reduce void costs, rent loss and address increasing costs of providing temporary accommodation.
- A new workflow was created for ending tenancies, including a channel shift for tenants to submit Notice to Quit for dwellings and garages online. This was not only as a response to lockdown but also to instil control and compliance with all the necessary legal aspects of property terminations.
- During the early stages of lockdown our all round void performance was significantly improved with revised arrangements and an ability to address waiting times.
- Whilst the new housing management system will afford enhanced control over the 'end to end' void and allocation processes, we will continue to prioritise efficient void turnaround times to a quality standard, ensuring decent homes are available quickly.
- Void numbers (at 12<sup>th</sup> August 2020) have been reduced from a peak of over 120 voids to the current voids levels of 34 'in-house' and 18 larger scale capital voids.

**3.6 Section 5: Compliance/Capital Works**

3.6.1 The Improvement Plan does not reflect the significant amount of work undertaken by the teams in ensuring compliance in all aspects of delivery of our landlord services. The following updates can be provided:-

**Fire Safety Compliance**

3.6.2 The key statutory requirement is the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRO) which requires Redditch Borough Council (RBC) to undertake regular assessments by a competent person of the fire safety risks of a residential block of flats.

3.6.3 The Capital & Compliance team have been carrying out new Fire Risk Assessments (FRA) of the blocks over the last 12 months along with detailed Building health checks to ensure that the integrity of the buildings are not breached.

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3.6.4 The following works have been completed

- All high-risk buildings have had a new FRA completed by external consultants, with detailed health checks undertaken.
- A new fire safety policy has been drafted.
- All fire alarm systems and emergency lighting are maintained and serviced as required by legislation.

3.6.5 The following areas of work were placed on hold due to the COVID19 pandemic

- Medium and low risk FRAs were suspended and these are due to be restarted in September 2020.
- Medium & low risk health checks were suspended, and these were restarted in July 2020.
- Fire compartmentation and fire door upgrade works were suspended and are due to restart in September 2020.

Electrical Compliance

3.6.6 The key statutory requirement is the British Standard BS 7671 Requirements for Electrical Installations (also known as the IET Wiring Regulations) requiring Redditch Borough Council (RBC) to undertake regular assessments known as an Electrical Inspection Condition Report (EICR) by a competent person.

3.6.7 The Capital & Compliance team have been carrying out (EICRs) of the communal areas within blocks and domestic properties over the last 10 months, along with detailed assessments of smoke detection within the domestic properties.

3.6.8 The following work has been completed

- Of the 288 communal blocks that fall under the 5-year cycle for EICRs, we have completed 282 electrical inspections. The 6 communal areas where access is an issue are by necessity following a legal route to ensure compliance.
- A new electrical safety policy has been drafted.
- The electrical RCD protections have been upgraded in communal areas.
- 261 EICRs are satisfactory and all necessary category 1 remedial works have been completed.
- 17 communal areas within the blocks have works currently being undertaken, to ensure a satisfactory EICR is received.
- There are 5678 domestic properties that require EICRs with 3422 properties completed.

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- The remaining 2256 properties have been scheduled in for the inspections with two external contractors, with surveys currently being undertaken.

3.6.9 The following areas of work were placed on hold due to COVID19 pandemic

- EICRs where the tenant has requested us not to attend.
- Asbestos removal due to location of meter which impacts on the ability to undertake an EICR.
- Areas which the council do not have access to, e.g. tenants external store cupboards.
- Upgrade of electrical systems which require access and works within tenants' flats. These works have now been scheduled to start in September 2020.
- Court injunctions for properties where we have exhausted our no access processes.

Asbestos Compliance

3.6.10 The key statutory requirement is the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 (CAR) which requires Redditch Borough Council (RBC) to undertake an asbestos survey to confirm locations of asbestos containing materials within communal areas.

3.6.11 The Capital & Compliance team have been carrying out Asbestos surveys within the domestic stock which may potentially disturb and Asbestos Containing Materials.

3.6.12 The following work has been completed

- 388 block surveys, and 112 re-inspections undertaken to ensure compliance.
- An internal audit report undertaken and completed.
- A new asbestos policy has been drafted.
- Asbestos awareness training delivered to all staff within the Capital, Compliance and Corporate Property teams.

3.6.13 The following areas of work were placed on hold due to COVID19 pandemic:-

- Re-inspections of domestic properties, now scheduled to restart in October 2020.
- Removal of asbestos in blocks where major works are due to start, and now rescheduled in accordance with the revised capital projects programme.
- Asbestos management surveys in domestic properties. We envisage these works to start in October 2020 and run over into next financial year.

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- Asbestos awareness training for R&M, Gas and Voids teams to be completed by the end of September 2020.

Gas Compliance

3.6.14 The key statutory requirement is that RBC adhere to the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 (as amended) with a legal requirement for RBC to perform a gas safety check every twelve months, and to maintain the associated paperwork. The Capital & Compliance team have recently taken responsibility for the interim management arrangements to ensure compliance with gas safety.

3.6.15 The team have recently identified the need for an essential programme of work to fit (additional) flue brackets to ensure compliance with the Gas Safety Regulations. These corrective work(s) will be undertaken over the next six to eight weeks, and will be carried out by an external contractor to enable the in-house team to concentrate on the required annual gas servicing and certification. Tenants will be advised in advance of the need to undertake essential upgrade work to flues and boilers, where identified by inspection.

3.6.16 The following works have been completed,

- A new draft gas policy has been written.
- Interim operational management arrangements in place, with consultancy support to the gas engineers and Gas Supervisor.
- A review undertaken of current procedures and processes, supported by a skills evaluation, and tool box talks, to ensure all staff comply with the regulations.
- The Capital Programmes and Contracts Manager has taken up the role of Duty holder on an interim basis until the new Mechanical and Electrical Manager is in post full time.
- New registration of staff endorsed with Gas Safe, and access to the portal allowing all key staff to receive information direct from the regulator.
- Third party audits re-introduced.
- New procedures drafted to address 'no access issues'.
- Sub-contractor procured to ensure high risk works are completed when in-house labour is not available.
- New IT system being developed to manage the gas service through the new procured Asset management system (Asprey).
- A review undertaken of all gas repairs and tenant heating/hot water related issues to ensure that the reporting/recording is now logged onto the SAFFRON housing system. This will be fully implemented by 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020.

