



Executive Committee

Tue 27 Oct
2020
6.30 pm

Skype

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

*making
a
difference*

www.redditchbc.gov.uk

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

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

GUIDANCE ON VIRTUAL MEETINGS

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 Council's YouTube channel.

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

[Live Stream of the Executive Committee 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

Tuesday, 27th October, 2020

6.30 pm

Committee Room 2 Town Hall

Agenda

Membership:

Cllrs:	Matthew Dormer (Chair)	Anthony Lovell
	Mike Rouse (Vice- Chair)	Nyear Nazir
	Greg Chance	David Thain
	Brandon Clayton	Craig Warhurst
	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 - 12)

5. Housing Strategy (Pages 13 - 28)

This report will be pre-scrutinised at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that is due to take place on Thursday, 22nd October 2020. Any recommendations in respect of this item will be reported in a supplementary pack for the consideration of the Executive Committee.

6. Planning for the Future - Government White Paper - Council Response (Pages 29 - 62)

7. Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 to 2024/25 - Update Report (Pages 63 - 68)

8. Borough Level Economic Recovery Framework (Pages 69 - 92)

9. Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Pages 93 - 110)

Two sets of minutes from meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 26th August 2020 and Thursday, 3rd September 2020 have been attached for Members' consideration.

There are no recommendations that require a decision from the Executive Committee.

10. 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.

11. Advisory Panels - update reports

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.

12. 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, 8 September 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

Officers:

Kevin Dicks, Clare Flanagan, Chris Forrester, Sue Hanley, Deb Poole, Guy Revans, David Riley and Judith Willis

Senior Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

15. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

The Leader was slightly delayed so the Vice Chair acted as Chair for the first four items on the agenda.

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

17. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members were informed that at the latest meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on Thursday, 3rd September 2020, Members had pre-scrutinised the Recovery and Restoration Plan and the Housing Strategic Improvement Plan. However, as the Committee did not propose any recommendations there were no proposals from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Executive Committee's consideration.

The Committee was informed that the Budget Framework Presentation, at Minute Item No. 21, had been published in a supplementary pack for the meeting. The intention was for Officers to deliver the presentation at the meeting but a copy would be available for Members, Officers and the public to refer to on the

.....
Chair

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 8 September 2020

Council's website should any IT problems occur during the meeting. As the presentation had been published on the day of the meeting the Leader had agreed that paper copies of the supplementary pack did not need to be provided to Members.

18. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday, 4th August 2020 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

19. DRAFT COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

The Financial Support Manager presented the draft Council Tax Support Scheme for Members' consideration.

During the presentation of the report the following matters were highlighted:

- The Council had the ability to review and change the Council Tax Support Scheme every year.
- Any proposed changes had to be subject to consultation with both the precepting authorities and anybody else who might be impacted by the scheme.
- The existing scheme was based on Council Tax data, was quite reactive and required the majority of residents to pay at least 20 per cent of their Council Tax.
- The proposed new scheme would take into account the changing circumstances of a resident and people could claim up to 100 per cent Council Tax relief.
- The potential for residents to claim Council Tax support of up to 100 per cent would enable a number of residents to be eligible for the support that was currently only available to care leavers.
- Under the proposed scheme once a person started to claim Universal Credit the Council would be notified and adjustments could be made to the amount of Council Tax that they were charged.
- The proposed new scheme would not take housing benefit into account when calculating the income that residents received.
- The draft new scheme would also provide clearer guidelines to residents about the Council Tax Support Scheme which would make it easier to understand how the scheme worked and how it applied to individuals.
- The proposed scheme, if approved, would result in an increase of £50,000 in costs. These costs would be shared

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 8 September 2020

- between all the precepting authorities and Redditch Borough Council would only need to cover 13 per cent of those costs.
- The changes were being proposed in a context in which approximately £400,000 in Council Tax had not been paid by residents, including those residents who struggled to pay the 20 per cent of Council Tax currently required from those in receipt of support.
 - As the proposals were subject to consultation there was the possibility that changes would be made prior to a decision being taken on the future scheme. Any changes as well as the final scheme would be reported for the consideration of the Executive Committee in due course.

RESOLVED that

the Council should 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 1st April 2021.

20. RECOVERY AND RESTORATION PLAN

The Head of Business Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy presented the Council's Recovery and Restoration Plan and in so doing highlighted the following points for Members' consideration:

- The purpose of the report was to provide the Council with a recovery plan, which needed to be developed whilst the Covid-19 pandemic was still in place.
- The local and national economies had both been impacted by Covid-19. To address this at a local level, an Economic Recovery Framework was in the process of being developed for Redditch and this would support the Worcestershire Economic Recovery Plan that was being developed at the County level.
- The lessons that had already been learned in responding to Covid-19 locally had been taken into account when developing the Council's Restoration and Recovery Plan. The recommendations arising from the Corporate Peer Challenge had also been considered in developing the plan.
- The Council Plan would need to be reviewed in response to the pandemic to ensure that proposed action met the emerging needs of the local community.

After the report had been presented Members discussed a number of points in detail:

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 8 September 2020

- The need for the Council to be able to act swiftly and appropriately in response to issues arising from the pandemic as and where this occurred. Officers were advised that it would be helpful for Members to be kept informed of major issues as they occurred.
- The potential for the Council to focus on a small number of key priorities. Officers explained that the key priorities would be to prepare for a second wave of Covid-19 in case this should occur and to ensure services could meet the community's needs in this scenario, to work in partnership with other agencies, including businesses, to support the local economy, to review the Council's future operating model and to ensure support was available to the most vulnerable in the community.
- The work that had already been undertaken by the Council in response to the recommendations set out in the Corporate Peer Challenge and the impact that Covid-19 had had on progress with this work.
- The potential impact that the end of the furlough scheme in October 2020 might have on unemployment levels in the Borough and the action that could be taken by the Council and partner organisations to address this locally.
- The potential for documentation to be provided for Members' consideration which set out the scale of the task ahead in terms of local recovery following the pandemic and the potential financial costs involved.
- The progress that had been made with developing the action plan for the Redditch Business Improvement District (BID) and the potential for this plan to be shared with Members.
- The extent to which all relevant businesses were contributing to the levy for the Redditch BID.
- The valuable services provided by Dial A Ride and Shopmobility and the potential for these services to operate on a cost neutral basis during the pandemic.
- The support available to Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations and the contribution that these organisations had made in respect of providing support to vulnerable communities during the pandemic.
- The recent closure of the Redditch Boxing Club and the support available to VCS groups that were struggling. It was noted that the Council could be contacted by any VCS groups to discuss the support available locally, including from other organisations that provided grants.
- The potential for the Council to deliver on the aims detailed in the plan and the resources available to the authority.
- The availability of Government funding for local government to enable Councils to support communities during the pandemic.
- The action that had been taken by the Housing Department during the lockdown to provide support to Council tenants.

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 8 September 2020

- The investment that had been made in new ICT systems for the Council and the impact that this would have on Council efficiency moving forward.
- The potential for the Council to work with local suppliers to aid local economic recovery, subject to procurement rules.

During consideration of this item the Chief Executive and Members commented on the hard work of Council staff during the lockdown. The Committee acknowledged that staff had had to adapt to working in new ways very quickly at the start of lockdown and had continued to ensure that crucial frontline services continued to be delivered. Council staff were thanked for their hard work during this time.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the proposed Recovery and Restoration Plan 2020-2021 be endorsed;**
- 2) **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; and**

RESOLVED that

- 3) **the attached Corporate Peer Challenge Report 2020 be noted.**

21. BUDGET FRAMEWORK PRESENTATION

The Head of Financial and Customer Services delivered a presentation, a copy of which had been made available in a supplementary pack for consideration at the meeting, in respect of the Council's Budget Framework for the period 2021/22 to 2024/25.

Members were asked to note the following matters arising in this presentation:

- In 2019/20 overall there had been a £403,000 underspend in the general fund.
- A total of £1.38 million in new reserves had been created, including a new reserve for economic development growth.
- New reserves also included a reserve for service reviews of £150,000 which would help to build more flexibility into the service review process.
- There had been significant savings in Enabling Services in 2019/20, primarily due to staff savings.

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 8 September 2020

- However, there had been an overspend of £486,000 in relation to the Strategic Purpose: Help me Run a Successful Business. This was largely due to a loss in revenue for Rubicon Leisure during the period of the lockdown.
- The income for Rubicon Leisure had increased in recent months. This was largely driven by growth in income from outdoor activities including outdoor theatre events and from activities at Pitcheroak Golf Course.
- Capital reserves in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) had been reduced by £3 million.
- There was a significant amount of uncertainty in relation to the position of the HRA moving forward as there had been a decline in the amount of rent that had been paid to the Council by tenants during the lockdown.
- The government had provided £13.5 million funding for business rates relief. The Council and other precepting authorities were projected to lose up to £2 million from business rates during the year.
- A loss of £1.6 million in income from Council Tax was also expected, which would impact on both the Council and other precepting authorities.
- Officers had calculated the projected budget gap for each of the years in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2021/22 to 2024/25. A significant gap was anticipated for 2024/25 as Officers were expecting that the Council would receive no income from the New Homes Bonus (NHB) that year.
- The capital programme had been significantly underspent in recent years and would be reviewed by the Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT) on an ongoing basis.
- Officers had attempted to assess budget pressures arising from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, though there was some uncertainty in relation to this as it was not known whether there would be a second outbreak locally.
- The potential for the Council to receive a one year settlement from the Government had been taken into account when considering the projections for the MTFP.

Following the presentation Members discussed a number of issues in detail:

- The purpose of the £2 million business rates reserve and the potential for this to be used to cover the projected losses in income from business rates. Officers explained that this reserve was for another purpose and agreed to clarify this outside the meeting.
- The funding from Government available to the Council and the need for clarity moving forward about funding for local government.

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 8 September 2020

- The amount of business grants relief that had been provided locally. Officers agreed to provide this information outside the meeting.
- The reduction in rent payments to the Council during the pandemic and the availability of Government funding to support the HRA. Officers explained that the Council had outlined the situation and the impact on the HRA at a recent meeting with officials representing the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).
- The services provided by Rubicon Leisure and the help that Members could provide in promoting and using these services.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

22. FINANCE MONITORING QUARTER 1 2020/21

The Head of Financial and Customer Services presented the Finance Monitoring Report for the first quarter of the 2020/21 financial year.

Members were advised that, based on the position in the first quarter, an overspend of £158,000 was anticipated by the end of the financial year. The overspend was primarily anticipated in relation to the Strategic Purpose; Run and Grow a Successful Business. This reflected the anticipated loss of income for Rubicon Leisure during the year.

The savings and income that had been secured to date had been outlined in the report. There were budget pressures arising in respect of Dial a Ride and Shopmobility services where income targets had not been met, but it was anticipated that this was mainly due to the impact of Covid-19.

There was a £211,000 underspend in the capital programme during the first quarter of the financial year. This was attributed mainly to the vehicle replacement scheme however, it was anticipated that expenditure on this scheme would be completed by the end of September 2020.

A gap of £2 million was anticipated for the HRA by the end of the year, due to a reduction in rent payments. This pressure had not been reflected in the report but would emerge in future reports to Committee. There had been a reduction in expenditure on repairs and maintenance and management and supervision, both of which were reflected in the figures for the HRA. During the lockdown there had been restricted access to Council properties which had impacted on expenditure on repairs and maintenance. There were

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 8 September 2020

some vacancies in management positions within the Housing Department, which had been reflected in the HRA, but staff were being recruited so expenditure was expected to reflect budgets in future.

After the report had been presented Members discussed the following points:

- The capital expenditure anticipated for the site of the bridge at Green Lane, Studley and what this would entail. Officers agreed to provide a written assessment of the work to Members.
- The potential for the site of the bridge at Green Lane, Studley to be the focus for housing development and for affordable housing or social housing to be provided at this location.
- The financial costs involved in maintaining the bridge at Green Lane, Studley.
- The Leader's offer to other organisations to take responsibility for the bridge and the requirements of any organisation taking on this responsibility. Officers explained that any organisation assuming responsibility for the bridge would need to be able to maintain the structure in accordance with health and safety and other legal requirements.
- The potential for the capital funding generated by the sale of the site at Green Lane, Studley to be invested in social housing in the Borough.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the current financial position in relation to revenue and capital budgets for the period April 2020 – June 2020 as detailed in the report be noted; and**

RECOMMENDED that

- 2) **the training budget held within the Human Resources service, is allocated to a shared service budget meaning that any training provided to our staff is beneficial to both Councils as we upskill our workforce.**

23. HOUSING / HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the Housing / HRA Strategic Improvement Plan Progress Report.

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

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 8 September 2020

- The purpose of the report was to provide assurance to Members that action was being taken in relation to Housing Services as agreed.
- The update was being delivered in the second year of the Council's three year improvement plan for Housing Services.
- The Covid-19 pandemic had impacted on rent income and a budget gap of £2 million was projected for the HRA moving forward.
- Council tenants had also been significantly affected by the pandemic and there were financial challenges for many tenants, especially in relation to claiming Universal Credit and household finances.
- The Housing Capital programme remained in place but some projects had been postponed or had been impacted by Covid-19.
- Compliance was a key priority, particularly with respect to Housing capital projects and progress had been made.
- There was a growing pressure in relation to homelessness in the Borough. As the furlough scheme would be ending in October 2020, Officers were anticipating that homelessness would continue to be an issue in the medium and long-term.
- In introducing the new Housing Management system, the Council would be required to update a range of Housing policies and procedures. To ensure that this could be achieved in a timely manner delegated authority had been requested to enable Officers to finalise some policies and processes. Major changes to Council policies would continue to be reported to the Executive Committee and Council.

After the report had been presented Members discussed the following points in detail:

- The progress that had been achieved in the previous two and-a-half years in terms of addressing the issues that had previously been identified in the Housing Department.
- The impact that the new Housing Management IT system would have on the efficiency of the service.
- The presentation of the report for the consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the previous week and the support that had been provided by scrutiny Members over the previous two years in respect of this matter.
- The hard work of staff working in Housing Services during the period.
- The potential for further information to be provided to explain how the Council had calculated that there could be a loss of £2 million income to the HRA by the end of the financial year. Officers explained that information had been provided to central Government in respect of this matter and the figure of £2 million had been identified based on weekly returns.

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 8 September 2020

- The early intervention work being undertaken by Officers to help tenants ensure that rent debts did not escalate to a point where they could not be paid. The Committee was advised that payment plans could be put in place to enable tenants to pay debts in a manner that was affordable for them.
- The thirty-year business plan for the HRA and the timescales for updating this. Officers explained that this plan was due to be reviewed in 2021.
- The potential for the Government to provide the Council with additional funding for Housing and to address the gap in the HRA.
- The extent to which the Trades Unions had been consulted about changes to Housing Policies. Officers explained that the unions were not consulted about changes to every policy but instead contact was made with the unions when service reviews and other projects were proposed that would directly impact on staff.
- The potential for Members to be kept informed of any changes made by Officers to Housing policies and procedures under delegated authority. Officers confirmed that this would be possible to arrange.
- The cost to the Council of providing temporary accommodation to rough sleepers. Officers explained that £41,000 had been spent on providing temporary accommodation to homeless people, including rough sleepers, during the lockdown. Temporary accommodation had been provided in hotels and bed and breakfasts as part of this process. A number of families were in temporary accommodation and action was being taken to provide two- and three-bedroom void properties for their use. Further information would be provided to Members on this subject as it became available.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the Executive Committee consider the content of the report and endorse the progress reports detailed in the Improvement Plan; and**
- 2) **the Executive Committee 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 and Procurement.**

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 8 September 2020

24. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Officers confirmed that there were no outstanding recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee requiring consideration.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2nd July 2020 be noted; and
- 2) the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 30th July 2020 be noted.

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

The Committee was advised that there were no further recommendations or referrals from other Committees requiring consideration on this occasion.

26. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

The following updates were provided in respect of the Executive Advisory Panels and other external groups:

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

Councillor Lovell explained that he had been meeting with the Climate Change Officer to discuss various initiatives, including the potential to introduce solar panels for Council buildings and action that could be taken to ensure that the café at Morton Stanley Park had environmentally friendly features.

The survey in respect of climate change, which had been mentioned at the previous meeting, had been circulated locally and approximately 700 people had responded. It was hoped that a meeting of the Climate Change Cross Party Working Group would take place soon and the feedback in these surveys could be considered.

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

The Committee was informed that a meeting of the Constitutional Review Working Party was scheduled to take place on 3rd November 2020.

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 8 September 2020

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

Members were advised that there had been no meetings of the Board since the previous meeting of the Committee.

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

Councillor Dormer explained that a meeting of the group would take place in November and the date would be confirmed with Members shortly.

- e) Planning Advisory Panel – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

The Committee was informed that a meeting of the Planning Advisory Panel was scheduled to take place on 17th September 2020.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 8.05 pm

Executive Committee27th October 2020**Redditch Borough Council Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2020-2024**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Craig Warhurst
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Judith Willis
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor Consulted	N/A
Key Decision	No

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The Council has a statutory duty to have a homelessness strategy and it is now becoming standard practice for local authorities to combine this with an overview of their wider strategic aims in the local housing market, thereby creating a synergised Housing and Homelessness Strategy.
- 1.2 The new draft Redditch Borough Council Housing and Homelessness Strategy adopts this synergised approach. It looks at some of the main challenges in the national and Worcestershire housing markets and sets out the local position in Redditch, together with the actions the Council intends to take to achieve its strategic purpose of 'Finding somewhere to live.'
- 1.3 The draft strategy also explains how the Council's local housing priorities connect to the wider Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership Plan, a high-level housing plan for the county, which steers the general direction of the travel for all the councils in housing terms. It also makes links with the council's recovery plan in relation to the covid19 pandemic.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **The Executive Committee is asked to approve the draft RBC Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2020-2024 for a period of public consultation for four weeks**
- 2.2 **Agree that a final version of the Housing Strategy, having considered any relevant consultation responses, will be brought back to Executive for approval**

3. KEY ISSUES**Financial Implications**

Executive Committee**27th October 2020**

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with adopting this draft strategy.

Legal Implications

- 3.2 Under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the Council has a statutory duty to have a homelessness strategy, and this is contained within the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership Plan, which the Council endorsed in 2017.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.3 The strategy sets out some of the main challenges in the national housing market, and looks at the role of stock-holding local authorities within this. The document also locates the Redditch market within the county-wide context and considers the specifics around home ownership, private renting, social housing, homelessness, planning and growth. The document contains a summary of the main challenges facing the council locally, and sets out a number of actions to tackle these issues, including those relating to the council's housing growth programme. The strategy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it remains relevant and that these actions are having a positive impact on the borough, and to explore any blocks to progress. The draft strategy will be the subject of a four week public consultation prior to formal adoption.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.4 These were covered in the Equality Impact Assessment carried out for the original Housing Partnership Plan. This will be reviewed to consider any additional impacts as a result of the strategy. The provision of good quality, affordable housing should help tackle inequality and support diversity.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

Failing to influence the housing market in a strategic way could lead to a rise in homelessness locally, and impact upon the delivery of affordable housing. There are also risks to housing posed by the coronavirus pandemic so this strategy links closely with the council's Recovery and Restoration Plan 2020.

5. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix A – Draft Redditch Borough Council Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2020-2024
Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership Plan

Executive Committee

27th October 2020

Strategic purpose of 'Finding somewhere to live.'
Redditch Borough Council Recovery and Restoration Plan 2020

6. KEY

None.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Derek Allen Housing Strategy Manager
derek.allen@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Tel: 01527 64252 extension 1278

This page is intentionally left blank

Redditch Borough Council Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2020-2024**Contents**

Foreword Councillor Craig Warhurst

The national housing context

The Worcestershire context and the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership Plan 2017

The Redditch context - Strategic Purpose 'Finding somewhere to live'

Home ownership

Private rental sector

Social housing

Homelessness

Planning and future growth

Appendices

- Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership Plan
- Strategic Purpose 'Finding somewhere to live'
- Redditch District Council Recovery and Restoration Plan

Introduction

Redditch Borough Council has six strategic purposes, one of which is 'Finding somewhere to live' so the organisation has an important role to play in making sure that the local housing market provides a supply of good quality, affordable accommodation for local residents. This document sets out the council's strategic approach to helping finding somewhere to live, together with a series of actions designed to enable local people to be well-housed. Getting this approach right should make Redditch safer, healthier and more prosperous, because housing is central to the wellbeing of individuals, families and the wider community as a whole. Housing also plays a role in helping to meet the Council's other strategic purposes particularly around business, leisure, and financial independence.

This housing strategy sets out an approach to meeting the housing challenges facing the borough, with a focus on improving standards in the private rented sector increasing the supply of homes that local people can afford, promoting independence and ensuring that homes are safe and secure. It's important to recognise that this strategy was put together in advance of the outbreak of Covid19 and it remains to be seen what impact the crisis has on local residents and their housing situations. As a council we have put together a recovery plan to try and

reduce the likelihood of homelessness and I will be monitoring this area of work closely to ensure we do everything we can to help Redditch residents stay safely housed during and after the pandemic.

.

Councillor Craig Warhurst (Portfolio Holder for Housing)

The National Housing Context

In recent years, the national housing market has changed considerably, which in turn poses significant challenges for local authorities, who undertake a wide range of statutory housing functions in their area.

The latest MHCLG English Housing Survey 2016-17 reports the key trends. Home ownership remains central to the market, but with prices rising, home ownership is becoming increasingly difficult for young families. In the meantime, 4.7 million households are now renting privately in England, a figure which has doubled since the mid-1990's. Finally, 3.9 million households are living in the social sector, making it a smaller provider than the private rented sector.

Nationally it is widely recognised that there is an acute shortage of housing particularly social and affordable housing and the government itself has described the market as 'broken.' As private rents and house prices continue to increase many households are facing severe affordability issues, with young people and families on low to middle incomes especially affected by the difficulty of affording to buy or rent a decent home.

The government's response to these changing dynamics in the English housing market has been to try to boost the number of new homes being built nationwide, and to speed up the rate at which these units are delivered. To encourage development there have been changes introduced to streamline planning, new building funds launched, and a suite of options designed for households wishing to get on the housing ladder. The Social Housing Green Paper has also tabled a whole series of changes that may need to be implemented by housing providers in the near future, some of which focus on the delivery of new homes while a new White Paper 'Planning for the Future' indicates other major changes lie ahead for housing and planning with central government exerting more influence at a local level.

Nevertheless, despite these efforts at a national level, housing development is still falling short of demand, According to current projections an average of 210,000 new households will form in England each year between 2014 and 2039. In 2016/17 the total housing stock in England increased by around 217,000 dwellings: 15% higher

than the previous year's increase but short of the 240-250,000 new homes needed to keep pace with household formation.

With home ownership increasingly out of reach for many, and the private sector becoming more and more competitive, so the pressure has risen on local authorities to provide help to local residents in housing need.

There has also been considerable debate about the impact of changes made to the welfare benefit system in the last five years, and how these are leading to increased pressure on all housing providers. Broadly speaking the welfare changes introduced have decreased and capped the level of benefits available to low-income households at a time when the overall cost of living has risen.

This pressure this has generated is certainly being felt by housing providers with tenants on Universal Credit, which is currently being phased in across the country. In February 2018, the BBC reported that 70% of 13,650 council tenants in London receiving Universal Credit were in rent arrears locally.

Local councils are expected to play an increasingly important role in regulating standards and conditions in their private rented sector, while the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act in 2018 places new statutory responsibilities on councils to prevent and relieve homelessness in their areas. Homelessness and temporary accommodation placements have risen nationally in recent years, with MHCLG reporting that rough sleeping is up 169% in the last seven years.

For councils who have retained their housing stock, the pressure doesn't stop there. The changes implemented by government to the Housing Revenue Account in 2012 have made further borrowing difficult for most councils at the same time as rental income is falling as a result of the 1% per year reduction introduced in 2016-17. Right to buy continues to be popular amongst social housing tenants, but its impact is being felt by councils struggling to replace a depleted stock base at the pace and scale required to meet incoming demand for housing from aspiring tenants.

From a health and safety perspective, the tragic events at Grenfell Tower in June 2017 have brought the role of housing providers as guardians of wellbeing and place-making sharply to the fore, and it's likely that further actions will be required in due course to protect tenants in light of the ongoing public enquiry.

All these national challenges and issues have combined to impact on councils on two fronts. As local landlords, councils need to be able to respond to the needs of the community efficiently and effectively which proves increasingly difficult with reduced finances and fewer homes to rent out. As a stock holder Redditch Borough Council is in a position of strength to influence the local market. Operationally the councils are also responding to an increase in demand for help through its housing options service – this is hard to resolve when stock levels and turnover are low, and

private rents are high, especially in comparison with limited help available via the Local Housing Allowance.

In short, in the current housing market, most councils are dealing with significant housing-related pressures at the moment, both in terms of a rising demand for help with housing options, and as the result of the mounting financial pressures that have been building up for some years now for councils and residents alike.

The Worcestershire Context

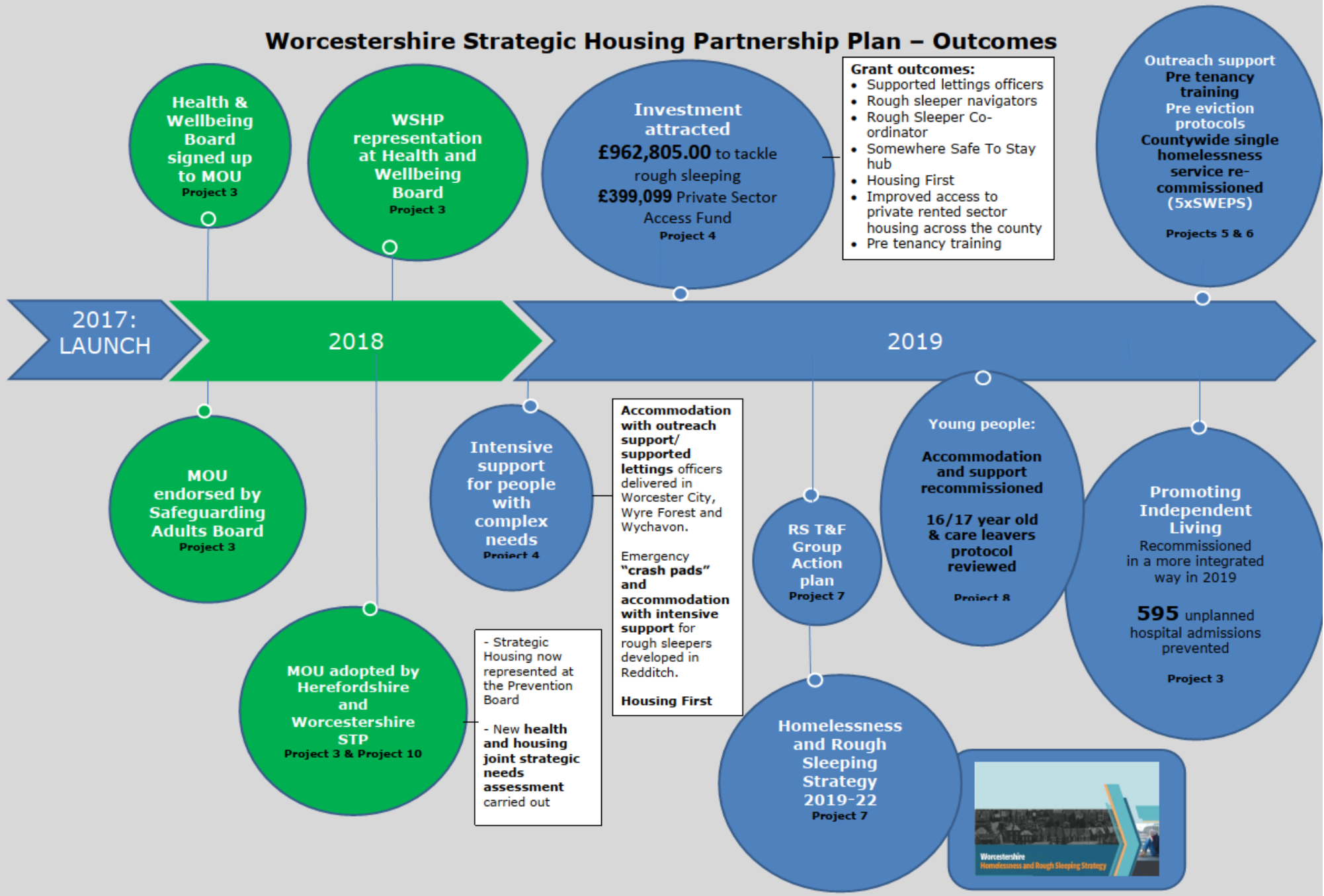
The Council works in partnership with the other local authorities in the county, primarily around influencing change, working up housing-related funding bids to central government, and the delivery of aids and adaptations in the private residential sector via the county-wide Home Improvement Agency. Most of this joint work is co-ordinated by the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership, which comprises of the main housing providers around the county and those key organisations associated with housing, including health, adult social care, childrens services, the Department for Work and Pensions and criminal justice agencies. The Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership has developed a county-wide homelessness strategy, which has been formally adopted by Redditch Borough Council, in order to meet its statutory duty to have such a policy in place locally. The Strategic Partnership has also developed a high-level housing plan for the county and this steers the general direction of the travel for all the councils in housing terms (Appendix 1). The six key themes in the 2017 high-level plan are:

- **Maximise the delivery of good quality housing** *of the right type and tenure* by co-ordinating the activities of housing developers, providers and support agencies to meet existing and future housing need in a sustainable way.
 - Build new homes
 - Investigate alternative models of affordable housing delivery to meet the housing and support needs of specific groups and sectors of the housing market
 - Attract funding opportunities to support delivery of identified housing development priorities
- **Improve existing homes** to tackle the personal, social, economic, mental and physical health, and community impacts of poor quality and inaccessible housing (and cold homes) across the private sector.
- **Improve collaboration, coordination and integration of healthcare and housing** in the planning, commissioning and delivery of homes and also services that focus on early intervention.
- **Develop an integrated approach to enable people with multiple and complex needs** to receive the services they need (not limited by existing practice or legislation) to change and support them to achieve resilience, health and well-being and independence within their communities in Worcestershire.

- **Create a simpler and more accessible pathway for *all* matters relating to disability and vulnerability**, empowering people to make the right choices to enable them to live independently.
- **Promote the strategic and operational impact of the housing sector** and ensure it influences key business planning processes in Worcestershire.

The high-level plan is accompanied by a number of actions to be undertaken by councils in relation to their local housing markets. The Partnership has also achieved a number of outcomes since its launch in 2017.

Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership Plan – Outcomes



Given that each council also has its challenges locally, and that delivery models vary across the districts, the authorities go on to determine their own specific priorities and this strategic document sets these out and how they will be progressed. The themes of the strategic purpose 'Finding somewhere to live' (Appendix 2) are:

- **Support the development and delivery of appropriate housing in the Borough**
- **Raise housing standards via delivery of a Strategic Improvement Plan**
- **Intervention in the private housing market**
- **Involve tenants and residents in service reform**
- **Support the prevention of homelessness**

The Redditch Context

The borough of Redditch is in Worcestershire, approximately 15 miles south of Birmingham. It has a population of 84,500, and the highest rate of young people aged 0-15 in the county. Four areas of the borough are within the top 10% most deprived in England. In housing terms Redditch Borough Council is the only council in Worcestershire to have retained its housing stock, and rents on these 5900 homes are lower than anywhere else in the county. Other Registered providers in the area provide in the region of 1900 homes. Redditch has a competitive and expensive private rented sector – around 4000 households rent privately and the borough also has 90 licensable Houses in Multiple Occupation. Home ownership is also an important part of the local housing market – there are around 23,000 privately-owned homes in Redditch, and the total number of properties is 34,800. The Council is also focussed on ensuring that careful consideration is given to the environment so green/Eco Home themes form part of its green thread thinking going forwards.

Home Ownership in Redditch

Currently home ownership levels are relatively stable in Redditch. Feedback from local mortgage providers indicates that the local economy is considered to be buoyant at the moment and there is a steady and ongoing demand from households seeking to purchase their own home in the area which is being catered for by lenders.

The Private Rented Sector in Redditch

The private rented sector in Redditch is experiencing similar pressures to other parts of the country. It provides a home to some 4000 households locally but it is becoming an increasingly expensive housing option for local residents. Local rents are significantly higher than the Local Housing Allowance and in some instances rents for properties in the town centre are more expensive than some in Birmingham city centre.

The financial pressures faced by local people living in the private rented sector, particularly on low incomes, are being felt in other parts of the housing system especially in terms of homelessness - loss of an assured shorthold tenancy is now the biggest cause of homelessness in Redditch.

Analysis of the local sector shows that most landlords are 'incidental' landlords, rather than larger-scale portfolio landlords. The number of Lettings Agents is also high – there are in the region of 15 agents operating across the borough. Standards and conditions fluctuate and the council's Private Sector Housing Team receives over 100 complaints a year from tenants who are dissatisfied with either the behaviour of their landlord or the condition of their property. It is also the case that there are a number of ex-Right-to-Buy properties being rented out privately, and analysis suggests these properties are over-represented in presentations for help under the homelessness legislation.

The Social Housing Sector in Redditch

The Council has a big influence on the local housing market – outside of home ownership, the authority is the largest provider of homes in the borough, and its rents are also the cheapest in the area. Customer feedback demonstrates that local people wishing to be housed by the council value the security, cost and speed of repairs offered by council housing.

Redditch is a popular place for social housing providers who operate across the area, providing around 1900 homes locally and the Council has strong relationships and works closely with all Registered Providers in the district.

Given the financial pressures and competitive nature of the private rented sector, demand for social housing is high in the borough and the housing waiting list has a minimum of 1000 households on it at any time.

The Council faces an ongoing challenge over the Right-to-Buy given that it is difficult to replace the stock at the speed it diminishes – on average the Council sells around 50 properties a year through Right-to-Buy. This, coupled with the reduction in rents introduced by the government in 2016, and the introduction of Universal Credit, has put a pressure on the Council's Housing Revenue Account, which requires action to ensure ongoing financial stability. As a result of these dynamics voids are also an issue the council is focussing on as returning properties back into the stock in a timely way is essential in the current financial climate.

As part of its response to these issues the council has launched a Housing Growth Programme which is designed to increase the number of affordable homes for local people by creating council properties on council-owned land. The Executive agreed a three year Council Housing Growth Programme in January 2017 and a budget of £12.5m was set aside for this, and the Council are working in partnership with private

sector property company Baily Garner on the potential to build council housing on 10 sites across the borough.

The Council has signed up to an agreement with the Government to retain Right to Buy receipts for the provision of additional affordable housing known as 1-4-1. This has a requirement that the receipts are spent within 3 years or they have to be returned to Central Government with interest. This agreement also makes it difficult for the Council to access other housing funding streams.

In order to spend the required 1-4-1 receipts in the required timeframe a programme of purchasing properties from the open market was undertaken in 2017. The Council has purchased a number of properties since the launch of the growth programme and the receipts must be used to replace the sales with either new build, buy back of properties or purchase on the open market (new stock). No more than 30% of the RTB receipt can be used in the cost of a new property.

In order to achieve the increase in stock officers completed a strategic response and identified a number of options that members agreed for officers to undertake. These are as follows:

- Commissioning the construction of new HRA stock
- Purchase properties
- Purchase from developers through s.106 bidding
- Purchase properties 'off plan' on developments
- Regeneration of existing stock
- Purchase stock from other Registered Providers
- Buy backs and Mortgage Rescue scheme

Homelessness

During the last couple of years a small number of individuals have had a high street profile in the town centre. The council has worked extensively with these individuals and with various partner agencies in order to secure housing for them where necessary. The sorts of issues faced by this group are covered in the recently published Worcestershire County Council JSNA profile on Health and Housing.

More broadly, the Housing Options Team continue to receive enquiries from potentially homeless households in Redditch. Loss of private sector tenancy has now become the primary cause of homelessness in the borough, ahead of parents/relatives refusing to accommodate and incidents of domestic violence.

Planning and future growth

The Council has a duty, through its Local Plan, to ensure that sufficient land is available to meet its housing need over any given Plan period. The Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3 (BORLP3) period ran from 1996 to 2011. The current Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4 (BORLP4) Plan period runs from 2011 to 2030.

Completions in the latter years of the BORLP3 Plan period were affected by the economic downturn. However, over the whole of the Plan period, the housing provision of 4504 dwellings was met. The housing requirement for the BORLP4 Plan period is 6400 dwellings, which equates to an average of 337 completions per annum. The annual average is on track with a total of 396 dwellings completed this monitoring year (1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019). A number of large sites across the Borough are currently being built out and therefore the trend is expected to remain slightly above the average for the plan period for the next few years until these sites are completed. In Redditch there is a need for homes that support economic growth, which includes increasing the availability of higher-value homes in the borough. The number of affordable homes delivered in Redditch in recent years is as follows:

Year	Affordable homes delivered
2018-19	123
2017-18	81
2016-17	73
2015-16	55
2014-15	168
2013-14	70

There are currently a total of 31 sites under construction this monitoring year, with 18 sites which have been completed. A further 51 development sites within the Borough benefit from planning permission but have not yet started.

Work is also taking place at a senior level to explore creating a new county-wide housing delivery plan, and consideration is also being given to the use of local authority assets within the 'One Public Estate' approach.

Summary of the key strategic housing challenges facing Redditch Borough Council and the actions to be taken to influence the local housing market

Home ownership	Action to be taken
Ensuring home ownership levels underpinning local market are maintained and developed	Joint approach from Strategic Housing and planning officers to incoming applications for housing development in the borough taking account of themes within 'Planning for the Future'. Review funding streams for growth, build and development and working with partners contribute to creating county-wide housing delivery plan Explore use of assets under One Public Estate approach
Ensuring government-sponsored products are available locally	Strategic Housing and planning staff to review current range of products being delivered and offered locally

Being alert to any Brexit-related impacts on local housing market	Discuss potential for increase in incoming demand from home owners with other council teams and monitor via relevant council measures
Potential for interest rate rises in the future	Strategic Housing to monitor on an ongoing basis
Social Housing	
Size of the housing waiting list	Review list as part of introducing new housing allocations policy
Impact of Right-to-Buy on stock levels	Review RTB processes and opportunities for tenants to streamline and reduce 'wasted work'
Increasing level of involvement of tenants and enhance tenant experience	Actions as set out in Strategic Improvement Plan – also focus on Management, structures and supervision Productivity and performance around contractor management, stores, voids and implementation of new IT system
Potential to introduce affordable rents, alternative accommodation and alternative asset management vehicle – for example a Housing Company	Council officers and members to consider value of this approach as part of wider Housing Growth Programme/assessment of use of council assets and submit report to Executive and Council outlining conclusions Focus on 30 year business plan Explore potential for council-generated HMOs and creating more temporary accommodation of higher quality as a means of ending use of bed and breakfast in Redditch
Private rental sector	
Variable standards and conditions	Private Sector Team to review current practice and explore options to expand influence within current resource constraints
High number of landlords and agents combined with increased focus on regulation	As above – explore Accreditation/incentive schemes for increasing partnerships with landlords and reducing non-compliance
Lack of security for tenants	Ensure any government changes to tenant security are implemented across the borough
Rising rents/affordability issues	Research efforts to tackle high rents in other parts of the country
Homelessness	
Lack of housing resources to resolve homelessness	Housing Options team to review provision of temporary accommodation and operational effectiveness and efficiency now new legislation has bedded in

Addressing rough sleeping/begging in town centre	Trial Housing First approach being adopted in Redditch as a new means of tackling rough sleeping
Cost and amount of temporary accommodation being accessed	Examine as part of wider review of temporary accommodation as above
Increased duties and expectations of Homelessness Reduction Act including Duty to Cooperate	Ensure team fully staffed and that financial resources required to tackle homelessness remain available
Utilising new government resources to maximum effect and maintaining existing support services	Strategic Housing staff to work with colleagues county-wide on securing additional resources available nationally
Recruitment and retention in relevant council service areas	Management team to take steps required to ensure services are fully staffed
Risks to housing created by Covid19	Implement local recovery plan and continue to work with county colleagues on Worcestershire-wide recovery themes

Executive27th October 2020

**Planning for the Future White Paper and
Changes to the Planning System – RBC responses**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Matt Dormer
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Ruth Bamford
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	Yes
Non-Key Decision	Yes

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The appendices to this report contain the Council's responses to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), Planning for the Future White Paper, and Changes to the Planning System consultation.
- 1.2 As result of the reforms being proposed it is likely that the creation of a new Redditch Local plan will have to begin in 2021

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **That Appendix A is submitted to MHCLG as the Councils Response to the Planning for the Future White Paper**
- 2.2 **That Appendix B is confirmed as the Councils response to the Changes to the planning System consultation**
- 2.3 **That authority is granted to officers to begin the creation of a new Local Plan for Redditch.**

3. KEY ISSUES**Financial Implications**

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report at this time. If there is a need to begin preparing a new local plan in 2021 then a budget will need to be allocated for this work.