**3.7 Section 7: Repairs & Maintenance (including Voids/Gas/Electrics)**

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- 3.7.1 Throughout lockdown and phased return to full business, we retained essential services at all times, including Out of Hours and emergency repairs. Gas servicing has been maintained and essential equipment and adaptation services continued.
- 3.7.2 Only essential electrical works were completed during lockdown with other non-essential works recorded for future reference and programming.
- 3.7.3 When not dealing with emergency repairs, the team have concentrated on work to void properties and external works, which reduced the overall voids numbers.
- 3.7.4 Operational Risk Assessments (RAs) including those for staff visiting tenants in their homes were completed and were compliant with government guidance and have been regularly reviewed. The RAs were also shared with our contractors.
- 3.7.5 Staff were placed on a rota, initially one week in three, moving to two weeks in three as advice changed. This was to ensure that we retained resilience in the work force. Managers and supervisors were also on an office/depot rota to support operational staff throughout. All teams have now returned to full time working.
- 3.7.6 The Stores team sourced and monitored requirement for personal protective equipment (PPE) throughout the pandemic. They have also maintained supplies of essential equipment and materials. However, materials such as glass, plastics and fencing materials were difficult to source during lockdown and still are.
- 3.7.7 We have recruited to a number of posts during the pandemic including a new Housing Property Services Manager and a Mechanical & Electrical Manager. Interviews for vacant posts were carried out part remotely via Skype and Teams.
- 3.7.8 Key points to note since October 2019:-
- In order to ensure strict financial control, weekly finance tracker meetings between Housing Property Managers and the Finance Team were implemented and strict budget limits were agreed, to help balance the 2019/20 budget.
  - The number of operational vehicles used by the in-house work force was reduced by 11. This was achieved by reducing the numbers of staff and implementing vehicle sharing on voids and E&A.
  - Operational staff numbers have been reduced through a reduction in the number of agency staff being used, Voluntary Compulsory

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Redundancies, retirements and resignations. Currently our work force numbers have reduced from 54 to 37 operatives.

**3.8 Overview**

3.8.1 All of the identified areas within the Improvement Plan continue to be developed, managed and regularly reviewed and reported. The impacts of the pandemic have necessitated a review of priorities, plans and timescales to ensure we continue to deliver essential services and resume business across all areas of housing as soon as possible.

3.8.2 The Plan(s) remain focused but also flexible to ensure we deliver the necessary change and improvements, although over a longer period of time. Heads of Service, Managers and all the teams are working incredibly hard to ensure we deliver our services in an integrated way in a complex environment whilst remaining true to tenant and community focused work.

3.8.3 It is natural to focus on the areas which have experienced some delays, and there to be the necessary reassurance provided in relation to critical services. Member scrutiny and challenge is fundamental and welcomed in our improvement journey, however given that it is two years since the Improvement Plan was agreed, the following achievements and developments should be recognised:-

- We have remained focused on delivering our strategic vision and priorities.
- Strengthened leadership and management.
- Major improvement in contract and contractor management.
- Management of the Capital Programme (Stock Condition Survey).
- Health & Safety with priority given to identified essential and urgent works (compliance areas)
- Greater degrees of integrated working across the service areas.
- Major review of policies and procedures alongside revised working arrangements.
- Service reviews undertaken – Community & Housing Management, Housing Options, Housing Capital, St. David's House.
- Working towards delivery of a new integrated Housing Management IT system.
- Planned housing growth programme development, with additional stock acquired.
- New cleaning contract procured and in place for Evesham Mews, the Batchley three storey flats and Woodrow Centre.
- Improved void performance.
- Proactive response in support of tenants throughout the period of the pandemic. This includes our response to rough sleepers, homelessness and community support.



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**3.9 Human Resources & Staffing Implications**

All of the management and service reviews carried out and those detailed over the next twelve months will be undertaken fully in accordance with our agreed Human Resources policies. Full consultation will be undertaken with the Trade Unions and all staff impacted by any review proposal(s).

**EXECUTIVE**8<sup>th</sup> September 2020**3.10 Customer/Equalities & Diversity Implications**

A wide range of people, groups of people and our communities are affected by current and future actions. Specifically tenants, future tenants, leaseholders, residents of the Borough and those seeking support and advice in all housing matters.

**4. RISK MANAGEMENT**

4.1 Risk logs are maintained and regularly reviewed at both corporate and service levels.

4.2 The following risks remain categorised as high risk areas for these service(s) as recently reviewed as a result of the pandemic and revised management arrangements.

- (i) Financial risks – Housing Revenue Account and General Fund – long term financial sustainability. Income recovery and debt management.
- (ii) Failure to effectively manage housing repairs and maintenance.
- (iii) Failure to deliver on compliance, regulatory and health and safety. Priority area identified to complete gas boiler/flue bracket rectification works.
- (iv) Failure to manage presenting homelessness and pressure on temporary accommodation.
- (v) Failure to manage backlogs of work.
- (vi) Delays on delivery of the improvement programme.

**5. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Strategic Improvement/Action Plan – August 2020

**6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

HRA Outturn Report January 2020

**7. AUTHOR OF REPORT**

Name: Sue Hanley  
E Mail: s.hanley@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk  
Tel: Extension 3601

**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

**1. CORPORATE**

<b>REF</b>	<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>LEAD OFFICER(S)</b>	<b>TIMESCALE(S)</b>	<b>KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS</b>	<b>UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT</b>
1.1	Capital Procurement & Contracts	Jayne Pickering/ Claire Felton	October 2018	Comprehensive assurance/ audit report to Audit, Governance & Standards Committee	Initial report completion October 2018. Last assurance report to Audit, Governance & Standards October 2019. Further update report to Audit, Governance & Standards January 2020. <b>Completed</b>
1.2	Delivery to Strategic Purpose	Sue Hanley	Throughout recovery plan	Delivery of actions to plan:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Member &amp; Portfolio Holder briefings</li> <li>• Staff briefings</li> <li>• Team briefings</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of Corporate Plan Priorities March 2019</li> </ul>	Monitoring/progress reports considered by Executive Committee 5 <sup>th</sup> February 2019, 9 <sup>th</sup> July 2019, 10 <sup>th</sup> December 2019. 8 <sup>th</sup> September 2020.  All Member and staff briefings undertaken throughout the plan period.  Report to Executive & Council 2020. <b>Completed.</b>

**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
1.2 contd		Deb Poole	Revised date October 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership/ Management Development Programme</li> </ul>	<p>Report/proposals in preparation for consideration by Corporate Management Team. Subject to provider confirmation, launch anticipated from October 2020.</p>
1.3	Cultural change	Sue Hanley/ CMT	August 2018 ↓ August 2021	<p>Team/individual purpose plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manager/team identification of improvement plan(s)</li> <li>Whole programme of change via Staff Survey Programme Board</li> </ul>	<p>Vision and Principles endorsed and communicated throughout the organisation Sept 2019. <b>Completed.</b></p> <p>Cultural Change Programme delivered throughout organisation Nov 2019 to Jan 2020. Team programmes/ action plans agreed. Further review by CMT August 2020.</p>

**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
1.4	Senior Leadership Team - appraisals	Kevin Dicks Annual CX appraisal to be undertaken by Leader/ Deputy Leader	March 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure all appraisals/ supervision is undertaken throughout organisation top to bottom</li> <li>Performance Management arrangements for all housing services teams</li> </ul>	<p><b>Completed April 2019</b></p> <p>Appraisals for Heads of Service responsible for Housing Services. Completed 2019/20. Further annual appraisals to be scheduled during 2021.</p> <p>Performance management arrangements in place. <b>Completed.</b></p>
	Directors/HoS/All Managers – Appraisals	Kevin Dicks/ Sue Hanley/ Jayne Pickering /HoS	March 2019 Ongoing annually		
	Performance Management Arrangements	Sue Hanley Judith Willis Guy Revans	March 2019		
1.5	Leadership & Management Arrangements	Kevin Dicks	April 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Senior Management Team Review</li> </ul>	<p>Agreed by Executive Committee in January 2020. <b>Completed. Completed –see above.</b></p>
			Sept 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formalise arrangements for lead HoS arrangements post consultation</li> </ul>	
1.6	Review of Housing & Community Services Management Team	Judith Willis	January 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service Review Proposals</li> <li>Consultation Staff/TUs</li> <li>Implement Management Team</li> </ul>	<p>Service review implemented June 2019. <b>Completed.</b></p>

**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
1.7	Review of Housing Capital/ Property/Compliance Team(s)	Guy Revans	December 2018  Revised date Jan 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Review Proposals</li> <li>• Consultation Staff/TUs</li> <li>• Implement Management Team</li> </ul>	<p>Due to the COVID19 Pandemic there have been some delays in appointing to posts in the new structure.</p> <p>All internal appointments completed January 2020.</p> <p>For the remainder of the externally advertised posts, recruitment commenced June 2020.</p> <p>The new Housing Property Services Manager (HPSM) now appointed and commences in post end of September 2020.</p> <p>Mechanical &amp; Electrical Manager (M&amp;EM) now in post.</p>

**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
1.7 contd					<p>The service now has Managers in place for all business areas.</p> <p>Appointments to the remaining posts has commenced.</p>

**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

**2. FINANCE**

<b>REF</b>	<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>LEAD OFFICER(S)</b>	<b>TIMESCALE(S)</b>	<b>KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS</b>	<b>UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT</b>
2.1	HRA Viability Plan	Jayne Pickering/ Chris Forrester	Completed	Short to medium term budget created incorporating feedback from CMT, removing budgets no longer required. Option exists to start using affordable rents given the primary focus is revenue as the capital programme has been scaled pending outcomes from the stock condition survey. Future modelling around repairs & maintenance will also then be undertaken. Once the new build programme is understood, capital modelling will be more useful and carried out.	Full budget review for 2019/20 undertaken. Rent setting and budget report to Council February 2020.
2.2	30 Year Business Plan	Sue Hanley/ Jayne Pickering/ Chris Forrester	Spreadsheets in place ready to be populated	Requires information from stock condition survey	Full review to be undertaken during financial year 2020/21. The review/ reassessment of the 30 year plan will be undertaken at a later date when all financial impacts on the HRA are known.
2.3	Medium Term Financial Plan	Sue Hanley/ Jayne Pickering/ Chris Forrester	March 2019 Reviewed annually	As per viability plan	A 4 year budget was approved by Council on 24 <sup>th</sup> February 2020. Subsequent to this, it was determined that a new 3 year HRA



**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
2.3 contd					Medium Term Financial Plan would need to be developed to take into account the impact of Covid and the information gathered post outturn. This is currently a work in progress and is anticipated to be completed by the end of November 2020 in readiness of rent setting.
2.4	Housing Growth Plan	Sue Hanley/ Judith Willis/ Chris Forrester  Matthew Bough/ Derek Allen	September 2018  October 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to develop working model(s) to develop a build programme.</li> <li>• Report to Executive – October 2018 – land/site disposals (HRA land/sites).</li> <li>• Review of Growth Programme.</li> </ul>	Report submitted to Executive Committee October 2018. <b>Completed</b>  Planning Permission has now been granted for Edgeworth Close, subject to signing s.106 agreement. Work is currently ongoing for the procurement of a development contract via a framework.

**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
2.4 contd					<p>Pre app discussions on redesign for Loxley Close is ongoing to bring this site forward for planning permission.</p> <p>A total of 31 properties have been purchased since January 2019 and a further 8 properties are in the purchase process. Note: As part of the Governments response to Covid-19 there has been a suspension on the repayment of unspent 1-4-1 receipts until 31 December 2020.</p>

**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
2.5	Income Growth	Guy Revans/ Judith Willis	March 2019  Annual review undertaken	(i) Review and update recharge policy.	(i) The Recharges Policy endorsed by Executive Committee. <b>Completed</b>  Recharges for void properties due to Covid 19 have been delayed and will be implemented during Sept/Oct 2020.  The remaining recharges from property and neighbourhood inspections will be implemented as part of the Civica CX configuration in December 2021.
			March 2019	(ii) Review and update fees and charges	(ii) Revised fees and charges for repairs and maintenance works - Completed Jan 2020 for implementation April 2020.

**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
2.5 contd			Dec 2018	(iii) Consider affordable rents and obtain member agreement  New actions	(iii) Member agreement to implement affordable rents on all properties that we buy or build has been implemented.  The communications plan to ensure all tenants are aware of the introduction of the new rechargeable repairs policy has been delayed due to Covid, and will now be undertaken as a joint communications plan with the new Tenancy Agreement and Handbook.

**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
2.5 contd			November 2019	(iv) Review and update service charges	<p>(iv) Review of service charges ongoing. The cleaning contract of key sites has been the first and priority service to be reviewed with a new contract now in place.</p> <p>Approval of these recharges will be via the annual fees and charges report to Executive with an implementation date of April 2021. Note: This update relates to the cleaning contract and is not reliant on the Civica CX system.</p>
2.6	Review of Revenue Spending by all service areas	Guy Revans/ Judith Willis	Feb 2019 (for budget planning)  April 2019 to Nov 2019 for 2020/21.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staffing</li> <li>• Contracts</li> <li>• Materials</li> <li>• Support and administration</li> </ul>	<p>(i) In year savings of £500K were targeted from the Repairs &amp; Maintenance budget. Outturn savings of £367K were achieved.</p> <p>(ii) Internal work and work sent to contractors is currently restricted to essential spend only.</p>

**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
2.6 contd					<p>(iii) Housing property revenue spending during the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2019/20 was significantly reduced, by imposing tighter controls, reducing spend with contractors, establishing a working group with Financial Services to monitor budgets on a fortnightly basis and ensuring that capital works were identified and charged to capital budgets.</p> <p>(iv) Working practices have been changed to reduce vehicle numbers across the responsive repairs, voids and equipment and adaptations teams from 41 to 28.</p>