Legal Implications

- 3.2 There are no direct Legal implications although should some of these reforms be implemented it likely there would be new legislation for the Council to consider.

Executive

27th October 2020

Service / Operational Implications

3.4 Planning for the Future White paper

The planning for the future White Paper was published on 6th August 2020 it is split up into the pillars which in turn contain 24 proposals.

The Pillars and topics within them are

Pillar One - Planning for development (Proposals 1 -10)

- A new approach to plan-making
- Development Management Process
- New interactive, web-based map standard for planning documents
- Streamlined, more engaging plan-making process
- Speeding up the delivery of development

Pillar Two - Planning for beautiful and sustainable places (Proposals 11-22)

- Creating frameworks for quality
- A fast-track for beauty
- Effective stewardship and enhancement of our natural and historic environment

Pillar Three - Planning for infrastructure and connected places (Proposals 23-24)

- Consolidated Infrastructure Levy
- How we move into the new system

3.5 Members have been briefed in detail via the Planning Advisory Panel (PAP), but it is worth remembering the aims of these reforms are to speed up the planning system and in particular the rate at which the planning system delivers new homes. The significant reforms which are contained within the white paper are.

- Simplified Land use plans containing only three types of allocation, **Growth Areas, Renewal Areas and Protected Areas.**
- Development Management policies set nationally.
- Simplified sustainability / environmental assessment processes.
- Abolition of the Duty to Cooperate.
- New binding standard method for establishing housing requirements.
- Areas allocated as growth areas will automatically have outline planning consent.
- More modern technology used in both plan making and decision taking.
- The requirement of Local Plans to be produced in 30 months.
- Nationally set mandatory levy to replace section 106 agreements.

The response to the white paper can be seen at appendix 1.

3.6 Changes to the Planning System consultation

Executive**27th October 2020**

Alongside the White Paper MHCLG have also proposed some shorter term changes to the planning system, some of which are in a direct response to the CV19 pandemic. Again Members have also been briefed on these proposals via PAP. The significant implications of the changes to the planning system are.

- Changes to the Standard method of establishing housing needs, the new approach would see Redditch's annual requirement rise from 337 as per the local plan, or 178 as per the current standard method to 368 under the new standard method.
- New policies on delivering first homes to encourage and facilitate home ownership for those currently priced out of the market.
- Support for small and medium sized developers which would raise the threshold for affordable housing contributions from sites of 11+ dwellings to sites of 40 or 50 dwellings.
- Extension of the Permission in Principle (PiP) consent regime

An officer's response has been submitted to this technical consultation to meet the deadline of 1st October, this can be seen at appendix 2, any additional responses as a result of discussion at formal meetings can be added to the initial response.

Implications for the Borough of Redditch Local Plan

3.7 Under the current planning regime it is possible that work would need to begin on a replacement for the Borough of Redditch Local Plan 4 (BORLP4) in 2021. The full implications of the white paper on the need to replace BORLP4 are unpredictable, although it is the view of officers that however the reforms are implemented, it is likely that the production of a new local plan for Redditch will become a necessity for the Council in 2021.

3.8 The most significant issue which will affect how the plan progresses in the future, will be the amount of housing a revised standard housing method allocates to Redditch, and what if anything will replace the duty to cooperate, and any subsequent additional housing as a result.

3.9 It will be possible to do some early evidence collection and scene setting work for a new Redditch local plan, this work can be brought before PAP in the new year.

3.10 If implemented a revised 30 month timeline for plan production will also have an impact on the creation of a new plan. Understanding when the period for plan production begins will be important, it will be essential that the Council uses the plan production time afforded to it wisely, hence it is suggested that some initial work begins on preparing a new local plan to allow the Council to implement the reforms as efficiently as possible. The Council get requests for updates on the plan making, it important that when in a position to do so the

Executive**27th October 2020**

Council publishes what it intends to do. Therefore a new local development scheme which is timetable for plan making will need to be produced as soon as possible once the outcomes of the white paper reforms are known.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.11 There are no Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications associated with this report. Although it should be noted that the white paper contains reforms to plan making which would change the way public consultation is carried out in future.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 There are no immediate risk associated with this report, as the reforms are implemented a more thorough assessment of risk can be carried out.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix A - RBC response to Planning for the Future white paper.

Appendix B - RBC response changes to the planning system

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Planning for the Future - white paper
- Changes to the planning System - consultation document

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Mike Dunphy
Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager

E Mail: m.dunphy@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Tel: 01527 881325

Government White Paper - Planning for the Future

Redditch Borough Council welcomes the publication of the White paper and supports the main theme of simplifying and speeding up the UK planning system. Below we have commented in turn on the 24 proposals, and hope this response assists MHCLG in progressing these reform over the coming months.

Pillar One – Planning for Development

1. The role of land use plans should be simplified. We propose that Local Plans should identify three types of land – Growth areas suitable for substantial development, Renewal areas suitable for development, and areas that are Protected.

1.1 We note with interest, the proposal for Local Plans to identify just three types of land, but understandably as this is only a white paper, the finer details which will follow in due course will be also of significant interest to the Council.

1.2 For Growth areas – the definition of substantial will be important. Whilst we understand that this will be defined in policy through the revised NPPF, the local view of substantial development can vary greatly dependent on the context and location in the country. Will size thresholds be set to define the difference between acceptable levels of development in growth areas versus renewal areas, or will there be a difference between greenfield and brownfield areas? Alongside the intention that growth areas will be for substantial development, there will inevitably be smaller scale and more routine development taking place. Therefore will further thresholds be set within growth areas as to what scale of development does or does not require further environmental assessment or reserved matters applications?

1.3 For Renewal areas, it is stated that these “could include... ..development in rural areas that is not annotated as Growth or Protected areas, such as small sites within or on the edge of villages”. For a district such as Redditch which has significant Green Belt, does this mean that small villages currently washed over by the Green Belt would need to be removed from it to allow any development at these locations? Removing such small villages from the Green Belt to allow some infill development may have unintended consequences. The specific suggestion that authorities can consider the case for resisting inappropriate

development of residential gardens seems at odds with the intention for renewal areas to include “gentle densification and infill of residential areas”. In many of our rural settlements, existing homes stand in large plots where additional development can be accommodated without overdeveloping the site. This is an area where a local policy approach is needed to determine where precisely garden or back-land development should be restricted.

1.4 For Protected areas – further detail will be needed as to what types of development will be restricted. Consultation on the draft revised NPPF will be essential so that we can respond to the specific types of development which are proposed to be restricted and those which will be permissible. We would suggest that the title of this area gives the public an incorrect impression that no development can take place because the area is ‘protected’ and we suggest that an alternative name, such as ‘Restricted area’ is considered. A wider point is whether authorities will still be able to review their Green Belt boundaries through their Local Plans. It is difficult to see how housing need can be met locally without this, but clarity on this is needed. Furthermore, if Green Belt boundaries are still to endure beyond the plan period, we need further guidance on the approach to safeguarded land, particularly given that Local Plans will now be subject to more frequent reviews.

1.5 We note the specific proposal to allow sub-areas to be created within Growth areas which are specifically for self and custom-build homes, and the related requirement for local authorities to identify enough land to meet the requirements identified on their registers. If these sub-areas for self build homes are only appropriate in Growth areas, what does this mean for areas that could feasibly have no Growth areas, because of the existence of land constraints designating them as areas to be Protected? How will the demand for self-build homes be met in such areas? Also, from our experience, those who wish to build their own homes often envisage doing this in a rural or semi-rural setting. Can these aspirations be met within Growth areas? Additionally, if only certain land within a Growth area is to be designated for self-build homes, how will land value and transactional issues play out if other parcels of land are designated for higher value land uses such as open market residential?

1.6 Regarding the alternative options – if Renewal areas are deemed ‘suitable for development’ it may be appropriate to extend the grant of outline planning permission for the principle of development for certain uses in these areas.

2. Development management policies established at national scale and an altered role for Local Plans.

2.1 We recognise that there can currently be unnecessary repetition of national policies in Local Plans, however, often policies within the NPPF are open to wide ranging interpretation and sparse in detail, and need expansion to be useable at the local level. To limit development management policies to site or area-specific requirements in the proposed Growth and Renewal areas is concerning to Green Belt authorities such as Redditch, where there is limited scope for such areas. The suggestion here is that there would be no locally specific development management policies to guide limited appropriate development within the Green Belt.

2.2 Under this proposal policy wording in the NPPF needs to be detailed and clear. The Government is no doubt aware of the number of planning appeals, High Court and Court of Appeal cases where the wording of the NPPF is dissected and analysed in great deal given the numerous ways it can be interpreted. If national policies are to be solely relied upon to determine the majority of 'routine' planning applications outside of specific sites or areas, then further detail will need to be added to current policies to avoid excessive amounts of appeals.

2.3 We are supportive of the move to a more design focused role for Local Planning Authorities although additional training and support will be needed to retrain local government planning professionals to enable them to perform their new function. We do have some concerns about the suggestion that the production of design guides and codes be twin-tracked alongside the Local Plan production process. With new Local Plans to be light on detail, the benefits of having design guides in place at or close to Local Plan adoption are apparent. However, this will place additional demands on the limited resources of local planning authorities and may not be achievable in practice. The situation can be foreseen where the Local Plan is adopted and design guides/codes follow some months afterwards when their production can be properly resourced, leaving a vacuum on the detailed requirements for allocated sites. We support the intention that neighbourhoods will play a crucial role in producing design codes and guides for their communities, although this will require assistance from and liaison with the local authority, which will need to be resourced. We also support the suggestion to make plans more visual and engaging, which is something we endeavoured to do with our High Quality Design SPD.

2.4 The proposals to make development management policies and code requirements machine readable is an interesting concept. The prospect of using digital services to automatically screen developments should not be done, at the expense of a planning officer using professional knowledge and experience from the planning process to make the final

decision on an application. The aim of “enabling automation of more binary considerations” would appear to remove application of planning judgement in the planning process. Even the smallest and seemingly least controversial planning application can require negotiations and the need for revised plans. There is rarely a straightforward yes or no, or ‘binary’ answer. With the proposed introduction of national development management policies and local design codes, it may be possible for planning professionals to process planning applications more efficiently, but we would not support and advise against a system where the human and professional input and oversight is removed from the decision making process on planning applications.

2.5 We are supportive of the alternative options suggested under this Proposal. Allowing local authorities to continue to have local development management policies but removing any duplication of the NPPF would be a sensible change to the current system.

3. Local Plans should be subject to a single statutory “sustainable development” test, replacing the existing tests of soundness.

3.1 We welcome the proposal to streamline the existing tests of soundness. Given that it is proposed that an assessment of Local Plan deliverability would be just one element to be incorporated into the single test, it is envisaged that the ‘single’ test would in fact be multifaceted. If Local Plans are to be devoid of development management policies setting local standards, the viability of the Local Plan would hinge on the proposals in Growth and Renewal areas, which could be diverse and varied. Therefore viability assessments could be more complex, having to take account of differing proposals and standards across these growth and renewal areas. However, until further detail of this single test is known, it is difficult to draw a full conclusion.

3.2 The specific proposal to remove the Duty to Cooperate is welcomed. Our experience has found the duty in some instances to be a totally ineffective mechanism in planning across local authority borders, particularly where there are multiple authorities involved. Recent well documented cases across the country (examples include St Albans, Wealdon, Sevenoaks) serve to highlight that the duty to cooperate is failing and is in need of wholesale changes. However, we are concerned about the lack of detail on what would replace the Duty to Cooperate. What would enable local authorities to plan effectively across administrative boundaries and to collaborate to provide local infrastructure? Reference is made to digital Local Plans helping LPAs to engage with cross-boundary issues but it is unclear how having Local Plans on websites will help difficult issues to be resolved.

Ultimately, dialogue between authorities will be required and without a framework or forum to work within to structure this dialogue, it is difficult to see how progress and agreements will be made. The proposal for housing requirements to be determined centrally, taking into account known constraints and for them to be binding on local authorities may remove the situation where there is unmet need from neighbouring areas to be apportioned and accommodated. However, until further details on which land constraints are to be factored in, and how this will impact on the local housing need derived from the standard methodology it is impossible to conclude that this will be the case. It is hard to envisage a scenario where all housing needs can be met locally and there is no need to export requirements to other areas which may be better placed to assist. Therefore an alternative mechanism for dealing with cross-boundary issues needs to be considered and included in the planning reforms.

3.3 The specific proposal to abolish the Sustainability Appraisal system is welcomed, given that the current process is cumbersome, repetitive and inaccessible to a lay-person. However once again, until more detail is known about the replacement simplified process for assessing the environmental impact of plans, it is impossible to comment much further. As highlighted below in response to Proposal 16, this simplified replacement still needs to robustly examine the social, environmental and economic impacts of the Local Plan and associated documentation.

3.4 The alternative proposal of using reserve sites to ensure delivery takes place is an possible welcomed addition to allow for a added flexibility in the process where site have stalled. It allows for a short terms solution rather than waiting for a plan review and will help delivery of housing continue.

4. A standard method for establishing housing requirement figures which ensures enough land is released in the areas where affordability is worst, to stop land supply being a barrier to enough homes being built. The housing requirement would factor in land constraints and opportunities to more effectively use land, including through densification where appropriate, to ensure that the land is identified in the most appropriate areas and housing targets are met.

4.1 We remain supportive of the move to the standard method to determining housing need as it has removed the ambiguity, expense and time involved in preparing the local authority led objectively assessed housing need under the previous arrangement. We are cautiously supportive of the move to a standard housing requirement which would be binding on local authorities, as this would further remove an area of challenge which causes delays

to plan production. However, the biggest unknown is how land constraints will be factored into the binding requirement. For areas such as Redditch with considerable amounts of Green Belt, this could alter the local housing need figure substantially, but until the precise weighting of the various land constraints is known, it is impossible to plan confidently for the future. There is also concern as to how affordability issues can be addressed locally if supply is to be restricted from fully addressing local housing need through the imposition of a land constraint factor.

4.2 We are concerned about the lack of guidance on planning for other development needs, most notably economic growth and question when further advice will be given on this area. There is a close relationship between economic growth and housing need and therefore it is important that there is a link between the standard method and resultant housing requirement and the amount of land to be provided for economic development.

4.3 We note the standard method is proposed to be a means of distributing the national housebuilding target of 300,000 homes annually, but would question the underlying evidence for this target which was set in 2017. Given revised population and household projections projection have been released since the announcement of this target, it should be revisited to properly reflect latest figures and hence be linked to the most up to date evidence.

4.4 Much more detail is needed on the proposal that joint planning arrangements could be used to agree an alternative distribution of housing requirements. Although reference is made to the role of Mayors in combined authority areas, there is no further detail on the process of distributing and agreeing a reassignment of housing in non-Mayoral or combined authority areas. This follows on from the comments made above regarding the void in guidance the proposed removal of the duty to cooperate will create.

4.5 We do not support the proposal to retain the Housing Delivery Test as this would seem unnecessary if the local authority has already had to prove that the sites included within the Local Plan are deliverable. Government should instead be looking to the housebuilders and the development industry for assurances that sites will come forward in a timely manner, with the ability to penalise them where these assurances are not met. Our authority has ongoing issues with the current Housing Delivery Test which we have taken up with the MHCLG and we are still awaiting a satisfactory solution.

5. Areas identified as Growth areas (suitable for substantial development) would automatically be granted outline planning permission for the principle of development, while automatic approvals would also be available for pre-established development types in other areas suitable for building.

5.1 The proposal to remove the need to apply for outline planning permission if any area was already identified for development would be welcomed especially if the principle had already been established. Often, if a site is already allocated for development, an outline planning application can attract significant public comment relating to the principle of the development and therefore give the public a false sense that they can influence whether the development goes ahead or not.

5.2 Under these reforms the council is concerned that the detail that would have been submitted to support an outline planning permission will now be submitted to promote a site for inclusion in the local plan process, as developers will be keen to demonstrate as fully as possible the credentials of their site. This is potentially a huge amount of evidence for planning authorities to consider when allocating sites, albeit with a much-reduced timescale by which to operate i.e. within the 30 months. Similarly, this information may then have to be distilled into an allocation policy for the growth area to ensure that when the final permission is granted there is enough detail to ensure the development proceeds as planned. If this process is repeated for all growth areas, local plans could end up being reduced to a list of very detailed allocations policies, and not the short succinct easy to read documents the white paper is striving to achieve

5.3 By the time a site is allocated for development the focus needs to be on the detailed technical matters. Therefore the council would be keen to ensure that whatever method is chosen, the ability to shape the design and deal with site specific matters such as ecology/land contamination/highways etc should not be diminished.

5.4 With respect to renewal areas any move towards using a 'prior approval' type of process would be met with caution. Whilst under current legislation this has been intended to be a 'light touch' process it has, in many cases, caused a number of issues. High Court challenges have been required in order to provide clarity on the wording of such legislation, amendments to the legislation have been required in order to make development meet basic amenity standards. The submission of an application, and the subsequent consultation procedure has given the public the impression that they are able to influence the outcome of the application with respect to the principle of the development, when this is not the case. It

would therefore be necessary to give some serious consideration as to how a prior approval process for renewal areas would operate.

5.5 The use of a faster planning application process for renewal areas, whilst not necessarily an issue in principle, requires some further details as it is not clear how a proposal could be determined based on the context of the Local Plan description and the National Planning Policy Framework alone.

6. Decision-making should be faster and more certain, with firm deadlines, and make greater use of digital technology.

6.1 With respect to the firm deadlines of 8/13 weeks it is a concern that the White Paper implies that the extension of time provisions will be removed from legislation. Prior to extensions of time existing it could often be the case that an applicant was forced to withdraw their application late in the day or face a refusal of permission in order to make a decision within the 8/13 weeks. A resubmitted application would then be made to resolve the outstanding matters which results in wasted time and expense for the applicant and local authority as well as ultimately delaying development. The extension of time provisions allow what are often modest extensions to the 8/13 weeks in order to resolve technical matters and largely lead to approval of planning permission. Removing this provision would almost certainly mean decisions are made more quickly but not necessarily with a positive outcome which would seem counterproductive.