**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
2.6 contd					<p>(v) The in-house workforce across the responsive repairs, voids and equipment &amp; adaptations teams has been reduced from 54 to 37 by removing agency staff and a number of staff members taking VCR.</p> <p>(vi) Procurement of materials has been improved by procuring via a framework and reducing the number of suppliers that we now deal with and also the control of materials has also been improved, however, this will be further improved with the introduction of the new computer systems in Housing.</p>

**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
2.6 contd					<p>(vii) Monthly budget meetings being held with Senior Officers and the Portfolio Holder.</p> <p>(viii) Savings have been achieved through the ending of agency staff in Housing locality/ housing options and requests for voluntary redundancies accepted.</p>



STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020

3. STAFFING/SERVICE REVIEWS

REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
3.1	Review of Housing Options & Advisory Team	Judith Willis	Proposals January 2019  Revised timescale February 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Review Proposals</li> <li>• Consultation Staff/TUs</li> <li>• Implement Management Team</li> </ul>	<p>Initial service review was completed in February 2020. <b>Completed.</b> A further review will be now undertaken as part of the Locality Services Review. This will take into account the need for additional support to prevent homelessness in the private sector. Self-service; an improved triage system alongside improved pre-tenancy services will be introduced as a consequence of Covid 19.</p>
3.2	Housing Older Peoples Accommodations Review including St. David's House Category A Schemes	Judith Willis	Revised date October 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review funding allocation from WCC, currently being negotiated</li> <li>• Review Older Persons Strategy</li> <li>• Gather demand data</li> <li>• Understand the flow</li> <li>• Identify waste</li> <li>• Identify legal requirements</li> <li>• Links to allocation policy review</li> </ul>	<p>The Service Review of the Extra Care Scheme has been undertaken and a new structure implemented in October 2019. <b>Completed.</b></p>

**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
3.2 contd					<p>Future developments - Funding from WCC has remained stable however long term commitments remain uncertain. Officers are currently reviewing the finances and the cost of this service to the Council. Options to make the service cost neutral are being considered and, as appropriate, a business case will be produced.</p> <p>Costs to the service as a consequence of Covid have increased with extra staffing hours to ensure compliance with above Govt Guidelines and risk assessments. These have been balanced with a major reduction in Agency costs following the service review.</p>

**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
3.2 contd					The review of the Home Support Service will now be included with the Locality Services Review.
3.3	Gas Services Business Case	Guy Revans	Present to Executive in October 2019  Revised date for Business Case review October 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the work flows</li> <li>• Identify waste &amp; efficiencies</li> <li>• Identify legal requirements</li> <li>• Prepare business case</li> <li>• Review &amp; draft staffing structures</li> <li>• Consult with Staff/TUs</li> <li>• Implement new structure</li> </ul>	<p>The business case has been received with the key recommendation that the gas service should be considered as part of the wider change programme/ review for Repairs &amp; Maintenance, Voids and E&amp;A teams.</p> <p>The Head of Service will bring forward proposals for the Change programme and service review by October 2020.</p>

**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

<b>REF</b>	<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>LEAD OFFICER(S)</b>	<b>TIMESCALE(S)</b>	<b>KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS</b>	<b>UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT</b>
3.4	Review of Housing Management Services	Judith Willis	March 2019 ↓ Dec 2019  (Revised timescales) October 2020 ↓ February 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the work flows</li> <li>• Identify waste &amp; efficiencies</li> <li>• Identify legal requirements</li> <li>• Tenant involvement</li> <li>• Prepare business case</li> <li>• Review &amp; draft staffing structures</li> <li>• Consult with Staff/TUs</li> <li>• Implement new structure</li> </ul>	The service review was due to be consulted upon with Staff and TU's in April 2020, however a hold was put on this due to the impact of Covid 19. With the support of the TU's the review will now be taken forward from September 2020
3.5	Review of Performance Management Team	Judith Willis	March 2019 ↓ Dec 2019  (Revised timescales) December 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the work flows</li> <li>• Identify waste</li> <li>• Identify legal requirements</li> <li>• Tenant involvement</li> <li>• Review &amp; draft staffing structures</li> <li>• Prepare business case</li> <li>• Consult with Staff/TUs</li> <li>• Implement new structure</li> </ul>	The work of this team is integral to the Housing IT system. Therefore a review of this service will now be undertaken once the new Civica System is implemented. Savings have been achieved within the service following 2 Officer retirements.

**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
3.6	Review of All Repairs & Maintenance Teams	Guy Revans/ Ian Roberts	Revised timescales for Review & Change Programme Sept 2020 ↓ February 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the work flows</li> <li>• Identify waste</li> <li>• Identify legal requirements</li> <li>• Tenant involvement</li> <li>• Review &amp; draft staffing structures</li> <li>• Prepare business case</li> <li>• Consult with Staff/TUs</li> <li>• Implement new structure</li> </ul>	<p>COVID19 has delayed the start of the service review and change programme for responsive repairs, voids and equipment and adaptations teams. It was originally planned to commence April 2020 with the Business Support team first. The delay has given officers an opportunity to review the programme.</p> <p>Phase 1 commences August 2020. Phases 2 and 3 to be proposed by October 2020</p> <p>The externally commissioned report has been received and will be used to inform the review programme.</p>

STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020

4. VOIDS

REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
4.1	Review process end to end	Helen Keightley / Louise Peace	30 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the work flows</li> <li>• Identify waste &amp; efficiencies</li> <li>• Identify legal requirements</li> <li>• Links to allocations &amp; policy review</li> </ul>	<p><b>Completed</b></p> <p>Weekly voids and allocations meetings are now in place including temporary accommodation lets. This includes all key officers from Housing Property and Locality.</p>
4.2	Redesign voids process	Helen Keightley/ Louise Peace	30 <sup>th</sup> November 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenant involvement</li> <li>• Clarify roles and responsibilities</li> </ul>	<p>Original Voids process redesign. <b>Completed.</b></p> <p>New procedures are now in place for ending tenancies. Once the Locality service review has been implemented there will be annual inspections that will reduce void repair costs. Civica CX will also assist in being able to track end to end process on voids and monitor performance.</p>

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REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
4.3	Agree voids standard	Helen Keightley/ Louise Peace	Revised timescale January 2020	End to end	A revised voids standard has been drafted, however consultation has been delayed due to Covid. It will now be produced as part of the wider voids policy. In the interim the teams are working to the draft standards.
4.4	Agree measures	Judith Willis Guy Revans	31 <sup>st</sup> December 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss at DMT &amp; with Portfolio Holder(s)</li> <li>• Consider good practice elsewhere</li> <li>• Draft &amp; trial measures</li> <li>• Refine &amp; implement</li> </ul>	<p><b>Completed</b></p> <p>Endorsed by Executive Committee February 2019.</p>
4.5	Restructure service delivery and workforce	Judith Willis Guy Revans	Revised timescale October 2020 ↓ January 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review &amp; draft staffing structures</li> <li>• Prepare business case</li> <li>• Consult with staff/TUs</li> <li>• Implement new structure</li> </ul>	<p>This continues to be undertaken by delivery of the revised management and service reviews.</p> <p>The general voids turn around and backlog has improved and is being managed proactively.</p>

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REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
4.5 contd					<p>We are currently packaging the capital voids into a number of contracts to ensure that revenue costs are minimised and economies of scale are maximised.</p> <p>See 3.6 re work force restructuring</p>
4.6	Look at how we prevent damage to properties that leads to large scale refurbishment projects	Jas Sidhu Ian Roberts Helen Keightley	January 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a risk based inspection programme</li> <li>• Review enforcement procedures &amp; how this is communicated to tenants</li> </ul>	<p>The review of tenancy team and role of Tenancy Officers will include a focus on inspections. Officers will be trained on fit for habitation and pre termination inspections.</p> <p>Work has been ongoing to improve working between the tenancy and repairs teams to embed a culture of shared responsibility to monitor standards of properties, e.g. annual</p>



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<b>REF</b>	<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>LEAD OFFICER(S)</b>	<b>TIMESCALE(S)</b>	<b>KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS</b>	<b>UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT</b>
4.6 contd					compliance inspections to be reporting damage to properties.
4.7	Look at recharges and enforcement policy and procedures – draft policy.	Ian Roberts	Revised timescale March 2021	Further review to be undertaken with Tenancy Policy.	Formed part of the recharges policy that was approved by Executive Committee on 29 <sup>th</sup> October 2019.  Complete but requires completion of the Tenancy Policy to implement together. This has been delayed due to the COVID19 pandemic.

**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

**5. COMPLIANCE/CAPITAL WORKS**

REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT																																			
5.1	Undertake Stock Condition Survey and analyse results	Jas Sidhu/ Guy Revans	Revised timescale January 2020	<p>Commission Stock Condition Survey and appropriate software to gather and analyse data. Draft indicative results December 2018 and full analysis by March 2019</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Property Group</th> <th>Surveyed</th> <th>Un-surveyed</th> <th>Total</th> <th>%Surveyed/ Cloned</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Houses &amp; Bungalows</td> <td>2,146</td> <td>144</td> <td>3,592</td> <td>95.99%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Flats &amp; Maisonettes</td> <td>1,030</td> <td>174</td> <td>2,117</td> <td>91.78%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Residential Blocks</td> <td>600</td> <td>2</td> <td>602</td> <td>99.67%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Community Office</td> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> <td>2</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Garage Site</td> <td>197</td> <td>0</td> <td>197</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Car Park Sites</td> <td>1044</td> <td>0</td> <td>1044</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The table above shows the final numbers of surveyed properties</p>	Property Group	Surveyed	Un-surveyed	Total	%Surveyed/ Cloned	Houses & Bungalows	2,146	144	3,592	95.99%	Flats & Maisonettes	1,030	174	2,117	91.78%	Residential Blocks	600	2	602	99.67%	Community Office	2	0	2	100%	Garage Site	197	0	197	100%	Car Park Sites	1044	0	1044	100%	<p>Current survey numbers that have been achieved are contained within the table.</p> <p>The survey detail obtained to date has provided sufficient information to develop the future capital programme proposals.</p> <p>The survey detail includes the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Age and condition data for property components;</li> </ul>
Property Group	Surveyed	Un-surveyed	Total	%Surveyed/ Cloned																																				
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**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
5.1 contd					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The elements required for a full Decent Homes analysis;</li> <li>• The 'minimum' RdSAP elements necessary to return an indicative SAP score under the RdSAP 9.93 methodology</li> </ul> <p>We are now carrying out a final data evaluation prior to the stock condition report being produced which is due to be completed by 31/12/20.</p>

**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

<b>REF</b>	<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>LEAD OFFICER(S)</b>	<b>TIMESCALE(S)</b>	<b>KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS</b>	<b>UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT</b>
5.2	Agree resource framework for capital works	Jas Sidhu/ Guy Revans/ Finance	December 2018 Annual review	Set indicative capital budget for 2019/20	A reduced capital budget forms part of the HRA budget for 2019/20. <b>Completed</b>
5.3	Develop and agree 5 year programme of works	Jas Sidhu/ Guy Revans	Revised date April 2021	Consult with members and tenants on priorities and programme timetable	An initial programme of capital works was completed and agreed in Feb 20.  COVID19 has delayed the future setting of works programmes due to system implementation delays and the necessary consultation with members and tenants. A revised 5 year programme will be completed by 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2021 subject to COVID19 restrictions and reprioritisation of works.  Works scheduled for 20/21 have been re-prioritised alongside strict social distancing guidelines. Major delays on start dates and some programmes placed on hold until we can reach a satisfactory level 1 in the governments COVID19 guidelines to re-start works.

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REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
5.3 contd					<p>Other works have been identified to compensate where contracts were delayed or placed on hold. This includes cyclical painting works, estate improvements, car parking refurbishments and Communal door(s) upgrades.</p> <p>We are working closely with finance to produce a revised programme for this and the next four financial years.</p>
5.4	Review and agree procurement framework for major works programme	Jas Sidhu/ Guy Revans	March 2020	Programme to be drawn up with prioritised works/programme	<p>A formalised procurement framework has been completed with key contracts already being procured.</p> <p><b>Completed</b></p>

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<b>REF</b>	<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>LEAD OFFICER(S)</b>	<b>TIMESCALE(S)</b>	<b>KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS</b>	<b>UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT</b>
5.5	Develop Asset Management Strategy	Jas Sidhu/ Guy Revans	Revised date 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2021	Prepare draft strategy	<p>The asset management strategy has been delayed due to COVID19 and its dependencies on a number of other strategies.</p> <p>The asset management strategy is required to provide property asset management for the future with both financial and non-financial benefits.</p>
5.6	Embed Stock Condition Survey (SCS) into new housing management IT systems, if appropriate	Jas Sidhu/ IT Project team	2020/21	Build into the Housing Project Board Work Plan	<p>The decision has been taken to use the Asprey system for asset management with integration to Civica CX.</p> <p>Work is ongoing and the project has moved on considerably. The initial training is booked for w/c 24/8/20.</p> <p>Other modules are being completed in tandem with the main system and they are all due to be completed at various times. The full system is scheduled to go live the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.</p>