6.2 Any mechanism to front load the system to ensure accurate and adequate information is supplied at the submission of a planning application would be welcomed. The current requirement to only submit sufficient information to describe the development proposed is often sufficient for simple applications, however in the case of more complex proposals or those which fall within the Green Belt it is often the case that further discussion/information is required from the applicant in order to inform the decision making process which can extend the time taken to make a decision on applications.

6.3 The proposals for clearer planning conditions, streamlined approach to developer contributions and the delegation of detailed matters for consideration to officers is welcomed.

6.4 With respect to an incentive to determine applications within the statutory time limits, the issues that arise relating to this matter have been outlined above – whilst it may lead to a timely determination of applications, this may not be a positive determination. These

proposals also do not sit comfortably with the requirement to work in a positive and proactive manner in order to seek problems to solutions as currently required by the DMPO.

7. Local Plans should be visual and map-based, standardised, based on the latest digital technology, and supported by a new template.

7.1 The Council agrees with the above statement that there should be a requirement for Local Plans to be visual and map based. Many Local Authorities already have a digital map-based system in place which works well and doesn't require any extra training or resources. There should also be an alternative option for people to be involved in the Local Plan and consultation process. We need to be inclusive to all groups of society and ensure that for those that struggle to use the technology there are other options to engage in the planning process

7.2 Going interactive with planning applications such as architect's drawings could be a move in the right direction for development management, but there is still a need for actual documents to be able to be in order to ensure decision making is clear and accountable.

7.3 Planning for beautiful and sustainable places (Pillar Two of the White Paper) requires human judgement, so cautious use of technology to aid the human process of decision making is one which the council supports.

8. Local authorities and the Planning Inspectorate will be required through legislation to meet a statutory timetable for key stages of the process, and we will consider what sanctions there would be for those who fail to do so.

8.1 We have considered the proposals to reform the Local Plan production process and to meet a statutory timetable for key stages of the process. Whilst we welcome the intention to simplify and shorten the plan-making process, we have a number of concerns about the proposed reforms.

8.2 Stage 1 - We are unsure how we will achieve meaningful public engagement in Stage 1. We know through experience that the majority of developer-led sites are submitted to us late in the call for sites process, leaving very limited time in this short 6 month stage to 'shape' the plan with public involvement. Also in the early stages of plan making it is harder to engage with the public as very often the fact that people want to know is what is happening near them, if we are doing the early engagement without this information it's likely to

generate confusion and apathy with the public rather than a feeling of meaningful engagement.

8.3 Stage 2 - 12 months seems like a very limited timescale for producing 'any necessary evidence' and using it to inform and justify the Plan. Further information is needed as to what is considered as 'necessary evidence' for new style Local Plans, and how it differs from the data that is promoted to underpin plan-making and decision-taking in the early paragraphs of the White Paper.

8.4 Stage 3 – We are concerned that the level of public engagement at this critical stage seems restricted, especially given as this 'transparent and engaging' process will limit consultation at the decision-taking stage. This would be the first time the public will see a full plan on which to comment, its likely that as much as there undoubtedly be objections to the proposals in the plan, there will also simply be many questions about the plan which aren't necessarily objections. A key element of the preferred option process we currently undergo allows the Council to answer these questions and where possible positively address objections. Would it now be solely the role of the planning inspectorate to resolve those issues? Reference is also made to 'best in class' public involvement but we are uncertain this can be achieved if the public are limited to the number of words they can submit. This stage also seems to overlook the complexity of public engagement at this important stage in plan production, plus there is no time allocation given to processing, summarising and responding to the large volumes of responses that are envisaged.

8.5 Stage 4 – We would question why the examination period is within the statutory 30 month time period for production of the Local Plan, when this is outside of the control of the Local Authority. Resourcing at the Planning Inspectorate could delay the examination process and we would not want to see local authorities penalised for missing deadlines for something beyond their control. Instead, we would propose a timetable for Local Plan production which culminates in the Submission of the Local Plan.

8.6 We do not support the alternative option removing the 'right to be heard' at examination as this would stymie public involvement even further and be directly opposed to the 'best in class' public involvement which is being promoted for the other plan making stages.

8.7 We would emphasise the need for local planning departments to be properly resourced if they are to meet this extremely ambitious Local Plan production timetable. The

additional demands on Local Plan production, coupled with the reforms to funding under Proposal 23 do not tally, particularly when considered alongside the need for Local Plans are to be reviewed at least every 5 years. Local authorities need certainty of funding so that they are fully resourced to positively and proactively plan for the future of the area they represent.

9. Neighbourhood Plans should be retained as an important means of community input, and we will support communities to make better use of digital tools

9.1 We agree that Neighbourhood plans should be retained. Engagement with Neighbourhood Planning groups is something that is already done. Most authorities will have a good relationship with Neighbourhood planning groups which should be continued, and if possible strengthened by using modern technology to help produce neighbourhood plans as well.

10. A stronger emphasis on build out through planning.

10.1 Proposal 10 responds to the need to speed up the delivery of development, particularly within the proposed Growth Areas. We concur that there is a need to improve the build out rates of development, particularly on large sites and highlight the wealth of research in this area (for example, [LGA – Speeding up delivery, 2018](#)). This research emphasises that planning is not a barrier to building, but there are issues of unimplemented planning permissions, land banking and slow build out rates.

10.2 Whilst the proposal to include a variety of development types by different builders on a site to allow multiple phases to come forward together has good intentions, we struggle to see how it will work in practice. How will this be controlled through the planning process? If a large site is under a single ownership and one developer has an option on that site, what is the mechanism to get multiple developers on site? We are also aware that housebuilders would not want to flood the market with new homes in a single area. More often, their approach is to limit supply, thereby increasing demand and helping them to achieve the sales values they have planned for.

10.3 The suggestion that masterplans and design codes will be the mechanism to deliver the requirement for multiple developers on a single site needs further consideration, particularly if the design code is to follow the allocation of the site in the Local Plan. Under Proposal 2 it is stated that design codes could be prepared as supplementary planning

documents. Under this scenario it is difficult to see how the number of developers on a site could be specified and enforced by the Local Planning Authority.

10.4 The White Paper makes no reference to the other tools that could be used to speed up delivery. The LGA's 2018 research refers to compulsory purchase powers as one option available to local authorities in extreme cases to get stalled sites moving. It should be made easier for Councils to use CPO powers to get development started on difficult sites, including the ability to cap land values and use the uplift to forward-fund infrastructure. This ties in with one of the key recommendations from the 2018 Letwin Review.

Pillar Two - Planning for beautiful and sustainable places

11. To make design expectations more visual and predictable, we will expect design guidance and codes to be prepared locally with community involvement, and ensure that codes are more binding on decisions about development.

11.1 Page 48 states *"Prepare local design codes based on community input and empirical evidence of what is popular and characteristic in the local area"*. The Council would be keen to understand how data will inform this. It appears this evidence will be informed by community input. This raises questions regarding how and at what point in the process to get the community involved effectively; especially given the importance of ensuring designs only have weight in the planning process if they can demonstrate that community input has been secured.

11.2 It is accepted that there have been many years of housebuilders building the same style houses, which are not necessarily representative of the local area however the Council raises concerns that this level of uncharacteristic building could inform the 'new character'.

11.3 The Council wishes to raise concern regarding how firmly the National Design Guide and upcoming National Model Design Code will feature in decision making, particularly when 'viability' features so heavily with regard to the obligations and requirements placed on developers.

11.4 With regard to responsibility for implementation, historically too much emphasis is placed at the door of planners for the failure to build and build beautiful. There needs to be some responsibility placed on developers, and measures should put in place to ensure they

deliver what the government envisions in this Paper in their design proposals, ahead of seeking advice from Planners or submitting Planning Applications, particularly if proposals are to be in line with Design Codes.

11.5 The suggestion that Applicants could bring forward design guides themselves for significant areas of new development is an interesting addition. The Council would be keen to understand how the Local Authority could control how the area looks if applicants can do this. Given that it should be accepted that some developers tend to follow a similar style and that this is one of the elements this White Paper is seeking to change, how can the Local Authority restrict Developers proposing their existing styles in Design Codes if they permitted to prepare these documents? The Council also questions how these Codes prepared by Developers would become binding and what the status the design guidance and codes may have. What would be their process for production and how would they gain endorsement? They need to have an appropriate status to ensure they are binding in decisions which would make their production a lengthy process given the need to consult, revise and potentially examined however if their status is more akin to an SPD their influence may be limited.

12. To support the transition to a planning system which is more visual and rooted in local preferences and character, we will set up a body to support the delivery of provably locally-popular design codes, and propose that each authority should have a chief officer for design and place-making.

12.1 The Council considers that each Local Authority Planning Department is made up quite differently and it may be best for resources for each Local Authority to consider how best to prepare Design Codes it maybe simply that some expert input from Urban Designers is required rather than a Chief Officer role.

12.2 With respect to the expert body alluded to in the proposal. The Council suggests it is likely this will need to be heavily resourced, if given the proposals all Local Authorities are required to progress their Design Codes within the 30 month deadline alongside plan production. In addition it is queried how locally specific the advice will be, due to the varying nature and character of areas how is locally specific advice likely to be achieved. Will the advice come from a regional level body that can develop expertise and knowledge in the local towns and cities? Will there be a link or extension to the existing Design Review Panels or something similar to the West Midlands Combined Authority Design Review Charter.

13. To further embed national leadership on delivering better places, we will consider how Homes England's strategic objectives can give greater emphasis to delivering beautiful places.

13.1 The Council considers this is a useful point, but as Homes England will have varying levels of interest in different areas of the Country its not necessarily relevant to all authorities, for example in Redditch Homes England have not particularly promoted housebuilding, especially in Redditch where they have historic land holdings which have not been developed.

14. We intend to introduce a fast-track for beauty through changes to national policy and legislation, to incentivise and accelerate high quality development which reflects local character and preferences.

14.1 Page 52 states that masterplans and site-specific codes could be prepared by the LPA through the Local Plan. Although the principle of considering design early on in the process is to be encouraged, as expressed above Council has reservations about undertaking this work in conjunction with Plan preparation. If these codes are unable to be prepared alongside the Plan due to time restrictions or other factors, there will either be a delay in building or the housebuilders will likely submit plans that have no locally contextual design. There will then be no local evidence to reinforce changes to the design of the development suggested by the LPA.

14.2 The White Paper proposes a change regarding local orders being used to modify how the standard types of design apply in the local area, based on local evidence according to popular designs in the public opinion. The Council considers that further detail on how this evidence would be carried out in a comprehensive way should be given. If this evidence isn't carried out, there is a risk that many new developments across England would become indistinguishable. Additionally, whilst the public should have a say in the design of new development in their local area, traditionally this is not how the design of the built form has been decided. Instead, the local materials readily available, the style of the surrounding built environment and also the demands and character of the surrounding natural environment have all had a part in shaping design historically. Evidence relating to this would ideally need to be produced alongside evidence concerning public opinion, in order to produce beautiful developments that integrate successfully with the surrounding context.

14.3 The White Paper states that updates to the NPPF will “*make clear that schemes which comply with local design guides and codes have a positive advantage and greater certainty about their prospects of swift approval.*” If an increased importance is placed on local design, surely compliance with local design guides should be a necessity to attaining permission?

14.4 In regards to the use of permitted development rights to pre-approve ‘popular and replicable designs’, the Council questions if this will foster innovation, as the White Paper suggests. Instead it seems like this would stymie innovation. If identical designs are the quickest and easiest way to develop, it would stand that housebuilders will submit these plans rather than putting thought into alternative designs, as this would not be time or cost-effective. Whilst fast-tracking beauty in development could be an effective way to incentivise developers to incorporate better design in their sites, in other ways it seems counter-productive to this goal as it has the possibility to lead to cutting corners and making identical places.

14.5 The use of modern methods of construction should be encouraged through the planning system as a solution to building high quality developments at speed. Perhaps this should be stated in National Policy/ Local Plans explicitly rather than expecting expansion of PD rights and pre-approved designs to automatically encourage their use?

14.6 Paragraph 3.20 states “*we intend to develop a limited set of form-based development types that allow the redevelopment of existing residential buildings... in a range of common development settings (such as semi-detached suburban development)*”. The Council wish for clarity on exactly what the ‘*limited set of form-based development types*’ would be and whether this is Permitted Development aimed at the development of garden land and gentle density or increasing height of buildings? Either way the Council would either have limited or no control, or would need to be specific about what could be achieved and where through pattern books and LDOs this would again increase workloads for the Local Authority. It is unclear from the proposals what timeframe this would need to be achieved by.

15. We intend to amend the National Planning Policy Framework to ensure that it targets those areas where a reformed planning system can most effectively play a role in mitigating and adapting to climate change and maximising environmental benefits.

15.1 It is considered that further detail will be needed regarding marrying the changes proposed regarding the opportunities to strengthen the way environmental issues are considered with a simpler approach to assessing environmental impacts. The Council considers that protection of environmental assets should be paramount.

15.2 The Council queries how Government will decide which area are those areas “*where a reformed planning system can most effectively play a role in mitigating and adapting to climate change*” etc. will this is based on some form of evidence? What will the NPPF say regarding those areas which are not deemed to fit this criterion?

16. We intend to design a quicker, simpler framework for assessing environmental impacts and enhancement opportunities, that speeds up the process while protecting and enhancing the most valuable and important habitats and species in England.

16.1 Further detail on how the environmental impact assessment will be sped up will be welcomed. It is accepted that the current SEA, SA and EIA processes are cumbersome and lack transparency, however it is imperative that in the interest of faster, the processes of assessment are still robust and habitats and species are protected.

16.2 The Council wishes to question what status the European Natura 2000 sites (SPAs, SACs) will have, post-Brexit?

16.3 The Council acknowledges and welcomes there will be further consultation in the autumn on these proposals.

17. Conserving and enhancing our historic buildings and areas in the 21st century.

17.1 The White Paper recognises the importance of heritage assets including listed buildings and conservation areas, and highlights that assets have continued to be protected as part of the Government’s planning reforms since 2010 (Pg 16). The main proposal in the White Paper is for local plans to identify three types of land; Growth areas, suitable for substantial development; Renewal areas, suitable for development; and areas that are protected (pg 28). Conservation areas would fall into this latter category.

17.2 It is noted that the existing planning system including statutory protection and the NPPF has worked well in terms of protecting heritage assets including listed buildings and conservation areas. The aim is to build on this.

17.3 It is proposed that local planning authorities will identify the location of all heritage assets including listed buildings, conservation areas and locally designated heritage assets, in addition to protected views in their local plans.

17.4 Redditch has a local list compiled in 2007 but recent planning applications have highlighted that the list needs to be reviewed and there are likely to be further additions. It is also unclear how the original list was derived and the nature of the original criteria. A robust set of criteria and process for inclusion should be devised.

17.5 Where they exist, conservation area appraisals identify important views, but more work across both districts will be required to identify important views particularly in respect of listed buildings. The setting of heritage assets, where it contributes to the significance of that asset, currently has a high degree of protection as a result of the 1990 Act (listed buildings) and the NPPF. It is assumed at this stage that this protection will continue when the planning framework is updated. Setting of heritage assets will have to be taken into account when 'Growth' and 'Renewal' areas are identified.

17.6 The proposed change towards enabling historical buildings to install energy efficiency measures by ensuring the planning consent framework is "sufficiently responsive to sympathetic changes" is welcomed by the Council, as long as there are acceptable control measures in place to protect the buildings from adverse effects. The Council acknowledges that there is a necessity for existing housing stock to be made more energy efficient. There are some concerns, however, regarding the structure and fabric of Listed Buildings: can it be adapted to house insulation and other energy efficient measures without harming the integrity and uniqueness of the asset? It is in cases like this where a 'catch all' policy would not be appropriate; each building should still be assessed individually in terms of suitability for changes such as these.

17.7 The suggestion on page 59 regarding exploring if experienced architectural specialists have earned enough autonomy from routine listed building consents to bypass the conservation officer is potentially worrying, as taking control away from LAs and giving it to architects seems contradictory to the purpose of planning and conservation departments. Additionally, it is considered that there is no such thing as "routine" listed building consent, and to suggest otherwise would be to stop considering listed buildings as the individual assets that they are.

17.8 Finally it is suggested in the White Paper that to assist local planning authorities in concentrating on conserving and enhancing the more important historic buildings, architectural specialists may be given more autonomy in respect of routine consents. This has been suggested in the past but the concern is how objective these ‘architectural specialists’ might be when it is their client paying their bill. The gradual loss of small details on historic buildings can in the long run have a major cumulative impact on the significance of the asset.

18. To complement our planning reforms, we will facilitate ambitious improvements in the energy efficiency standards for buildings to help deliver our world-leading commitment to net-zero by 2050.

18.1 The Council believes that strong commitments in the Future Homes Standard are required if targets are to be met and real improvements towards slowing the impacts of climate change are to be made.

18.2 For a matter of the importance of the role that LPAs can play in setting energy efficiency standards, new standards should be imposed at a national level in the new National Design Guide. Currently local standards require justification and plan viability testing, and in some cases financial viability stands in the way of locally imposed standards being implemented. If other matters are being taken out of the Local Planning Authority’s control, it would be productive at the same time for a standard of this importance to be implemented nationally also.

Pillar Three: Planning for infrastructure and connected places

19. The Community Infrastructure Levy should be reformed to be charged as a fixed proportion of the development value above a threshold, with a mandatory nationally-set rate or rates and the current system of planning obligations abolished.

19.1 The Council support the need for a streamlined mechanism for securing developer contributions, and in particular the need to capture uplifts in land value, in order to help fund vital infrastructure required to support new development.

19.2 Within the proposal for a new Infrastructure Levy (IL), we do however have concerns with the idea of a national rate, or indeed area specific rates set nationally. This proposal would appear to be too simplistic to cater for the differences in land and development values across the country, or even within regions such as the West Midlands. Therefore there is the prospect of extremely low rates being set in areas of marginal development viability, which consequently generate little levy income for the funding of essential infrastructure. It would seem prudent in such an example that the system of S106 developer contributions was retained, in order that any large development sites with a need for significant infrastructure delivery to mitigate the impact of the development could provide specific S106 contributions to top up the likely low level of infrastructure levy receipts. This twin track approach would be akin to that proposed through the Local Infrastructure Tariff (LIT) in the 2017 CIL Review.

19.3 The proposal further states that the IL would be charged on the final value of a development and payable on occupation of development. There is concern that if a local authority is to borrow against future IL revenue, then the uncertainty of final development values or any unforeseen delays to payment of the levy would leave local authorities in a compromised position with regards to the funding and thus timely delivery of infrastructure to support new development as soon as it is completed. There is also some concern over the practical considerations of collecting payment of the levy if payable on completion of development, rather than at the point of securing planning permission as is the case with the current system.

20. The scope of the Infrastructure Levy could be extended to capture changes of use through permitted development rights

20.1 As PD rights have expanded in recent years to allow for more significant conversion from one land use to another, in particular to allow more residential development, it would seem sensible that the potential impacts of such developments in the future can be mitigated through levy receipts, which offer an opportunity for investment in essential infrastructure. We would therefore support the proposal that the IL is extended to include change of use through PD rights.

20.2 However this will require submission of a sufficient level of detail on the development proposal from the developer or applicant to the local authority, to enable the correct levy to be calculated based on the relevant amount of floorspace being converted or developed.

21.The reformed Infrastructure Levy should deliver affordable housing provision

21.1 We note the comment under this proposal that the reformed approach should continue to deliver on-site affordable housing to at least the present levels and we would strongly agree with this. However where there is an affordable housing need demonstrated for a local authority, it is important that provision of affordable housing as an in kind delivery of the IL does not detract from the IL funding available for other infrastructure provision to support the delivery of new housing development.

22. More freedom could be given to local authorities over how they spend the Infrastructure Levy

22.1 The proposed retention of the 'neighbourhood share' applies to parished areas where a neighbourhood plan is in place ('made'), rather than all local communities or parishes regardless. It will be important that local planning authorities have the resource to potentially manage a higher level of neighbourhood planning in their local authority, if local communities now see neighbourhood planning as a more attractive option to secure funding from the new IL. Furthermore, division of IL receipts between a local authority and parish / NP areas presents a risk of more disparate, smaller infrastructure projects being sought rather than investment in larger, more costly schemes.

22.2 Whilst the principle of local authorities being able to fund service provision through IL receipts is welcomed, in areas of high development needs it is unlikely that there would be sufficient receipts to invest in service provision once the high cost of certain infrastructure provision, for example costly transport infrastructure to mitigate the impact of a substantial new residential development, is taken into consideration.

23. As we develop our final proposals for this new planning system, we will develop a comprehensive resources and skills strategy for the planning sector to support the implementation of our reforms.

23.1 Implementing a new planning system requires resources. Local Planning Authorities need to be properly funded and resources available. External training has reduced significantly due to budgets being cut for LA's.

24. We will seek to strengthen enforcement powers and sanctions.

Proposals are particularly weak with little substance and unfortunately the opportunity has not been taken to make enforcement powers more robust. Although the recognition that enforcement is an overlooked part of the service was welcomed.

This page is intentionally left blank

Government consultation – Changes to the current planning system

This response, as submitted represents an Officer view for Redditch Borough Council. Due to the closing date for consultation responses and it has not been possible to ratify this response through the Committee cycle. The response will be considered by Council Members on 16th November, should the need arise we will update the consultation response if any amendments are requested by Members. The Council will send notification on 17th November to advise if this is the case and to provide an anticipated date for forwarding an updated response.

The standard method for assessing housing numbers in strategic plans

Step 1: Setting the baseline – providing stability and certainty by incorporating a blend of household projections and stock:

Q1: Do you agree that planning practice guidance should be amended to specify that the appropriate baseline for the standard method is whichever is the higher of the level of 0.5% of housing stock in each local authority area OR the latest household projections averaged over a 10-year period?

Paragraph 13 of the consultation document states that “household projections have attracted criticism for their volatility and the way in which they can result in artificially low projections in some places... Crucially, they cannot in isolation forecast housing need – they project past trends forward.”

Paragraph 20 of the consultation document goes on to say that housing stock figures “should also offer the stability and predictability which has been absent when solely relying on household projections.”

The Council is mindful of the volatility of the household projections, which was highlighted when the 2016 projections were released and dismissed for the purpose of calculating LHN figures.

The Council’s only preference is for clarity and certainty that an adopted methodology is substantially robust and can endure over time.

Q2: In the stock element of the baseline, do you agree that 0.5% of existing stock for the standard method is appropriate? If not, please explain why.

As above The Council’s only preference is for clarity and certainty that an adopted methodology is substantially robust and can endure over time.

Step 2: Adjusting for market signals – maintaining price signals using the current affordability ratio and the change in affordability over the last 10 years:

Q3: Do you agree that using the workplace-based median house price to median earnings ratio from the most recent year for which data is available to adjust the standard method's baseline is appropriate? If not, please explain why.

The Council agrees with the use of workplace-based data as this is more representative in terms of potential affordability issues within a local authority area.

Q4: Do you agree that incorporating an adjustment for the change of affordability over 10 years is a positive way to look at whether affordability has improved? If not, please explain why.

The introduction of the two part affordability adjustment is considered to better reflect market conditions and affordability in a pragmatic and positive manner.

Q5: Do you agree that affordability is given an appropriate weighting within the standard method? If not, please explain why.

No comment

Transition

Do you agree that authorities should be planning having regard to their revised standard method need figure, from the publication date of the revised guidance, with the exception of:

Q6: Authorities which are already at the second stage of the strategic plan consultation process (Regulation 19), which should be given 6 months to submit their plan to the Planning Inspectorate for examination?

Q7: Authorities close to publishing their second stage consultation (Regulation 19), which should be given 3 months from the publication date of the revised guidance to publish their Regulation 19 plan, and a further 6 months to submit their plan to the Planning Inspectorate?

If not, please explain why. Are there particular circumstances which need to be catered for?

No comment, the transition arrangement will not apply to Redditch.

Delivering First Homes

Q8: The Government is proposing policy compliant planning applications will deliver a minimum of 25% of onsite affordable housing as First Homes, and a minimum of 25% of offsite contributions towards First Homes where appropriate. Which do you think is the most appropriate option for the remaining 75% of affordable housing secured through developer contributions? Please provide reasons and / or evidence for your views (if possible):

i) Prioritising the replacement of affordable home ownership tenures, and delivering rental tenures in the ratio set out in the local plan policy.

ii) Negotiation between a local authority and developer.

iii) Other (please specify)

Option i) Prioritising the replacement of affordable home ownership tenures, and delivering rental tenures in the ratio set out in the local plan policy. Focus should remain on the delivery of rental tenures which has already been set through the local plan process. Our current requirement provides for 60% of affordable housing to be social rented therefore this proposed change will not have a negative impact on the provision of this tenure. This will also ensure mixed and balanced communities are being delivered on developments.

With regards to current exemptions from delivery of affordable home ownership products:

Q9: Should the existing exemptions from the requirement for affordable home ownership products (e.g. for build to rent) also apply to this First Homes requirement?

Yes – The private rented sector provides an important provision of housing which should not be diluted with the need for the provision of home ownership products.

Q10: Are any existing exemptions not required? If not, please set out which exemptions and why.

Small sites and those benefiting from vacant building credit should not be exempt from the provision of First Homes on site. The provision will not have such an impact on the viability of a development.

Q11: Are any other exemptions needed? If so, please provide reasons and /or evidence for your views.

No comment

Q12: Do you agree with the proposed approach to transitional arrangements set out above?

Yes

Q13: Do you agree with the proposed approach to different levels of discount?

Yes, providing the valuation is a RICS red book valuation.

Q14: Do you agree with the approach of allowing a small proportion of market housing on First Homes exception sites, in order to ensure site viability?

Yes, providing developers are required to fully evidence the need for market housing to make the scheme viable.

Q15: Do you agree with the removal of the site size threshold set out in the National Planning Policy Framework?

No comment

Q16: Do you agree that the First Homes exception sites policy should not apply in designated rural areas?

Yes - A rural exception site is designed to meet need and the affordable housing provision provided should be purely to meet that need.

Supporting small and medium-sized developers

For each of these questions, please provide reasons and / or evidence for your views (if possible):

Q17: Do you agree with the proposed approach to raise the small sites threshold for a time-limited period? (see question 18 for comments on level of threshold)

The Council disagrees with the proposal to raise the site size threshold for affordable housing contributions. Paragraph 57 of the NPPF already offers the flexibility to negotiate expected contributions from development if there are justifiable circumstances which affect the viability of a site. Furthermore, NPPF, paragraph 68, directs LPAs to identifying a range of smaller site allocations through the Plan-making process. During this process, LPAs are balancing the delivery of the overall requirement with meeting the housing needs of different groups in the community (NPPF paragraph 61). Raising the site size threshold has the potential to compromise much needed affordable housing provision.

With respect to the time limited period for the proposed approach, there is no certainty that this initiative wouldn't be extended beyond the initial 18 month period, given the reoccurring nature of Covid-related restrictions throughout the country. This is a time where the need for affordable homes is possibly at its most prevalent.

The office to residential prior notification initiative was originally time restricted, and then extended. There have since been many lost opportunities to secure affordable housing provision due to this initiative

Q18: What is the appropriate level of small sites threshold?

- i) Up to 40 homes**
- ii) Up to 50 homes**
- iii) Other (please specify)**

The Council considers that the threshold should remain at 11+.

Q19: Do you agree with the proposed approach to the site size threshold?

No

Q20: Do you agree with linking the time-limited period to economic recovery and raising the threshold for an initial period of 18 months?

See response to Q17

Q21: Do you agree with the proposed approach to minimising threshold effects?

If the threshold does have to be increased, then the Council welcomes measures to ensure that larger scale developments are not brought forward on a piecemeal basis to avoid exceeding the threshold.

Q22: Do you agree with the Government's proposed approach to setting thresholds in rural areas?

The Council welcomes this approach.

Q23: Are there any other ways in which the Government can support SME builders to deliver new homes during the economic recovery period?

No comment

Extension of the Permission in Principle consent regime

Q24: Do you agree that the new Permission in Principle should remove the restriction on major development?

The Council welcomes this change. For sites that have been allocated through the Local Plan process, this initiative could shorten the route to full planning approval and secure earlier housing delivery on site.

Mixed use sites allocated through Local Plans that exceed to 150 dwelling threshold for PiP would also benefit from this initiative, which would again secure earlier housing delivery on sites without compromising other uses/ needs that have been identified as part of the Plan-making process

Q25: Should the new Permission in Principle for major development set any limit on the amount of commercial development (providing housing still occupies the majority of the floorspace of the overall scheme)? Please provide any comments in support of your views.

The Council agrees with the approach identified in paragraphs 98 and 99 of the consultation document.

Q26: Do you agree with our proposal that information requirements for Permission in Principle by application for major development should broadly remain unchanged? If you disagree, what changes would you suggest and why?

The Council agrees with the proposed approach.

Q27: Should there be an additional height parameter for Permission in Principle? Please provide comments in support of your views.

Following PiP consent, any development would need to meet the rigours of adopted planning policy, both nationally and locally. The height of development should be considered by locally distinctive policies in adopted local plans rather than the imposition of a national parameter.

Q28: Do you agree that publicity arrangements for Permission in Principle by application should be extended for large developments? If so, should local planning authorities be:

- i) required to publish a notice in a local newspaper?**
- ii) subject to a general requirement to publicise the application or**
- iii) both?**
- iv) disagree**

If you disagree, please state your reasons.

No comment

Q29: Do you agree with our proposal for a banded fee structure based on a flat fee per hectare, with a maximum fee cap?

No comment

Q30: What level of flat fee do you consider appropriate, and why?

No comment

Q31: Do you agree that any brownfield site that is granted Permission in Principle through the application process should be included in Part 2 of the Brownfield Land Register? If you disagree, please state why.

No comment

Q32: What guidance would help support applicants and local planning authorities to make decisions about Permission in Principle? Where possible, please set out any areas of guidance you consider are currently lacking and would assist stakeholders.

No comment

Q33: What costs and benefits do you envisage the proposed scheme would cause? Where you have identified drawbacks, how might these be overcome?

No comment

Q34: To what extent do you consider landowners and developers are likely to use the proposed measure? Please provide evidence where possible.

No comment

Q35: In light of the proposals set out in this consultation, are there any direct or indirect impacts in terms of eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations on people who share characteristics protected under the Public Sector Equality Duty?

If so, please specify the proposal and explain the impact. If there is an impact – are there any actions which the department could take to mitigate that impact?

No comment

This page is intentionally left blank

EXECUTIVE

27th October 2020

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN - FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK 2021/22 – 2024/25

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor David Thain , Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling Services
Relevant Head of Service	Jayne Pickering, Executive Director Finance and Corporate Resources
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 This report considers some preliminary matters relating to the 2021/22 budget process and the Medium Term Financial Plan to 2024/25. A proposed timetable for the budget process is set out, including proposals for scrutiny of the draft budget, and parameters to be used for the 2021/22 budget. Uncertainties still remain around the expected Spending Review, Fair Funding Review and business rates reforms which mean that the 2021/22 budget will be a one-year budget in line with an expected one-year finance settlement.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.2 That Executive notes the parameters to be used to prepare the 2021/22 budget and the framework for the Medium Term Financial Plan to 2024/25.
- 2.3 That Executive notes that should the Section 24 notice be continued it agrees the regular reporting of the action plan once approved by Audit, Standards and Governance through to Executive

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

Financial Framework

- 3.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is the strategy which sets out the Council's commitment to provide services that meet the needs of people locally and that represent good value for money within the overall resources available to it. The MTFS is what links our Council Plan with forecasted resources and budgets and shows how our Council's finances will be structured and managed to ensure that this fits with, and supports, the priorities of our Council and its community. The Medium Term Financial Plan presents the detailed financial position over a 4 year period and is developed in line with the strategy objectives
- 3.2 The overall MTFS was approved in 2019 and in light of the financial pressures the Council faces the strategy aims to provide a framework in

EXECUTIVE

27th October 2020

which the Council can become financially sustainable whilst delivering the priorities to our communities. The key objectives are:

- To ensure resources are directed to the council's strategic purposes
- To set financially sustainable budgets over the 4 year period
- To maintain balances at £1.5m to ensure funds available for future projects and to mitigate opportunities
- To maximise income opportunities whilst supporting the vulnerable
- Identify and disinvest in non-priority areas
- To ensure all savings are achievable and developed with robust data
- To reduce overheads & direct costs over the 4 year period
- To maximise use of assets and disinvest surplus or non performing assets
- To further develop the commercial culture within the Council
- To consider and adapt to the uncertain future financial climate
- To work with the public, members and staff to engage and inform partners on the impact of the financial pressures of the Council

3.3 Prior to the final budget approval in February 2021 the financial plan will be developed and presented to members to include, over the next 6 months;

- Review of Prior year underspends and additional income generated
- Review of vacant posts
- Review and approval of fees and charges
- Identification of savings plans
- Consideration of additional pressures to the budgets
- Detailed consideration of the Capital Programme
- Review of Reserves
- Consideration of Government Funding settlement and impact on the financial position

3.4 The Budget Scrutiny working group as established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will continue to meet on a regular basis to review costs, fees and charges and the capital programme and it is anticipated they will make a number of recommendations to Executive.

Current Issues

3.5 The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant negative effect on Council income in the first half of 2020. Budget monitoring to the end of June 2020 indicates a year to date overspend of £158k against the 2020/21 revenue budget, most of which relates to additional payments to provide funding to support the Rubicon Leisure company which have resulted in further unanticipated financial pressures being met by the Council.

3.6 Due to Covid-19 there is an impact on Business rates and Council Tax income where an increase in Local Council Tax Support is already becoming apparent and is likely to increase in the autumn when the

EXECUTIVE

27th October 2020

Government furlough scheme ends. As part of the Covid-19 response the Government has allowed any council tax deficits to be spread over 3 years. A review has been made and currently the Council has made a decision to not spread the deficit encountered year to date. Although there has been an increase in support given through the Council Tax support scheme, there has been some growth in the area and a reasonable level of bad debt provision was made. A regular review of the Council Tax outturn position will be done in order to keep members updated on whether there have been significant increases to the deficit position.

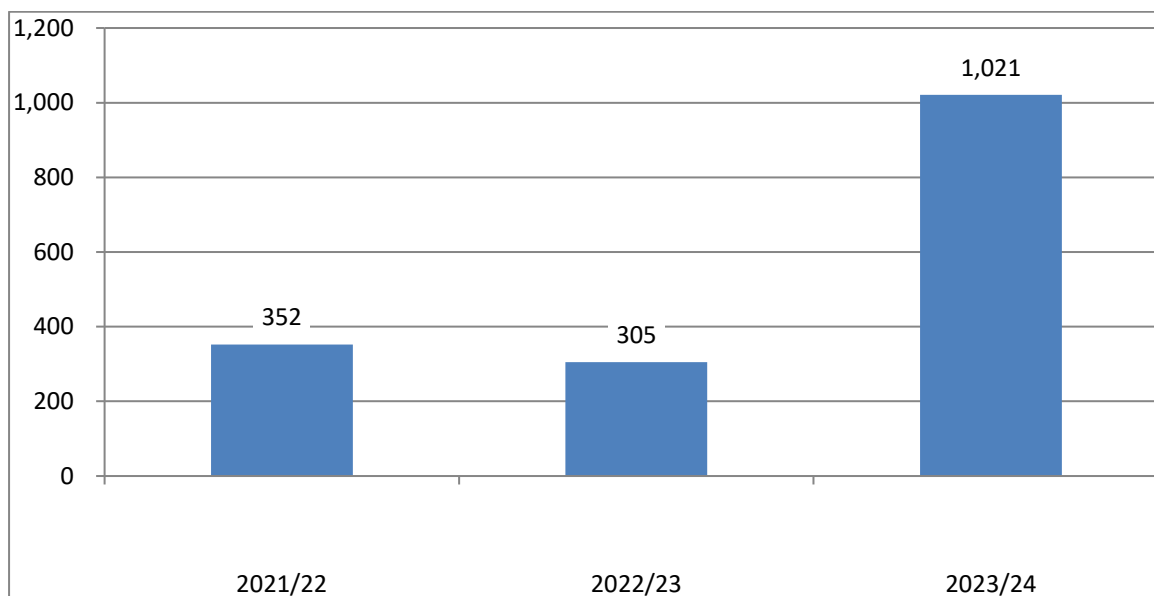
Due to the high level of reliefs available to businesses in 2020/21 we expect the main impact on business rates from Covid-19 will also be felt in the following year in 2021/22 when claims for empty property relief are likely to increase.

- 3.7 The Council received £1.038m in Covid-19 support grant from the Government in 2020/21. In addition, the Council will receive Government funding for sales, fees and charges losses but the amount is yet to be determined. Furthermore it is hoped that funding will be received in relation to the deficits faced by leisure providers, however, it is highly likely that Government support will not cover all the losses the Council has or will sustain in the future. Any additional shortfall will be met from general balances.
- 3.8 The 2020/21 local government pay award has been agreed at 2.75%. We are estimating that the pay award in future years will be 2% as shown at Appendix C. The additional cost of the 2020/21 pay award of around £95k will need to be included in revised budgets and will increase the deficit for the year, other things being equal.
- 3.9 As the current year 2020/21 is a one-year finance settlement and next year is likely to also be a one-year settlement we do not know at this stage what we can expect regarding our business rates baseline / guaranteed income from business rates and rules for surplus retention in future years. From 2020/21 we had previously assumed a significant reduction in our business rates income, supposing that the results of the Spending Review, Fair Funding Review and the move to increased local retention of business rates would impact 2021/22 onwards. With a rolled-forward one-year finance settlement this is now no longer likely to be the case so we will be reviewing the impact of this change on the budget moving forward.
- 3.10 Uncertainties also remain regarding the future of New Homes Bonus. The amount of New Homes Bonus we will receive from 2021/22 will depend on the outcome of the Government consultation on the future of the housing incentive. According to the Government, "this will include moving to a new, more targeted approach that rewards local authorities where they are ambitious in delivering the homes we need and is aligned with other measures around planning performance". We have assumed New Homes Bonus will be phased out over the period to 2022/2023

EXECUTIVE

27th October 2020

- 3.11 Prior to any of the proposed parameters as included at 3.13, the Medium Term Financial position for the Council presents the following gap to 2023/24.



- 3.12 As can be seen from the above table the Council has to deliver £1.7m over the next 3 years with a £352k to be found for 2020/21.

3.13 Budget Parameters

- 3.14 Work is already underway regarding detailed budget preparation for the budgets for next year. The following are proposed:

- A **2%** pay award effective on 1 April 2021. This will be determined as part of the national local government pay settlement. A pay award of 2.75% will be applied for 2020/21 only;
- Continue with a staff vacancy allowance of £209k in 2021/22. This equates to around **2%** of total staff costs;
- In addition to this, we will continue to seek further efficiency gains and remove any excess budgets;
- Other unavoidable pressures, revenue bids and savings will be subject to separate considerations and approval by Executive.
- Council Tax increases at 2% per annum

- 3.15 Before the pandemic the Council was in a good financial position with reasonable general fund balances. Since the pandemic the Council has largely been able to mitigate losses through Government funding however the medium and long term effect on council tax and business rates is still unknown and it would be prudent to set aside any windfall revenue into reserves to cover any future shortfalls.

EXECUTIVE

27th October 2020

4 Legal Implications

- 4.1 As part of the budget and the Council Tax approval process, the Council is required by the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to make specific calculations and decisions in approving a balanced budget for the following financial year and setting the Council Tax Level. These will be included in the report to Executive and Council in February.