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**6. POLICY/PROCEDURES**

<b>REF</b>	<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>LEAD OFFICER(S)</b>	<b>TIMESCALE(S)</b>	<b>KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS</b>	<b>UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT</b>
6.1	Review of Allocations Policy	Judith Willis/ Amanda Delahunty	Revised timescale March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report to Executive/ Council</li> <li>• Undertake required consultations</li> <li>• Finalise policy</li> <li>• Implement with required IT system</li> <li>• Train staff on new policy</li> <li>• Ongoing review and update</li> </ul>	<p>Completed and agreed via Executive/Council.</p> <p>An IT system has been procured and will be operational by March 2021 enabling the Policy to be fully implemented. This has been delayed due Covid.</p>
6.2	Review of Tenancy Agreement and Handbook	Judith Willis Jayne Baylis	March 2019  Revised date for completion (see update)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gain feedback on current agreement</li> <li>• Consult with tenants</li> <li>• Draft new Agreement &amp; handbook</li> <li>• Seek approval via Executive Committee</li> <li>• Make available on-line</li> </ul>	<p>The new Tenancy Agreement was approved by Executive Committee on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2019. Notices of Variation to advise tenants of the changes are required in advance of implementation.</p>

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REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
6.2 contd					The Housing Tenancy & Advisory Manager has identified some omissions and the Agreement needs to dovetail with the Tenancy Management Policy (currently in draft). The Agreement is therefore under review with the issue of the handbook to follow in April 2021.
6.3	Review Tenant Engagement Arrangements with tenant involvement in all service reform/policy review	Sue Hanley Guy Revans Judith Willis	2018 ↓ 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenant consultation on all review of policy/procedures</li> <li>• Programme of reviews to be agreed</li> <li>• Wider place/locality based engagement to be considered</li> </ul>	Tenant involvement will form part of the Locality service review with a view to it being embedded across and within the team priorities.



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**7. REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE**

REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
7.1	Review of R&M service and processes end to end (including repairs & maintenance, voids, aids & adaptations)	Ian Roberts	Revised date to commence October 2020 ↓ January 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the work flows</li> <li>• Identify waste &amp; efficiencies</li> <li>• Identify legal requirements</li> <li>• Links to voids and aids and adaptations</li> </ul>	See update at 3.6
7.2	Redesign R&M processes	Ian Roberts	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2020  Revised to May 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenant involvement</li> <li>• Clarify roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• Risk based inspection regime</li> <li>• Agree what work to be undertaken in-house and that commissioned externally</li> </ul>	See update at 3.6
7.3	Agree Schedule of Rates service and quality standards, including performance and productivity arrangements (workforce & external provision)	Ian Roberts	Phase 1 June 2020  Phase 2 January 2021  Phase 3 To be advised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team and individual performance plans</li> </ul>	<p>To fully implement the new systems and processes we are dependent on the introduction of the new Housing IT system in full.</p> <p>Due to Covid 19 restrictions the start of the review and new ways of working have been delayed.</p>

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<b>REF</b>	<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>LEAD OFFICER(S)</b>	<b>TIMESCALE(S)</b>	<b>KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS</b>	<b>UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT</b>
7.3 contd					Work is now expected to start in Sept 2020, including the introduction of schedule of rates and or standard minute values, based on National Federation rates and revised performance management arrangements.
7.4	Agree measures	Guy Revans Ian Roberts	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2019	Consider revised measures	<b>Completed.</b> These will be reviewed again as part of the Repairs and Maintenance review to ensure the measures reflect new working practices.
7.5	Consider Recharges, Enforcement policy and procedures	Ian Roberts	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft policy and procedures</li> <li>• Tenant/Member involvement</li> </ul>	See comments in section 4.7

**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

**8. GOVERNANCE/PERFORMANCE/MEASURES**

REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
8.1	Provide progress reports to Executive Committee on delivery of Recovery/ Action Plan	Sue Hanley/ Judith Willis/ Guy Revans/	Quarterly commencing January 2019 April 2019 December 2019	Progress and Exception Report  Revised Forward Plan dates for Executive and Overview & Scrutiny	Executive consideration of progress reports as proposed/ agreed. <b>Completed.</b>
8.2	Review the performance measures for landlord services (in the context of government expectations/ housing sector scorecard)	Jayne Baylis/ Ian Roberts/ Emma Cartwright/ Paul Calland	Sept 2018 ↓ Dec 2018	Report to CMT/ Housing Portfolio/ Members	<b>Completed</b>
8.3	Review the performance of non-landlord services (in the context of government expectations/ housing sector scorecard)	Brenda Holden/ Derek Allen/ Judith Willis/ Paul Calland	Sept 2018 ↓ Dec 2018	Report to CMT/Housing Portfolio Members	<b>Completed</b>
8.4	Agree revised set of standards/ measures for housing services	Judith Willis/ Guy Revans/ Paul Calland	December 2018	To coincide with budget framework and revised structure for Housing Services and consult with Members	<b>Completed</b>
8.5	Review the scrutiny arrangements for landlord services	Sue Hanley/ Judith Willis/ Guy Revans	March 2019	Consultation with Members and tenants	Improvement Plan updates subject to Overview & Scrutiny prior to Executive Committee consideration

**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

**9. HOUSING MANAGEMENT IT SYSTEM**

<b>REF</b>	<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>LEAD OFFICER(S)</b>	<b>TIMESCALE(S)</b>	<b>KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS</b>	<b>UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT</b>
9.1	Recruitment of Project Team	Sue Hanley/ Judith Willis/ Guy Revans	Dec 2018	Subject to endorsement by Executive/ Council (Sept 2018)	<b>Completed</b>
9.2	Detailed specification	Sue Hanley/ Judith Willis/ Guy Revans	February 2019	Links to other systems	<b>Completed</b>
9.3	Procurement	Sue Hanley/ Judith Willis/ Guy Revans	March 2019		<p>Procurement of the Core Housing Management System. <b>Completed.</b></p> <p>Asprey will continue to be utilised and developed further for Asset Management and compliance with integration into Civica CX.</p> <p>Additional modules have been procured to ensure that the Asprey system fully meets our needs and will allow us to maximise the system in the management of our housing stock.</p>

**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
9.3 contd					<p>Housing Jigsaw has been procured to replace Abritas.</p> <p>Approval was given at Council on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020 to fund the procurement of a Rent software system that will integrate with the current Saffron system and the future Civica CX. The need for this additional software was a consequence of the impact of Covid 19 on tenant arrears.</p>
9.4	Selection of supplier	Sue Hanley/ Judith Willis/ Guy Revans	May 2019		<b>Completed</b>

**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
9.5	Implementation	Sue Hanley/ Judith Willis/ Guy Revans	April 2020		<p>The Civica CX implementation was “paused” due to COVID-19 for a period of 2 months due to capacity/ability to hold large workshops. This restarted from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020, all work is progressing remotely with the prospect of this continuing during 2020 with a review in Nov 2020. A revised project plan is being developed and it is anticipated the project will complete by December 2021. Asprey has continued to work on the implementation during COVID-19 impacting on BAU and availability of staff to attend training only.</p>

**STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT/ACTION PLAN – UPDATED AUGUST 2020**

REF	ISSUE	LEAD OFFICER(S)	TIMESCALE(S)	KEY ACTIONS/ TASKS	UPDATE/ PROGRESS REPORT
9.5 contd					<p>Housing Partners were procured during the COVID19 lockdown, they have been asked to implement the system remotely where possible during 2020 with reviews taking place on this decision in November 2020.</p> <p>All the project plans for the systems will be monitored closely for resource availability and dependencies.</p>

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# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 2nd July, 2020

## MINUTES

### Present:

Councillor Joe Baker (Chair), and Councillors Salman Akbar, Michael Chalk, Peter Fleming, Andrew Fry, Pattie Hill, Ann Isherwood, Mark Shurmer and Jennifer Wheeler

### Also Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer – Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships

### Officers:

Kevin Dicks, Judith Willis and Helen Broughton

### Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and J Gresham

#### 1. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no apologies for absence.

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

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

#### 3. MINUTES

**RESOLVED that**

**the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> June 2020 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.**

#### 4. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no registered public speakers on this occasion.

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Chair

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 2nd July, 2020

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## 5. REDDITCH COMMUNITY LOTTERY - UPDATE

The Redditch Partnership Manager introduced the Redditch Community Lottery Update and in doing so highlighted the following:

- the timeline of activity
- the promotional channels of the lottery including the use of social media and local newspapers and the impact of Covid-19 on the promotion of the lottery
- the percentage split of each lottery ticket purchased

Councillor Dormer, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships thanked officers for their hard work on setting up the Redditch Community Lottery.

There was a lengthy discussion regarding the figures that were presented in the report and whether they were as expected. The Redditch Partnership Manager explained that the operator of the lottery, Gatherwell Ltd, had indicated that they were in line with their expectations. It was requested that the Redditch Partnership Manager review the figures provided and report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at a later date.

In addition, Members requested future updates on the following: -

- What were the average number of tickets sold per week?
- What was the average cash pay out to the organisations per week?
- Was the Council expected to meet the target?
- How did the Council keep the lottery in residents' minds?
- What areas of Redditch have most of the ticket sales come from including the demographics?

Members requested a breakdown of the charities and the amount each had received in order to understand the differing amounts that had been awarded. The Head of Community and Housing Services reported that organisations promoted to their customers and some were more effective at raising support. As many organisations had not been able to meet during the Covid-19 Lockdown this might have had an impact on their ability to promote the lottery.

At this point the Chair moved to make a recommendation to the Executive Committee. The recommendation was as follows: -

“That the Executive Committee

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 2nd July, 2020

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review the financial implications to the Council in terms of costs and viability of continuing with the Redditch Community Lottery”  
On being put to the vote the proposal was agreed.

## **RESOLVED that**

**the Executive Committee review the financial implications to the Council in terms of costs and viability of continuing with the Redditch Community Lottery.**

### **6. DEMENTIA - TASK GROUP**

Councillor Chalk presented a scoping document to investigate Dementia within the Borough. In doing so, the following was highlighted: -

- The length of the review – Members agreed that the investigation might take longer than six months and that more meetings might be needed.
- The ageing population and the increase in numbers of people diagnosed with dementia
- The different types of dementia
- Services provided to those diagnosed with dementia and their families and how to access these services

During consideration of this item there was a discussion about whether the relevant Portfolio Holder should be invited to attend meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee when scoping documents were considered. Members requested that this matter be referred to the Monitoring Officer after the meeting for further consideration.

## **RESOLVED that**

- 1) a Dementia Task Group be launched; and**
- 2) Councillor Chalk be appointed to Chair the group.**

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

During consideration of this item Members discussed the content of the Executive Committee's Work Programme for the period 1st July to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020. The Suicide Prevention Task Group Report, which was due to be considered at the meeting of the Executive Committee on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> August 2020 was added to

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 2nd July, 2020

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the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme. As this item was due to be considered before the next scheduled meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee it was decided that an extra meeting would be needed and Members agreed that this meeting would take place on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

It was explained that the Financial Outturn report for 2019/20 would be scrutinised at the next Budget Scrutiny Working Group meeting. In addition to this item, it was requested that the Homelessness Grant be scrutinised at the Budget Scrutiny Working Group and then brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members also considered the minutes from the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020 when the Parking Enforcement Task Group report was considered. It was explained that the majority of recommendations were endorsed by the Executive Committee with the exception of one recommendation where the wording had been slightly amended.

## **RESOLVED that**

- 1) **the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020 be noted; and**
- 2) **the content of the Executive Committee's Work Programme for the period 1st July to 31st November 2020 be noted.**

## **8. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

The content of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme was considered by Members. It was confirmed that the extra meeting due to be held on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2020 would be added to the Work Programme and the Suicide Prevention Task Group report item included.

## **RESOLVED that**

**the content of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme be noted.**

## **9. 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:

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

Councillor Wheeler informed members that the first meeting of the municipal year had been arranged for Monday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020 at 6pm. The Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services was to be invited and an overview of how the Budget Scrutiny Working Group operated would be discussed.

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

Councillor Fry explained that the first meeting of the new municipal year was still to be arranged.

c) Suicide Prevention Task Group

Councillor Baker explained that there were recommendations to be put forward to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the next meeting.

## 10. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

Councillor Chalk informed members that he had not attended the latest West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Overview and Scrutiny meeting. However, he would contact them in order to obtain the minutes and would provide a detailed update from both this and the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm  
and closed at 8.43 pm

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# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 30th July, 2020

## MINUTES

### Present:

Councillor Joe Baker (Chair), and Councillors Salman Akbar, Michael Chalk, Debbie Chance, Peter Fleming, Pattie Hill, Andrew Fry, Ann Isherwood and Mark Shurmer

### Also Present:

Councillor Nyear Nazir – Portfolio Holder for Community Services and Regulatory Services

### Officers:

Kevin Dicks, Sarah Sellers and Judith Willis

### Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and J Gresham

## 12. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Jennifer Wheeler. Officers confirmed that Councillor Debbie Chance was attending as her named substitute.

## 13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

## 14. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no registered public speakers on this occasion.

## 15. SUICIDE PREVENTION TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT

Councillor Debbie Chance, in her role as Chair of the Suicide Prevention Task Group, presented the report to the Committee.