5 Service / Operational Implications

- 5.1 The Financial Strategy will enable services to be maintained and, where achievable, improvements to the community.

6 Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.1 The link with the finances supporting the Council Plan will enable the funding to be directed to the Councils purposes to support the community.

7 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 To mitigate the risks associated with the financial pressures facing the Authority regular monitoring reports are presented to both officers and Members to enable proactive action being undertaken to address any areas of concern. Risks include:
- Reductions in government funding leading to a reduction in the level of services delivered to the public
 - Reductions in business rates income as a result of appeals or reduction in the rateable value leading to a lower level of income for the Council.
 - Identification of sufficient and ongoing revenue savings to deliver a balanced budget.
 - Allocation of sufficient resources to meet the needs of service delivery and the Councils priorities.
 - Maintain adequate revenue and capital balances as identified in the MTFP to ensure financial stability.

The regular financial monitoring by Officers and Executive will provide a framework to mitigate the above risks.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Chris Forrester, Head of Financial and Customer Services
e-mail: chris.forrester@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Tel: 01527-881673

This page is intentionally left blank

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**27th October 2020**REDDITCH ECONOMIC RECOVERY FRAMEWORK**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Mathew Dormer, Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships
Portfolio Holder Consulted	✓
Relevant Head of Service	Ostap Paparega, Head of NWedR
Ward(s) Affected	N/A
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	N/A
Key Decision / Non-Key Decision	Key Decision

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 This report outlines the strategic priorities, key interventions and measures aimed at supporting the borough economy throughout the Covid-19 recovery effort.
- 1.2 The strategic priorities, key interventions and support measures are detailed in the Redditch Economic Recovery Framework (2020-2023), which is attached in Appendix 1.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee is asked to ENDORSE

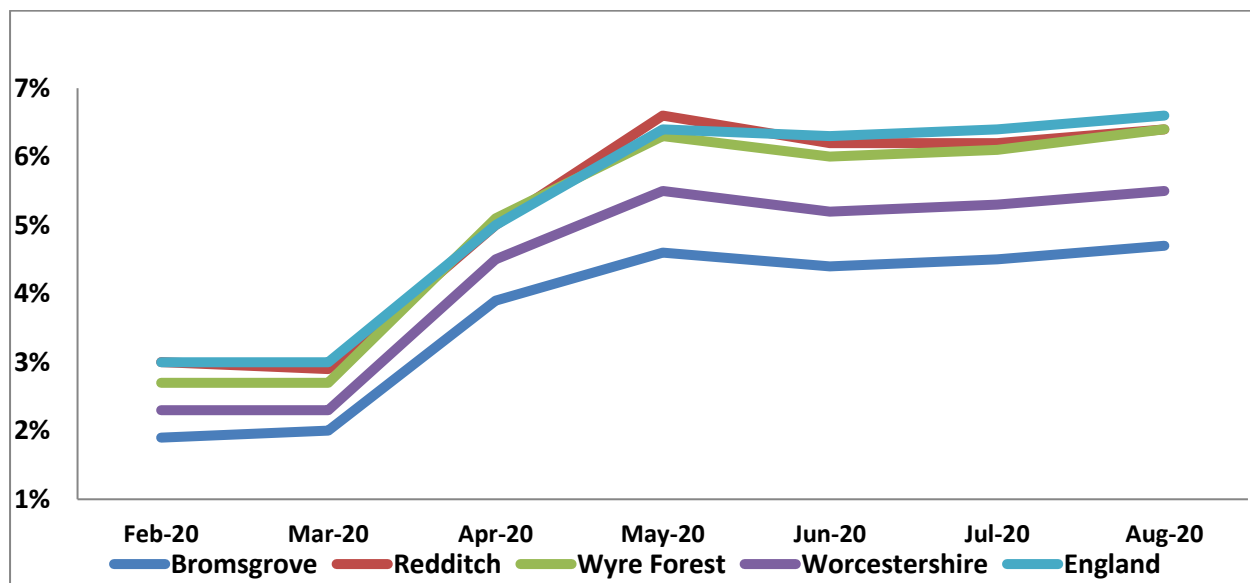
- 1) **the report and the Redditch Local Economic Recovery Framework (2020-2023) attached at Appendix 1**

3. Background

- 3.1 The Redditch Economic Recovery Framework sets out the strategic priorities, key interventions and measures aimed at supporting the local economy throughout the Covid-19 recovery effort. The framework is a live document and will be updated regularly, as new national, regional and local support measures are announced in response to the current pandemic.
- 3.2 The Redditch Economic Recovery Framework supersedes the North Worcestershire Economic Growth Strategy for the duration of the economic recovery effort in line with national and regional guidance.
- 3.3 The economic recovery framework focuses on three key priorities:
- Supporting people
 - Supporting businesses
 - Improving places

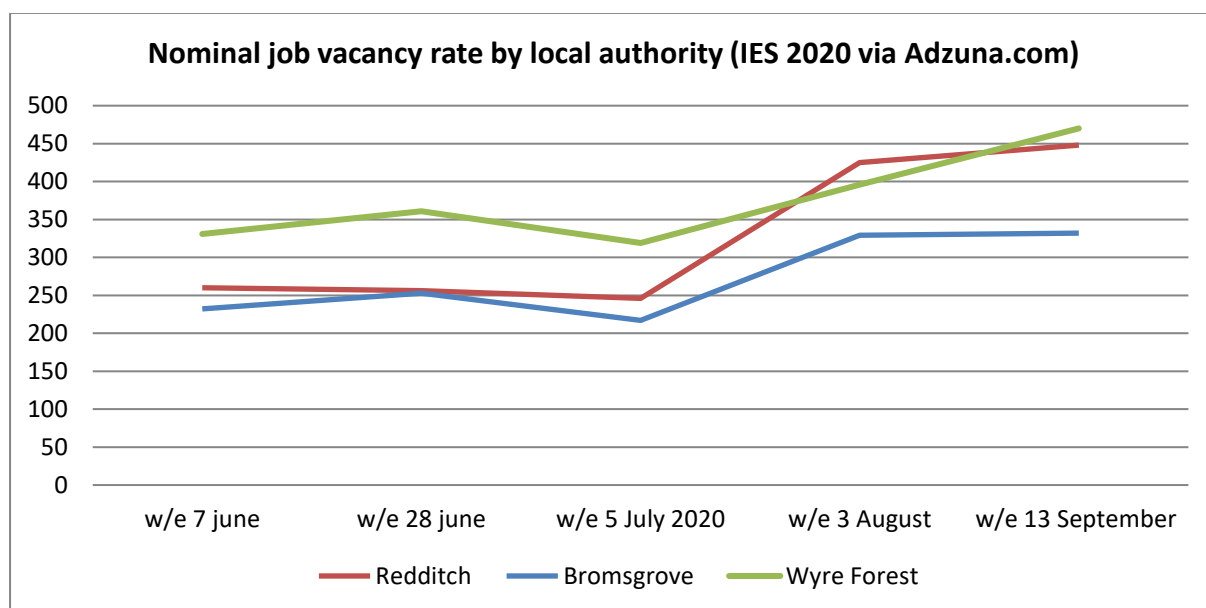
Supporting people

- 3.4 The immediate priority is addressing the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on jobs and the potential for large scale redundancies. This has been addressed temporarily by the central government through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, but there are major concerns about the likelihood of significant redundancies once the scheme comes to an end. Medium and long term, the priority is ensuring those in employment have the relevant skills and knowledge to perform well in an increasingly competitive labour market and access new opportunities in emerging and growth sectors.
- 3.5 The immediate impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on jobs and the labour market is measured by looking at data regarding claimant counts, unique job postings and employees on furlough. These are summarised in paragraphs 3.6 to 3.8 below and detailed in Appendix 1 in paragraphs 7 to 10.
- 3.6 The number of people aged 16+ claiming out of work benefits in Redditch increased from 1,550 in February 2020 to 3,355 in August 2020. Graph 1 shows the increase as a percentage of resident population of the same age.



Graph 1 – Claimant counts for people aged 16+ shown as percentages of resident population of the same age.

- 3.7 In terms of job vacancies, Redditch has seen a decrease of 35.20% between 15 March 2020 and 13 September 2020. However, the vacancy rate has improved since August, as illustrated in Graph 2.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**27th October 2020

Graph 2 – Nominal job vacancy rate by local authority

- 3.8 The third indicator that reflects the immediate impact of Covid-19 pandemic is the number of employees on furlough. Table 1 shows the number of claims received up to 31 July 2020 in Redditch, Worcestershire, West Midlands and England and the take up rate, which in Redditch is 4% above the England rate.

Table 1

Claims received up to 31 July 2020	Employments furloughed	Eligible employments	Take-up rate
Redditch	15,500	42,800	36%
Worcestershire County	92,400	274,600	34%
West Midlands	866,400	2,580,400	34%
England	8,067,700	25,577,800	32%

- 3.9 The detailed priorities, interventions and measures under the 'Supporting people' theme are described in Appendix 1, paragraphs 11-13.

Supporting businesses

- 3.10 The interventions under this priority are grouped in four categories:

- Business information, advice and guidance (IAG), including available business grants
- Start-up and enterprise support
- Support for companies with high growth potential
- Support for large / strategic employers

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE****27th October 2020**

- 3.11 In addition, attracting inward investment continues to be a key priority and the council is working with the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP, Worcestershire LEP and the West Midlands Growth Company on targeted programmes to attract private investment to the area.
- 3.12 Table 15 in Appendix 1, paragraph 16, details the key support programmes, including grant funding, available to local businesses, but key examples include:
- Enterprise for Success
 - Enterprising Worcestershire
 - Proof of Concept
 - Business Growth Programme 2
 - Manufacturing Growth Programme
 - Low Carbon Opportunities Programme
 - Skills Support for the Workforce
 - Higher Level Skills Match
 - National and Borough Apprenticeships Grants
 - Find it Worcestershire

Improving places

- 3.13 Place making will play a key role in the economic recovery effort and it will focus on the re-purposing of the town and local centres; making the town centre a more attractive place to do business and spend time; exploring new ways of mobility; prioritising the health and well-being of residents; putting a clear emphasis on clean growth and a green economy and providing critical digital (gigabit broadband) and mobile (5G) infrastructure.
- 3.14 The key regeneration interventions proposed under this priority are outlined in Appendix 1, Table 16 (paragraph 20). The estimated combined development cost of these key interventions is approximately £200m.
- 3.15 The most important programme and the catalyst for these proposed interventions, is Redditch Town Deal, which offers the opportunity to access up to £25m from the Towns Fund to kick start the delivery of this ambitious and transformational regeneration vision.

Delivery partners

- 3.16 The projects, interventions and support measures detailed in the Redditch Economic Recovery Framework will be delivered by a wide range of partners, as outlined in paragraph 23 (Appendix 1).
- 3.17 In addition, attracting private sector investment will be a critical success factor, especially in the delivery of the key regeneration projects detailed in paragraph 20, Table 16 (Appendix 1).

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE27th October 2020

4. KEY ISSUES**Financial Implications**

- 4.1 A total of £337,000 of external funding has been secured over the past two years to support the preparation of masterplans, feasibility studies, financial viability appraisals and business cases for key regeneration projects, including the Town Investment Plan (Redditch Town Deal).
- 4.2 The Towns Fund offers the opportunity to secure up to £25m of grant funding (capital funding) to support the delivery of key capital / regeneration projects in Redditch through the Town Deal.
- 4.3 The estimated total development cost of the proposed regeneration projects is considerably higher than the Towns Fund grant, therefore attracting private investment will be critical to the successful delivery of these regeneration projects.

Legal implications

- 4.5 There are no legal implications.

Service / Operational implications

- 4.6 The delivery of capital / regeneration projects has operational implications both in terms of capacity and specialist skills and expertise. These requirements are being assessed regularly and on a case by case basis and appropriate action taken (for example, the appointment of multi-disciplinary teams to prepare masterplans, feasibility studies and development appraisals).

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 4.8 There are no implications.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 Risk registers / logs are being developed for each regeneration/capital project, updated regularly and monitored by the Project Governance Board, which meets every six weeks.

6. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Redditch Economic Recovery Framework (2020-2023)

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

AUTHOR OF REPORT

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE27th October 2020

Name(s):

Ostap Paparega, Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development & Regeneration (NWedR)

email: Ostap.paparega@nwedr.org.uk

Tel: 01562 732192

APPENDIX 1

REDDITCH ECONOMIC RECOVERY FRAMEWORK 2020-2023

SUMMARY

1. The Redditch Economic Recovery Framework sets out the strategic priorities, key interventions and measures aimed at supporting the local economy throughout the Covid-19 recovery effort. The framework is a live document and will be updated regularly, as new national, regional and local support measures are announced in response to the current pandemic.
2. The Redditch Economic Recovery Framework supersedes the North Worcestershire Economic Growth Strategy for the duration of the economic recovery effort in line with national and regional guidance.
3. The economic recovery framework focuses on three key priorities:
 - Supporting people
 - Supporting businesses
 - Improving places
4. Table 1 outlines the areas of intervention within each of the three key priorities.

Table 1

SUPPORTING PEOPLE	SUPPORTING BUSINESSES	IMPROVING PLACES
Employment support – helping people back into work	Business support – information, advice and guidance (including grants)	Re-purposed / re-imagined town centre and local centres
Skills support – equipping existing workforce with the relevant skills	Start-up and enterprise support	Connectivity and new forms of mobility
Young people – ensuring future workforce has relevant skills & qualifications	Support to large / strategic employers and high growth companies / sectors	Healthier, greener and sustainable communities
<i>Attracting public and private investment</i>		

SUPPORTING PEOPLE

5. The immediate priority is addressing the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on jobs and the potential for large scale redundancies. This has been addressed temporarily by the central government through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, but there are major concerns about the likelihood of significant redundancies once the scheme comes to an end. Medium and long term, the priority is ensuring those in employment have the relevant skills and knowledge to perform well in an increasingly competitive labour market and access new opportunities in emerging and growth sectors.
6. The immediate impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on jobs and the labour market is measured by looking at data regarding claimant counts, unique job postings and employees on furlough at national, regional and local levels, as detailed in Tables 2 – 11 below.

National and regional context

7. Tables 2 and 3 show the claimant counts for those aged the 16+ in February 2020 (pre-lockdown) and August 2020. In all tables, percentages mean number of claimants as a proportion of resident population of the same age.

Table 2

Claimant counts	West Midlands		England		UK	
<i>February 2020</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>
Aged 16+	141,095	3.9	1,050,875	3	1,255,770	3

Table 3

Claimant counts	West Midlands		England		UK	
<i>August 2020</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>
Aged 16+	271,905	7.4	2,314,695	6.6	2,726,510	6.5

Tables 4 and 5 show the claimant counts for those aged the 18-24 in February 2020 (pre-lockdown) and August 2020.

Table 4

Claimant counts	West Midlands		England		UK	
<i>February 2020</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>
Aged 18-24	27,065	5.1	193,070	4.1	232,620	4.1

Table 5

Claimant counts	West Midlands		England		UK	
<i>August 2020</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>
Aged 18-24	54,785	10.3	443,505	9.3	529,920	9.4

Local context

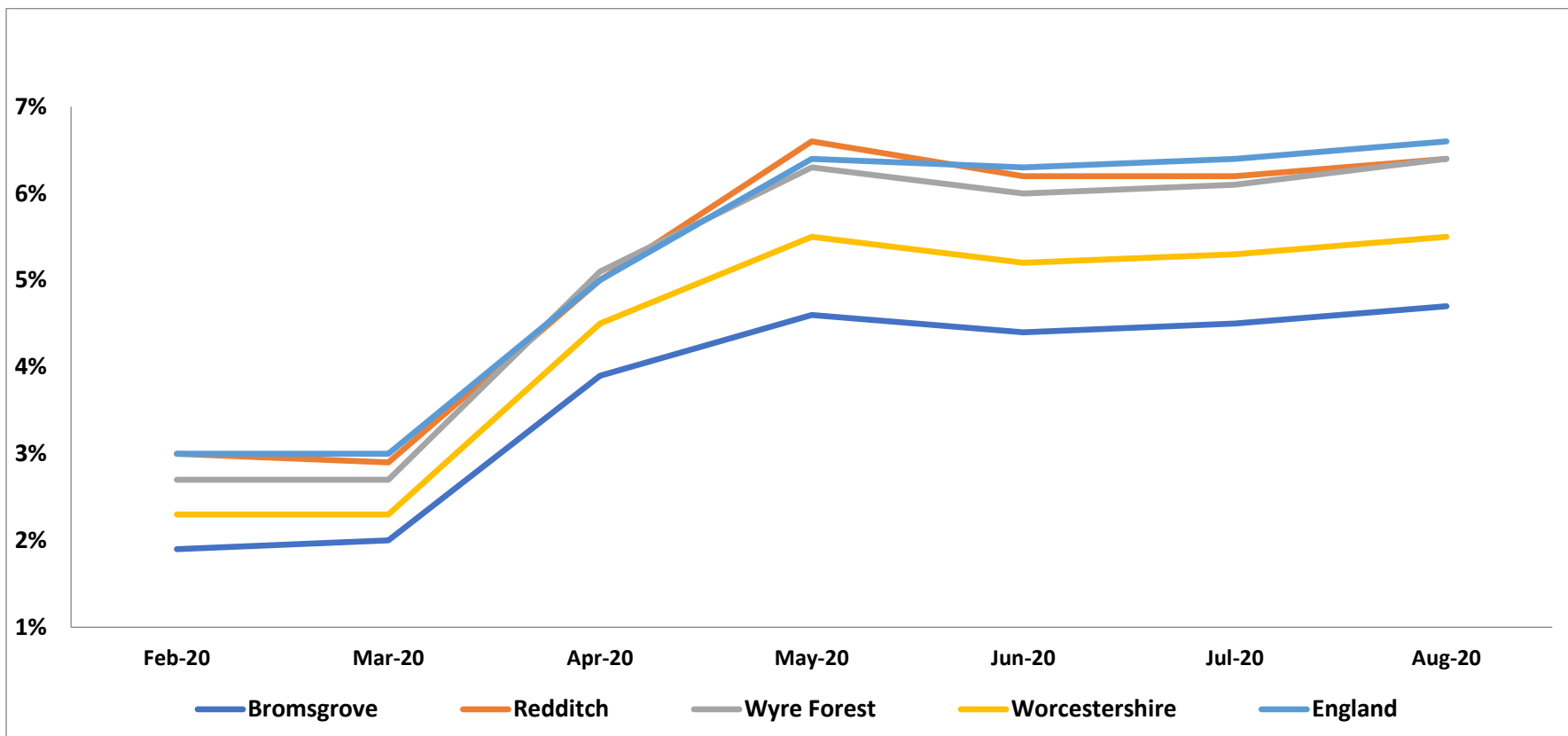
8. Tables 6 and 7 show the claimant counts for those aged the 16+ in February 2020 (pre-lockdown) and August 2020. In all tables, percentages mean number of claimants as a proportion of resident population of the same age.

Table 6

Claimant counts	Bromsgrove		Redditch		Wyre Forest		Worcestershire LEP		GBS LEP	
<i>February 2020</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>
Aged 16+	1,145	1.9	1,550	3	1,575	2.7	8,155	2.3	62,485	4.9

Table 7

Claimant counts	Bromsgrove		Redditch		Wyre Forest		Worcestershire LEP		GBS LEP	
<i>August 2020</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>
Aged 16+	2,770	4.7	3,355	6.4	3,715	6.3	19,590	5.5	112,835	8.8



Graph 1 – Claimant counts for people aged 16+ shown as percentages of resident population of the same age.

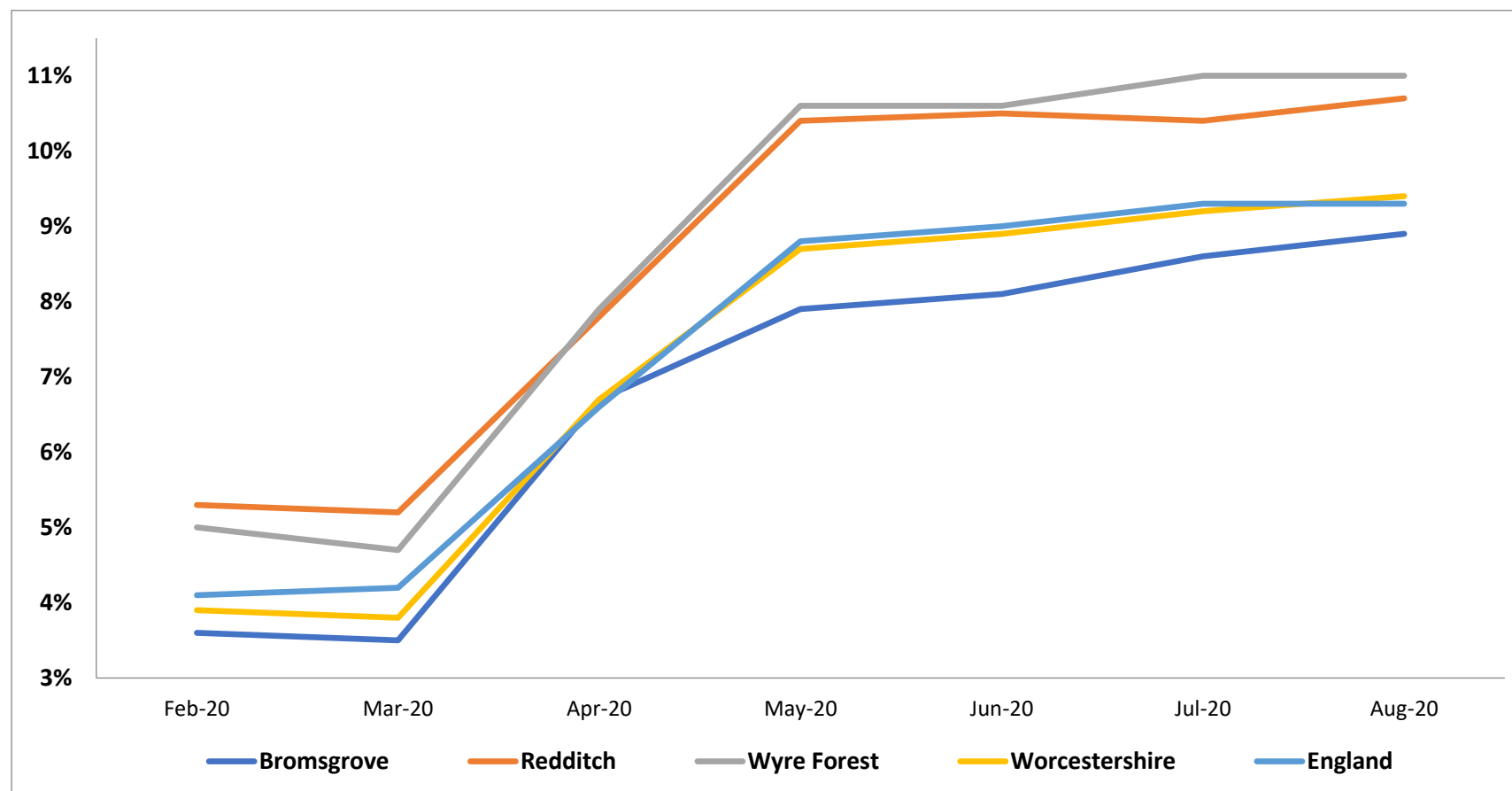
Tables 8 and 9 show the claimant counts for those aged the 18-24 in February 2020 (pre-lockdown) and August 2020.

Table 8

Claimant counts	Bromsgrove		Redditch		Wyre Forest		Worcestershire		GBS LEP	
<i>February 2020</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>
Aged 18-24	220	3.6	315	5.3	330	5	1,625	3.9	11,700	5.7

Table 9

Claimant counts	Bromsgrove		Redditch		Wyre Forest		Worcestershire		GBS LEP	
<i>August 2020</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>%</i>
Aged 18-24	545	8.9	640	10.7	720	11	3,905	9.4	22,655	11.1



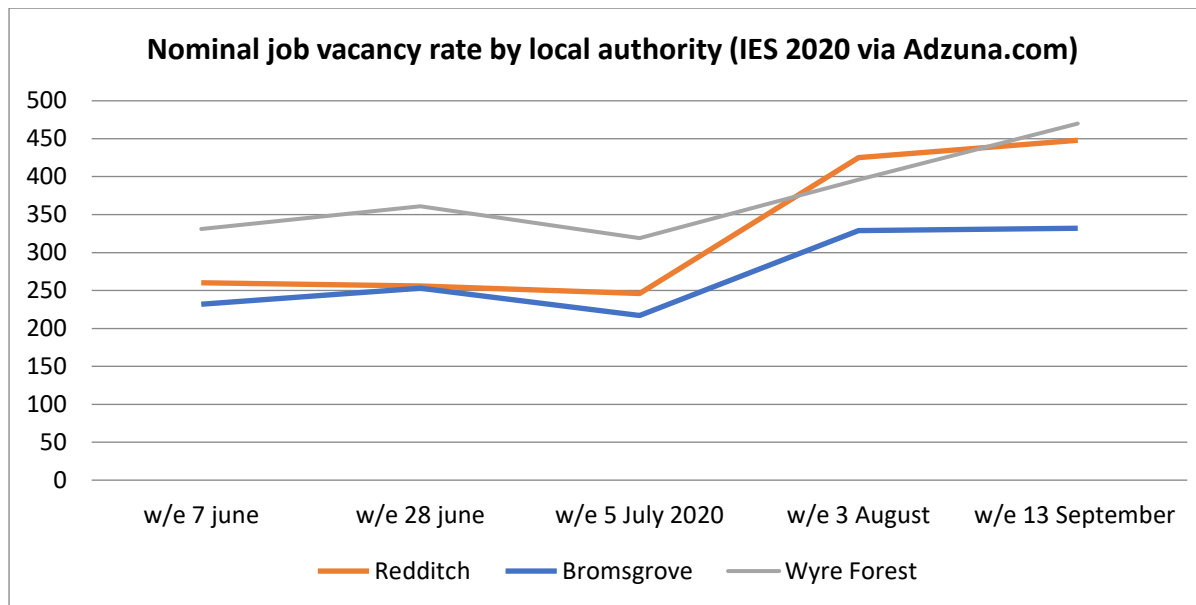
Graph 2 - Claimant counts for people aged 18-24 shown as percentages of resident population of the same age.

9. Table 10 shows the number of local area vacancies and changes since the pandemic began, % change between 15 March and 13 September, last month change (September) and year-on-year change (IES 2020).

(Available at: https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/system/files/resources/files/IES%20Briefing%20-%20w.c%2021.09.2020_1.pdf)

Table 10

	w/e 7 June	w/e 28 June	w/e 5 July 2020	w/e 3 August	w/e 13 September	% since 15 March to 13/09/2020	Change with last month (09 August 2020)	Year on Year change
Redditch	260	256	246	425	448	-35.20%	3.00%	-44.30%
Bromsgrove	232	253	217	329	332	-47.30%	2.60%	-51.00%
Wyre Forest	331	361	319	396	470	-22.20%	13.50%	-33.30%



Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

10. Table 11 shows the number of furlough claims received by 31 July 2020 per district as well as the county, West Midlands and England.

Table 11

Claims received up to 31 July 2020	Employments furloughed	Eligible employments	Take-up rate
Bromsgrove	14,400	45,000	32%
Malvern Hills	10,400	31,700	33%
Redditch	15,500	42,800	36%
Worcester	17,400	52,100	33%
Wychavon	19,200	59,300	32%
Wyre Forest	15,600	43,600	36%
Worcestershire County	92,400	274,600	34%
West Midlands	866,400	2,580,400	34%
England	8,067,700	25,577,800	32%

Key priorities:

11. The immediate priority is to understand the likelihood and scale of potential redundancies in the borough and the medium and long term priorities focus on identifying local employers' skills needs and work with the relevant education and training providers on designing and delivering courses and qualifications that meet those needs. Table 12 summaries the key priorities and Table 13 the key interventions being delivered under the 'Supporting People' theme.

Table 12

Work with local businesses employing 50+ staff to establish the risk of redundancy in those companies.	Work with DWP and other relevant support organisations on providing targeted support for people at risk of redundancies or already made redundant as a result of Covid-19 pandemic	Promote all current employment and training programmes available to the Redditch residents, including the Opening Doors to Business and apprenticeships programmes etc.
Identify employers' skills and employment needs medium and long term (demand) and work with the key education and training providers to align delivery of courses, qualifications and training to match those needs (supply).	Work with WLEP, GBSLEP, WCC and WMCA to ensure NW's employment and skills needs and prioritise are reflected in strategies, action plans and interventions planned by these organisations.	

Key interventions:

12. Table 13 below details the key current and planned interventions, which include business as usual activities and specific projects / programmes. The table is being updated on a regular basis, as some programmes come to an end and new ones are launched.

Table 13

Intervention	Nature of support	Delivery partner
Connecting Communities	1:1 support with an employment advisor. Providing knowledge and insight into how an individual can secure their preferred job	HoW via WMCA
Adult Education Budget	Funding for Further and higher education courses	HoW via WMCA
Digital skills - Coursera	Free online short courses for residents of WM who are facing redundancy, furlough or those looking to re-skill. 3,800 online courses and 400 specialities	Coursera via WMCA
The apprenticeship levy fund - SME	Provide support to SME who do not currently pay the apprenticeship levy but would like funding to train apprentices. £40 million apprenticeship pot to access	WMCA
The Apprenticeship levy fund – large companies (£3 million+ on payroll)	Guidance and support to help large companies use their apprenticeship level contributions	WMCA
Mayor's Mentors	Young people aged 16-24 have access to a mentor for one hour a month to discuss career options	WMCA via multiple partners
The Kickstart scheme	6 month placements are open to those aged 16-24 who are claiming universal credit and at risk of long-term unemployment. Employers will receive funding for 100% of the relevant NMW for 25 hours a week. Accepting expressions of interest	DWP via WMCA/ GBSLEP/ WLEP HW Chamber
Work and Health Programme	Personalised support to enter into employment. To be eligible you must have a health condition or experience certain social barriers. Click here for further details.	DWP
The Skills Toolkit	List of free online courses and resources to develop skills – focussing on digital skills	DfE by various partners
The Supplier Skills programme	Grant for SMEs to upskill their new and existing workforce. Grants of between £500-£18,000 per SME. 50% match funded by ESF.	ESF via Birmingham City Council

Skills4Worcestershire	Career advice website that is designed for young people, parents and schools. The website has detailed information on career pathways and opportunities in Worcestershire.	WCC (WLEP)
16 to 24 training Worcestershire	Providing traineeships to 16-18 year olds, 19-24 year olds with an Education Health care plan and 15 years if they are elected home educated	WCC via 2 Counties Training (funded by ESFA)
Here2Help; Develop - Graduate	Grant support up to £10,000 to Worcestershire SME to offer 12 month graduate placement or internship	WBC (WLEP)
Apprenticeship grant	£1,500 grant for businesses to pay towards the cost of hiring an apprentice who is based in NW	Bromsgrove DC, Redditch BC and Wyre Forest DC via NWedR
Booster Grant	£2,500 grant (50% match funding) that can be used towards training for businesses trading more than two years in NW [subject to other eligibility criteria]	Bromsgrove DC, Redditch BC and Wyre Forest DC via NWedR
Skills Support for the Workforce (incorporating Skills Support for Redundancy)	Fully funded training for employees. Redundancy support available to at risk employees and those that have recently been made redundant (3 months)	Serco (funded by ESF via WCC)
Opening Doors to Business	Experience of workplaces Encounters with employers and employees	Redditch Business Leaders

Resources and delivery partners

- The employment and skills support has been coordinated for the past 5 years by a PTE (3 days a week) post within NWedR. The post is currently vacant and in the process of being re-evaluated. The post will be advertised as a full-time (37 hrs per week) in October 2020. The post holder will work in partnership with the partner agencies to ensure the support measures and programmes are promoted locally and accessed by as many residents as possible.

SUPPORTING BUSINESSES

14. Table 14 shows the number of businesses in the borough categorised by the number of employees and compared to the other two North Worcestershire districts. The data contained in the table are compiled from an extract taken from the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) recording the position of units as at March of the reference year. The IDBR contains information on VAT traders and PAYE employers in a statistical register which provides the basis for the Office for National Statistics to conduct surveys of businesses.

Table 14

ENTERPRISES – employee number	BROMSGROVE	REDDITCH	WYRE FOREST	TOTAL
Micro – 0 to 9	5,080	2,575	3,840	11,495
Small – 10 to 49	470	335	315	1,120
Medium – 50 to 249	70	85	40	195
Large – 250 +	20	25	10	55
TOTAL	5,640	3,020	4,205	12,865

UK Business Counts (2019)

15. The key priorities under the ‘Supporting Businesses’ are focused on four key themes:

Business Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) + Grants	Start-up and enterprise support	High Growth Companies support	Strategic / Large employers support (50 plus employees)
--	---------------------------------	-------------------------------	---

16. Table 15 details the key current and planned interventions, which include business as usual activities (on-going) and specific projects / programmes (time-limited). The table is being updated on a regular basis, as some programmes come to an end and new ones are launched.

Table 15

Intervention	Key Tasks	Support Programmes	Deadlines
Business Information, Advice & Guidance	Maintain an up to date database of active business support programmes	NWedR business support platform	Ongoing
	Undertake diagnostics with businesses and entrepreneurs to identify their needs, issues and growth aspirations / prospects	Delivered by WBS and GBS LEP business advisors on a 1:1 basis	Ongoing
	Promotion of availability of business support programmes, including grants, via networking & social media	Programme specific campaigns delivered in partnership with the Growth Hubs / funding providers / business networks	Ongoing

		Weekly Business Bulletin / social media	
Start-up and Enterprise Support	Provision of pre-start support to entrepreneurs	Enterprise for Success Enterprising Worcestershire	31/3/2023 30/6/2023
	Provision of post-start and early years support to new businesses	Enterprise for Success Enterprising Worcestershire	31/3/2023 30/6/2023
	Access to Finance Support	Enterprising Worcestershire grant NWedR Start-up grant Midlands Engine Investment Fund Start-up Loans Business Growth Programme 2	30/6/2023 Base budget 31/3/2023
	Assistance with funding applications	1:1 support provided by Business Growth Manager and Business Advisors	Ongoing
High Growth Companies Support	Identify high growth companies	Beauhurst Business Data or similar	Ongoing
	Programme of engagement with high growth companies delivering detailed business diagnostic	DIT key account management NW Business Advisor	Ongoing
	Growth Support	Elevate Business Growth Programme 2 Manufacturing Growth Programme NWedR Business Booster Grant Small Business Leadership Programme Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses	30/9/2023 31/3/2023 Base budget
	Innovation Support	Proof of Concept Business Growth Programme 2 Low Carbon Opportunities Programme Betaden WINN – Worcestershire Innovation Innovate UK Innovation Vouchers	30/6/2023 31/3/2023 30/9/2022
	Access to Markets	Department for International Trade Find It in Worcestershire HS2 Commonwealth Games Green Economy	On-going
	Sectoral Support	GBS LEP Sectoral Leads	
Strategic Employers Support	Identify businesses with 50 or more employees locally	Beauhurst Business Data or similar	October 2020

	Deliver a programme of engagement and account management	Meetings (virtual meetings) and calls delivered by Worcestershire Business Central advisors and a GBSLEP North Worcestershire Business Advisor who works exclusively with businesses in North Worcestershire	Ongoing
	Access to Markets	Department for International Trade Find It in Worcestershire HS2 Commonwealth Games Green Economy	Ongoing / programme specific
Employers' Skills Needs	Skills Audits	Supplier Skills Programme	31/3/2023
	Funding for Training	Supplier Skills Programme Skills Support for the Workforce	31/3/2023
	Apprenticeships	National Apprenticeship Grants District Apprenticeship Grants	31/1/2021
	Graduate Recruitment	Higher Level Skills Match Develop Graduate Programme	
Inward Investment	Promotion of key investment sites Preparing bespoke business cases Search for land and premises Workforce skills & recruitment Liaison with regulatory services Liaison with Department for International Trade (DIT) Liaison with WLEP inward investment team Liaison with West Midlands Growth Company Local market intelligence	NWEdR website Invest in Worcestershire West Midlands Growth Company UK Capital Investment	Ongoing Programme specific Tailored responses to enquiries
	Respond to enquiries	West Midlands Growth Company Worcestershire LEP Department for International Trade	Ongoing
Visitor Economy	Promotion of North Worcestershire as a place to visit and stay	NWEdR Website Visit Worcestershire West Midlands Growth Company Access to national / international campaigns	Ongoing Time limited targeted promotional campaigns on a case by case basis
	Support Businesses in the Visitor Economy	Sectoral support via Worcestershire Business Support Platform	Ongoing

IMPROVING PLACES

17. The place making approach is centred on a number of existing and emerging priorities, as follows:

- Re-purposing / re-imagining high streets and town centres
- Making the town centre a more attractive space to do business (attract high skilled / high paid workers)
- Making the town centre a more attractive place to spend free time - leisure and hospitality
- Making the town centre a destination – providing a wide range of ‘experiences’ and reasons to visit and spend time in the town centre (other than shopping)
- Reflecting the emerging ways of working (hybrid work modes / hub & spokes) in the re-purposing of existing buildings and the design of new developments
- Exploring new ways of mobility
- Clear emphasis on clean growth and the green economy (Towns Fund)
- Prioritising the health and well-being of residents and communities
- Providing town-wide gigabit FTTP and 5G coverage

18. The key regeneration interventions include pre-development works (feasibility studies, masterplans, viability appraisals), site assembly, site / premises acquisitions), soft market testing (investors, developers, occupiers) and site development. In addition, the team works on the creation of a project pipeline ready to be submitted to future UK government and LEP funding programmes.

19. Summary of key interventions:

Redditch Regeneration
<i>Redditch Town Deal - £25m (up to £25m grant funding)</i>
<i>Matchborough and Winyates Regeneration - c. £35m (development cost)</i>
<i>Church Road development – c. £50m (development cost)</i>
<i>Railway Quarter development – c. £65m (development cost)</i>
<i>Town Centre Masterplan (Town Hall, former covered market, Library, Police station, town centre car parks)</i>

20. The estimated combined development cost of these key interventions is approximately £200m (including the delivery of the Town Centre Masterplan). The delivery timeframe is considerably tight and determined by the relevant external funding programmes (for example, the Towns Fund), therefore ensuring adequate capacity is a critical success factor in the implementation of these schemes.

Table 16

	Project / Activity	Description	Support programmes / grants	Deadlines
	Redditch Town Deal	Preparation and submission of Town Investment Plan Heads of Terms Agreement with government Preparation and submission of Project Business Cases	Town Deal Capacity Fund - £172,000 Town Deal Accelerated Fund - £1m Towns Fund - up to £25m grant	Town Investment Plan submission – 31 January 2021 Heads of Terms agreed with government – April / May 2021 Town Deal business case submission – May 2022 Redditch Town Deal Funding Agreement – Summer 2022 Redditch Town Deal completion (development) – March 2026
	Redditch Town Centre Masterplan	Masterplanning, feasibility and financial viability	GBLEP SEP Enabling Fund 2020 - £40,000	January 2021
	Redditch Matchborough & Winyates Regeneration	Masterplanning, feasibility and financial viability	OPE funding – Matchborough and Winyates Masterplan - £125,000	November 2020
	Redditch Church Road Development	Masterplanning, feasibility and financial viability	GBSLEP SEP Enabling Fund 2018	Completed (2019). Part of site subject to asset transfer programme from Homes England to RBC. Next phase to be agreed once the asset transfer has been completed.
	Redditch Rail Quarter Development	Masterplanning, feasibility and financial viability	GBSLEP SEP Enabling Fund 2018 Get Britain Building - £1m	Initial masterplanning, feasibility and viability appraisals completed (2019). Worcestershire CC leads the work on infrastructure requirements (Phase 2).