The Committee was informed that in total the group had held 11 meetings and spoken to eight witnesses between June 2019 and

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Chair

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Thursday, 30th July, 2020

June 2020. There had been a slight delay in bringing the report before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Suicide Prevention was a very sensitive subject to investigate and the members of the group had learned a lot about the impact of death by suicide on bereaved families and friends. Members were advised that on average one person died each week as a result of suicide in Worcestershire. In Redditch, for the three year period from 2015 to 2017, there were 26 deaths by suicide of which 84% were among men.

The group had been really surprised by the data around the economic cost of death by suicide and the evidence of the long-term effects on bereaved relatives. Research showed that those who had lost a loved one to death by suicide were at a higher risk of suicide themselves. Another surprising finding was that many of the deaths were amongst persons not previously known to mental health services, or who had not confided in anyone that they were struggling.

The Committee was asked to note that the investigation had focused on issues outside the day-to-day service remit of Redditch Borough Council and had relied on a number of external witnesses. There was a Suicide Prevention Plan for Worcestershire and locally this was co-ordinated and led by Worcestershire County Council.

The two main areas the group focused on in detail were:

- 1) Suicide prevention generally and in particular the Worcestershire Suicide Prevention Policy. In these discussions the group was greatly assisted by Officers from Worcestershire Public Health.
- 2) Mental health services available in Redditch, including the options that were available for people in crisis, and the role of the voluntary sector.

The feedback received from witnesses during the review had highlighted the need for awareness raising and training and this was reflected in the group's recommendations. The group had also been guided by the Council's Policy Team to identify how the Council's Equalities Strategy could be updated to include actions that supported suicide prevention. The final recommendation from the group covered the benefits of promoting awareness around suicide prevention.

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



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- The important work that had been undertaken by the group and the impact that suicide could have on friends and families.
- The evidence that had been submitted by Mr Mike Lewington to the group. The Committee was informed that sadly Mr Lewington had since passed away and therefore the report was dedicated to him.
- The financial implications of the proposals detailed in the report. Officers advised that this information had been received after publication of the report and it was anticipated that the action proposed could be covered within existing budgets. Members were asked to note that, if it was discovered during implementation by Officers that more significant financial resources were needed, then a further report would be presented inviting Members to approve additional funding.
- The incidence of suicide within all communities and the higher incidence of suicide amongst young men compared to other sections of the population.
- The work that Members could undertake to address suicide following the completion of the review. The Committee was asked to note that Members could ensure that mental health considerations were taken into account during the policy setting process. Elected Members could also help to raise awareness within the local community and signpost local constituents to support services where they were reporting mental health problems.
- The difficulty in terms of helping people who did not display any mental health difficulties prior to suicide.
- The role of the Redditch Partnership in the community and the fact that mental health had been identified as a priority area to address. The group were suggesting that Members' findings should be taken into account by the partnership.
- The actions of Members of the Task Group and the Democratic Services Officer who supported the group. They were thanked for their hard work.

During consideration of this item Councillor Nyear Nazir was invited to speak to the Committee in her capacity as Portfolio Holder for Community Services and Regulatory Services as well as a former member of the group. She highlighted the value of the review in terms of raising awareness of the impact of suicide in the community and the importance of suicide prevention work. Members were asked to note that the subject of suicide prevention was very complex and the group had interviewed a wide range of witnesses. Councillor Nazir concluded by thanking all the

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 30th July, 2020

Members, Officers and external witnesses who had contributed to the review.

## **RECOMMENDED that**

- 1) **the Redditch Borough Council Equalities Strategy should reflect the Council's commitment to suicide prevention and supporting good mental health, and that in producing the updated version of the Equalities Strategy for 2020 to 2024 objectives and actions should be included to cover the following:-**
  - a) **that officers continue to publicise messages around positive mental health to staff and promote opportunities to participate in training and events;**
  - b) **that officers develop the signposting information available on the intranet to support staff in being able to signpost either service users or colleagues to the relevant support services;**
  - c) **that officers mark suicide prevention awareness day in September 2020 including using this as an opportunity to promote the work of local groups that support suicide prevention;**
  - d) **recognising that not all staff may undertake the Mental Health First Aid training, that officers arrange for some alternative web based training resources to be provided for staff, to be aimed at those working in front line posts;**
- 2) **support to local voluntary sector organisations around improving promotion of their organisations:**
  - a) **that officers from the Communications Team work with the Partnership Manager to identify local voluntary sector organisation which offer support around mental health and wellbeing and/ or promote suicide prevention;**
  - b) **that the organisations identified be invited to participate in workshop training sessions to be provided by the Communications Team to help them to better publicise the support and services their organisations provide through use of social media and other publicity; and**
- 3) **publicise the findings of the Task Group:**

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given that suicide prevention work is carried out by multiple agencies and stakeholders, that officers be tasked with publicising the outcome of the Task Group in the Wellbeing in Partnership Newsletter and by giving details of the findings to the Worcestershire Suicide Prevention Plan Partnership Group (sub-group of the Health and Well-being Board).

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

Members considered the content of the Executive Committee's Work Programme for the period 1<sup>st</sup> August to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and agreed that the Recovery and Restoration Plan be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme.

### RESOLVED that

- 1) the content of the Executive Committee's Work Programme for the period 1<sup>st</sup> August to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020 be noted; and
- 2) the Recovery and Restoration Plan be added to the Committee's Work Programme for pre-scrutiny.

## 17. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Officers explained that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme would be updated in accordance with the request made under Minute Item No. 16.

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

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

The Senior Democratic Services Officer (Redditch) reported to Members that the Budget Scrutiny Working Group had met on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020 and had pre-scrutinised the Financial Implications of Covid-19 report and the Quarter 1 Financial Outturn Report 2019/2020. It was reported that the Head of Environmental Services and Housing Property Services had been in attendance to discuss the Capital Expenditure Programme for a number of items within his remit.

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Thursday, 30th July, 2020

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

Councillor Fry advised Members that a date had been identified for the next meeting and that the Head of Business Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy would be in attendance to discuss the impact of Covid-19 on Council Services.

c) Dementia Task Group – Chair, Councillor Michael Chalk

Councillor Chalk reported that the members of the Task Group had been confirmed and were as follows: -

- Councillor Michael Chalk – Chair
- Councillor Joanne Beecham
- Councillor John Fisher
- Councillor Jennifer Wheeler

It was confirmed that the first meeting would take place in September 2020.

## 19. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

a) West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Redditch Member, Councillor Michael Chalk

The Committee was informed that Councillor Chalk had missed the last two meetings of the Committee but he offered to circulate the minutes.

b) Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Redditch Member, Councillor Michael Chalk

Councillor Chalk explained that the previous two meetings of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) took place on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2020 and Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2020. Councillor Chalk referred Members to the updates provided in the supplementary agenda and explained that, unsurprisingly, the main thrust of the discussion was the impact of Covid-19 on services across Worcestershire.

The Meeting commenced at 6.47 pm  
and closed at 7.23 pm