Key Performance Indicators Dashboard

21. There is limited economic data covering the period since lockdown available at a local level for many economic indicators. Where available, these local indicators will be monitored on a monthly / quarterly basis, but in most cases the data will need to be extrapolated from national figures and turned into local estimates. Table 17 lists a series of proposed indicators to be measured and updated at regular intervals (i.e. when published/made available) and benchmarked against county, regional and national figures.

Table 17

INDICATOR	BASELINE – FEB 2020	LATEST DATA	TREND (graph)	BENCHMARK TO COUNTY, REGION AND UK DATA	COMMENTARY / CONTEXT
Claimants (aged 16+)					
Youth Claimants (aged 16-24)					
Unique job postings					
Total number of staff furlough					
Unique job postings					
Apprenticeships vacancies					
Town centre vacancy levels					
Town centre footfall					
Number of businesses supported / assisted					
Number of business grants approved					
Number of people supported to get a job					
Number of people supported to access new training courses					
GDP					
Inward investment enquiries					

22. The Redditch Local Economic Recovery Frameworks sets out the key regeneration, business support and employment and skills support interventions and projects that will be delivered over the next three years in Redditch in partnership with key local, regional and national partners to support the

local economic recovery process. The framework will be updated regularly, as existing programmes and interventions come to an end and new ones are launched.

Delivery Partners

23. Our ability to deliver this comprehensive economic recovery programme is heavily dependent on the collaboration with and support of our key partners, funders and supporters, as illustrated below. We are grateful for all the support provided so far and will continue to foster deeper and closer working relationships with all our partners to deliver these critical support measures and interventions.



This page is intentionally left blank



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 26th August,
2020

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Joe Baker (Chair), and Councillors Joanne Beecham, Michael Chalk, Peter Fleming, Pattie Hill, Ann Isherwood, Mark Shurmer and Yvonne Smith

Also Present:

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

Officers:

Ruth Bamford, Kevin Dicks and Mike Dunphy

Democratic Services Officer:

J Bayley

20. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Salman Akbar, Andrew Fry and Jenny Wheeler. Members were advised that Councillors Joanne Beecham and Yvonne Smith were attending respectively as Councillor Akbar and Wheeler's substitutes.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

22. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no registered public speakers on this occasion.

.....
Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 26th August, 2020

23. E-SCOOTER TRIAL - REPORT TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager presented a report outlining the Council's proposals for a bid to take part in a national e-scooter trial.

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

- The Government had been proposing to launch an e-scooter trial in 2021. The Department for Transport (DfT) had brought the scheme forward in response to the Covid-19 pandemic in order to provide an alternative form of sustainable transport to the public.
- In Britain, e-scooters remained illegal outside of private land. Legislation was going through parliament to permit e-scooters to operate on public highways in certain circumstances.
- The deadline for applications to be submitted to the DfT to participate in the e-scooter trial was 31st August 2020. Successful bidders would need to identify a location in which the trial would take place. E-scooters would not be permitted to operate outside of that identified area.
- Since the Executive Committee meeting the Council had been advised that it was likely that the West Midlands Combined Authority's (WMCA) e-scooter bid would cover parts of Wolverhampton, Birmingham and Coventry. There would not therefore be an opportunity for Redditch to be the focus of the combined authority's trial.
- Should the bid for Redditch be successful, the Council would need to ensure that appropriate Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) were in place before the trial could be launched.
- The Council had gone out to tender in respect of an e-scooter trial in Redditch and there had been 12 responses. A company had been selected in this process to deliver the trial in Redditch. This operator had experience of managing similar schemes in big cities.
- The location for the trial in Redditch, should the bid be successful, would range throughout parts of the town centre.
- The operator would be expected to take on all liabilities in respect of the e-scooter scheme and would be responsible for

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 26th August, 2020

maintenance and recovery of the e-scooters after use. The company would be insured for these purposes.

- Should the bid be successful Council Officers would meet with representatives of the operator on an ongoing basis to discuss the trial.

After the report had been presented Members discussed the following points in detail:

- The positive impact that e-scooters could have on vehicle emissions in Redditch town centre and the potential for electric buses to operate in the Borough. Officers explained that Bromsgrove District Council had recently made a successful bid for electric buses to operate in their district and Redditch would feature on the routes for some of these vehicles.
- The benefits to be accrued, in respect of climate change, as a result of people using alternative forms of transport rather than relying on cars.
- The extent to which people with physical disabilities and parents with young children in pushchairs could use e-scooters. Officers acknowledged that, as with bicycles, e-scooters would not be suitable for everybody to use.
- The requirements in respect of customers who would use e-scooters. The Committee was informed that drivers would need to be at least 16 years of age and would have to have a provisional driving licence or a driving licence.
- The potential for accidents to occur involving e-scooters. Officers explained that the e-scooters would only operate on public highways where there was a maximum speed limit of 30 miles per hour and the vehicles could only operate at a maximum speed of 15 miles per hour, which would limit the potential for accidents to occur.
- The potential for fatal accidents to occur involving e-scooters. Members were advised that on the continent, where e-scooters could operate at faster speeds than proposed for the trial in Redditch, there had been very few fatalities.
- The potential for accident data to be provided to the Council. Officers explained that this data could be requested for the meetings that would take place between representatives of the Council and representatives of the operator.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 26th August, 2020

- The need for a data sharing agreement to be drawn up between the Council and the operator, which was a DfT requirement for such schemes.
- The safety features installed on e-scooters. The Committee was informed that the e-scooters would have lights and a dual breaking system which could be operated both on a manual and an automatic basis. Customers who signed up with the operator to use the e-scooters would all be provided with a free helmet to help protect the driver in the event of an accident.
- The concerns that had been raised by the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) in respect of the safety of people who were partially sighted or blind once e-scooters were in operation.
- The role of the customer in choosing whether to use an e-scooter and in assessing any potential risks to their safety.
- The timeframes for the launch of the scheme, should the Council's bid be successful. Officers explained that the start of the trial would be determined by the DfT, though there would be some time needed to establish the scheme at a local level.
- The potential for the trial to be extended beyond 12 months. The Committee was advised that the 12 months' duration for the trial had been determined by the DfT but there was the possibility that the Council could decide to extend the trial at a local level should Members feel that this was appropriate.
- The reasons why the trial would operate within parts of the town centre rather than the whole of the Borough and the extent to which this would enable an accurate assessment of local demand for e-scooters. Officers explained that the choice of location for the trial was based on market research and advice received from the chosen operator.
- The potential for the location in which the e-scooters operated to be extended to the whole of the Borough once the trial had concluded.
- The arrangements that would be in place to monitor use of the e-scooters and to ensure that privately owned e-scooters were not driven in the Borough as part of the trial. Officers explained that the operator would monitor e-scooter usage and it was likely that the official e-scooters in the trial would have identifiable branding.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 26th August, 2020

- The requirements in respect of customers disposing of the e-scooters after use. The Committee was informed that before a customer could dispose of an e-scooter they would have to submit a photograph showing that the e-scooter had been left in a safe place.
- The cost that would be charged to hire an e-scooter. Officers explained that customers would need to pay £1 to unlock a scooter and an extra 20 pence every minute.
- The number of e-scooters that would be used as part of a trial in Redditch. The Committee was informed that there would be 100 e-scooters available to use during the trial.
- The hours in which an e-scooter could be used. Members were advised that e-scooters would be available to hire 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

During consideration of this item the Chair of the Committee explained that the Executive Committee had determined at a meeting held on 4th August 2020 that the Council should submit a bid to take part in the national e-scooters trial. This had been discussed as an urgent item of business that had not been included on the Executive Committee's Work Programme and therefore there had been no opportunity to pre-scrutinise the proposals. The debate during the extra meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 26th August 2020 had been requested to provide an opportunity for Members to scrutinise in detail the Council's proposals for a bid to take part in the national e-scooter trial and to make suggestions about that trial.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships attended the meeting in his capacity as the lead Portfolio Holder for the e-scooters trial. Members were asked to note that Officers had worked very hard to prepare the Council's bid in respect of e-scooters, which was an initiative with which the Council had not had any prior involvement. Should the Council's bid be successful, a trial would be launched and this would test local demand for e-scooters. Should there be considerable demand then there was the possibility that the scheme could be extended to a wider geographical area.

RESOLVED that

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 26th August, 2020

- 1) should the Council's bid to participate in the national e-scooter trial be successful, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should receive an update on the trial six months after the launch of the scheme in Redditch; and
- 2) the report be noted.

24. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES AND SCRUTINY OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday, 4th August 2020, were considered. Officers explained that during that meeting the Suicide Prevention Task Group's final report had been considered and all of the group's recommendations had been approved. Due to the importance of the evidence gathered in this investigation, an additional proposal had been added by the Executive Committee in respect of this matter, which called for a copy of the group's report to be shared with Worcestershire County Council and the MP for Redditch.

During consideration of the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 4th August 2020, Members noted that there had been a discussion of an updated Amenity Standards Policy for the Council. This policy applied primarily to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the private rented sector. Members commented on the importance of HMOs as a source of housing for residents and the need for these to be managed appropriately. A request was made for an update to be provided to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in respect of HMOs at a later date.

The content of the Executive Committee's Work Programme for the period 1st September to 31st December 2020 was considered. Members noted that the Housing Strategy item, that had been scheduled for the Executive Committee's consideration in September and for pre-decision scrutiny in the same month, had been postponed. Clarification was requested in respect of the reasons for this delay.

RESOLVED that

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 26th August, 2020

- 1) an update report in respect of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) should be provided at a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- 2) the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 4th August 2020 be noted;
- 3) Officers to clarify the reasons why the Housing Strategy report had been postponed from September to October for the consideration of the Executive Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and
- 4) the content of the Executive Committee's work Programme for the period 1st September to 31st December 2020 be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 7.33 pm

This page is intentionally left blank



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 3rd September,
2020

MINUTES

Present:

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

Also Present:

Councillor Brandon Clayton – Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services
Councillor Matthew Dormer – Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships
Councillor Craig Warhurst - Portfolio Holder for Housing and Procurement

Officers:

Mike Birkinshaw, Sue Hanley, Deb Poole, Guy Revans and Judith Willis

Democratic Services Officers:

J Bayley and J Gresham

25. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Jenny Wheeler with Councillor John Fisher as named substitute.

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

27. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 3rd September, 2020

the minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 2nd July 2020 and 30th July 2020 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

28. PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Chair welcomed Mr. I. Soady as a public speaker to the meeting, who was invited to speak to the Committee.

His speech was delivered as follows:

“I note that Item 6 on the Agenda is Pre-scrutiny of the Restoration and Recovery Plan. Under the heading “Living Independent, Active & Healthy Lives”, one of the sub-headings is “Develop a Parks & Open Spaces Strategy (including increased physical activity & cycling).

I would like to bring to the Committee’s attention the publication in March this year by Worcestershire Green Infrastructure Partnership on behalf of Worcestershire County Council of a document entitled “Planning for a Multifunctional Green Infrastructure Framework in Worcestershire”. It is effectively an analysis of current green spaces throughout the County, a statement of their importance, and a strategy for their maintenance and improvement. Redditch Borough Council was one of the contributors and signatories to this document.

Table 5 of the report lists major Worcestershire sites at or near capacity. Arrow Valley Country Park appears in this list.

Other parts of the document (particularly Section 5) emphasise the benefits that readily accessible open spaces have for the more deprived areas of the County. Redditch is identified as having some of the most deprived areas.

The report also supports the Redditch Local Plan No 4 published in 2017 which makes strong recommendations for retaining open spaces, especially Chapter 8: “Creating and Sustaining a Green Environment”. Objectives under this heading include: ““To maintain and provide a high quality natural, rural and historic environment

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 3rd September, 2020

with a Green Infrastructure network which maximises opportunities for biodiversity value, wildlife and ecological connectivity” and “To protect, promote and where possible enhance the quality of the Borough’s landscape and Redditch Borough’s other distinctive features”. Section 13 goes into more detail regarding Primarily Open Space, which constitutes much of the Country Park.

I commend the report to the Committee and hope that they will endorse its findings and make every effort to ensure that its recommendations regarding preservation and enhancement of green space in Redditch are adopted in full by the Borough Council, and in particular that its contents are made known to all sub-committees”.

29. NEW CEMETERY - UPDATE REPORT

The Chair welcomed the Bereavement Services Manager to the meeting who presented a report to the Committee outlining the historical discussions and decision-making process undertaken in respect of the provision of a new cemetery. He confirmed that the item would be further scrutinised at a future Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services was invited to speak to the Committee and explained that this was an important item and that there was a considerable need for new cemetery provision.

Some Members were keen to understand the process in more detail and whether a single report that summarised the process was available and what work had specifically been undertaken in the previous twelve months. It was clarified that due to the ongoing suitability testing and because the Planning applications was a material part of the process, as yet no single report had been produced. It was reiterated that various reports had been provided to Members previously and that information regarding the current testing of sites was available in the Planning application. Some Members indicated that they hoped there would be complete transparency in the decision-making process once a decision on the subject was bought before Executive Committee and Full Council.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 3rd September, 2020

The Bereavement Services Manager explained that there had been delays in the process for several reasons including due to the ecology and archaeology of certain sites and the appropriateness of surveying these areas. This was in addition to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown.

The Chair requested that regular updates were provided to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the new Cemetery as and when information was available. On being put to the vote this was carried.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be provided with regular updates on the new cemetery as and when available; and**
- 2) the report be noted.**

30. PRE-SCRUTINY - RESTORATION AND RECOVERY PLAN

The Head of Business Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy outlined the report in respect of the Restoration and Recovery Plan and in doing so highlighted the following:

- Delivery of essential services had continued during the pandemic.
- Economic recovery plans were being established across both Redditch and the Worcestershire area and the Restoration and Recovery Plan would sit alongside these two documents.
- Learnings from the 'first wave' of Covid-19 had been recognised and had resulted in major changes to how the Council operated.
- The Restoration and Recovery Plan had been formulated around the five Strategic Purposes and included priorities from the Council Plan. The Council Plan was drafted prior to the pandemic and, due to changes in priorities during the pandemic, a Council Plan review was scheduled to take place in early 2021

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 3rd September, 2020

to ensure priorities were refreshed and remained relevant.

Members questioned what the plans were for brownfield sites mentioned in the Recovery and Restoration Plan and what type of use they may be allocated to. Officers undertook to ask the Head of Planning and Regeneration for the information for circulation for the consideration of members of the Committee at a later date.

The Head of Business Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy confirmed that the Executive Committee had a role to monitor performance around the actions contained within the Restoration and Recovery Plan. The Deputy Chief Executive also confirmed that this was a huge priority for the Strategic Management Team and that the Council's Chief Executive and the Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration were preparing an economic recovery plan and framework for the Borough.

The Chair queried the loss of rental income incurred during the pandemic and it was accepted that there would be a significant loss in this area but that officers were working proactively to mitigate any losses.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

31. PRE-SCRUTINY - HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT PLAN PROGRESS

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Procurement introduced the report in respect of the Housing Revenue Account Strategic Improvement Plan Progress and in doing so highlighted the following:

- Successes had been achieved in the key compliance areas of the Housing Revenue Account Strategic Improvement Plan including gas servicing, asbestos and fire safety.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 3rd September, 2020

- The Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown had impacted on the provision of Housing Services at the Council which had forced a change in priorities so that major compliance issues and emergency and essential repairs were only carried out.
- Rent collection had been impacted due to the increase in Universal Credit applicants and residents who had been placed on furlough or had lost jobs.
- Measures had been put in place to mitigate the deficit in rent arrears and residents had been contacted regarding the options for rent payment and the process for applying for Universal Credit if needed.
- Staff had worked positively and with success throughout the implementation of the measures.
- Voids were at a record low number.
- Structural changes implemented in the Housing Service had been successful.
- Reduction of costs had been successful and reserves of £144k that had been previously agreed for use to balance the budget in 2019/20 had not needed to be used.

The Deputy Chief Executive provided further information regarding the report and the following matters were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- The financial situation of the Housing Revenue Account was still being monitored extremely closely and the Committee was advised that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government had had a strategic discussion with the Council regarding the impact of Covid-19 and the financial returns that had been made.
- There had been some delays in the Culture Action Plan however, it was still progressing in Housing and corporately and as a result of remote working there would be some fundamental changes however, it was important that the plans remained flexible in the current situation.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 3rd September, 2020

The Chair asked the following questions with regard to Housing Services:

1. How many homeless people there were currently in the Borough?
2. What was happening with the homeless people who were provided temporary accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic at The Blue Inn?
3. Would there be an increase in local labour contracts within the Council and apprenticeship positions created?
4. What was the current turnaround timescale for Voids?

The Head of Community and Housing Services reported to Members that during lockdown rough sleepers had to be provided with temporary accommodation consequently there were no homeless people in the Borough. A number of families had been placed in temporary accommodation and the Housing Options team were working closely with the Voids team to provide a solution to more permanent accommodation. It was hoped that there would be apprenticeships established over the next 2 to 3 years in the department. Some Members expressed concerns about the retention of apprentices and the final qualifications provided to apprentices. Officers acknowledged that retention of apprentices was dependent on vacancies however, succession planning was underway to create leaders for the future to make improvements in this area.

Regarding the use of local labour, the Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services explained that over the next 12 months work would be divided into smaller programmes in order for smaller, local contractors to bid for work. It had, however, been necessary to engage non-local contractors during the pandemic in order to carry out essential works urgently.

Officers confirmed to the Committee that all staff were provided with adequate Personal Protective Equipment and undertook full risk assessments when carrying out inspections and any works. Furthermore, if tenants felt that the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment was not being utilised during appointments they were advised to report this to Housing Services. It was acknowledged that there had been problems with contacting some of the Housing

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 3rd September, 2020

teams, and although the Covid-19 pandemic had certainly had an impact it was confirmed that a simplified solution was being created in order for Members to report complaints and get responses more quickly.

The Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services explained that gas servicing was not suspended during lockdown and that due to the way gas servicing was scheduled in advance the service was able to continue with the servicing plan. This would continue as residents felt more comfortable having gas servicing staff in their property.

The Chair thanked officers for a detailed report and comprehensive answers.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted

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

The Senior Democratic Officer (Redditch) presented the Executive Committee's Work Programme and reported that a further item had been added to the work programme since the latest edition was published, entitled Borough Level Economic Recovery Framework which was due to be considered by the Executive Committee on 27th October.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

33. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

It was confirmed that there were no updates to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme however, Officers undertook to take account of any changes made during the meeting.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 3rd September, 2020

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

34. 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 not met since the previous Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting and the next meeting was due to be held on 22nd September 2020.

- b) Dementia Task Group – Chair, Councillor Michael Chalk

Councillor Chalk reported to the Committee that the first meeting of the Task Group was scheduled to take place on 14th September 2020.

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

Councillor Fry advised Members that a date had been identified for the next meeting on 7th September 2020.

The Chair thanked all the Members that were involved in the Working Groups and Task Groups.

35. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

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

The Committee was informed by Councillor Chalk that the next meeting of the West Midlands Combined Authority was due to take place on 7th September 2020.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 3rd September, 2020

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

The Committee was informed by Councillor Chalk that the next meeting of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee was due to take place on 30th September 2020.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 8.07 pm