



Executive Committee

Tue 12 Jan
2021
6.30 pm

Microsoft Teams

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

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If you have any queries on this Agenda please contact
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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.

[Link to the 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, 12th January, 2021

6.30 pm

Microsoft Teams

Agenda

Membership:

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

1. Apologies

2. Declarations of Interest

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

3. Leader's Announcements

4. Minutes (Pages 1 - 12)

5. Independent Remuneration Panel Report 2021/22 (Pages 13 - 26)

6. Declaration of Land Surplus to Requirement at Badger Close and Berkeley Close, Winyates and Ledbury Close, Matchborough (Pages 27 - 42)

7. Flexible Homelessness Support Grant and Homelessness Reduction Grant 2021/22 (Pages 43 - 46)

The report in respect of the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant and Homelessness Reduction Grant 2021/22 is due to be pre-scrutinised at a meeting of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group, scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 5th January 2021. Any recommendations arising from this meeting will be reported for the Executive Committee's consideration in a supplementary pack.

8. Final Council Tax Support Scheme (Pages 47 - 82)

9. Housing Revenue Account - Rent Setting 2021/22 (Pages 83 - 86)

10. Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 to 2024/25 - Update - Presentation

11. Council Tax Base 2021/22 (Pages 87 - 90)

12. Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Board - Recommendations (Pages 91 - 110)

13. Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Pages 111 - 120)

The recommendations detailed in the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 3rd December 2020 were considered at the last meeting of the Executive Committee. There are therefore no outstanding recommendations from the Committee requiring consideration on this occasion.

14. 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.

15. Advisory Panels - update report

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

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

16. 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 December 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, Mike Dunphy, Clare Flanagan, Chris Forrester, Sue Hanley, Judith Willis and Kate Goldey

Senior Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

38. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

39. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

40. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised that at the latest meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on Thursday, 3rd December 2020, Members had agreed recommendations on the subject of the Church Green Conservation Area and Management Plan and future versions of the Council's fees and charges report. These recommendations would be considered during the Executive Committee meeting.

41. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 27th October 2020 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

.....
Chair

**42. CHURCH GREEN DRAFT CONSERVATION AREA AND
MANAGEMENT PLAN CONSULTATION**

The Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager presented the Church Green Draft Conservation Area and Management Plan for Members' consideration.

The Committee was informed that the Council had a duty to designate conservation areas and to have plans for the management of those areas. The plan presented for Members' consideration built on previous strategies for the conservation area. There were a number of buildings in the conservation area which needed to be supported and enhanced.

During the development of the plan, a number of issues had been identified with the conservation area. The main challenges were the poor state of the public realm, issues with the shop fronts in the area, vacant units and parking issues close to St Stephen's Church and in the town centre. On Alcester Street there were a few buildings which had previously been left out of the conservation area which would be incorporated under the new proposals.

To address issues with vacant units, plans would need to be developed which would consider different approaches to managing town centres; traditional retail units were increasingly struggling and might need to be replaced with other options. The Redditch Town Deal would potentially provide some new opportunities. The Council was working with Worcestershire County Council and the North Worcestershire Economic Development Unit to address some of the problems that had been identified with the public realm. In addition, Officers were already exploring the potential to introduce Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) for locations within the conservation area where parking was a problem.

The work on the conservation area and management plan placed the Council in a position to apply for grant funding to help manage the conservation area. Funding was available from bodies such as Historic England and this type of funding had been used to positive effect in other parts of the country to enhance features in conservation areas.

Subject to the approval of the Church Green Draft Conservation Area and Management Plan, Officers were preparing to undertake consultation with relevant stakeholders about the details contained within the plan. This consultation exercise would be held early in 2021 and the outcome would be reported for Members' consideration at a later date.

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

- The contribution that the proposals detailed in the management plan could make to the wider plans for the regeneration of Redditch town centre.
- The risks to the heritage of the town centre should action fail to be taken in relation to the conservation area.
- The potential for modern infrastructure, such as electric charging points for vehicles, to be introduced in the conservation area. Officers reassured Members that this would be possible to do.
- The need for the Council to have a costed plan for any work proposed in relation to the conservation area.
- The impact of traffic in the conservation area and the potential for enforcement action to be taken in relation to the pedestrianised area on Alcester Street.

During consideration of this item Members noted that the Church Green Draft Conservation Area and Management Plan had been pre-scrutinised at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3rd December 2020. The Committee had endorsed the recommendations contained within the report and had raised a number of important issues during their debate on the subject. In particular, a number of suggestions had been made about Unicorn Hill in Redditch town centre.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the draft Church Green Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan be endorsed; and**
- 2) **a six week public consultation period be approved. The result of this consultation will be reported back to the Executive Committee in due course.**

43. DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY - IDENTIFYING ABUSE AND RESPONDING EFFECTIVELY

The Head of Community and Housing Services presented the Domestic Abuse Policy for the Executive Committee's consideration.

Members were advised that the policy set out how the Council would equip staff to identify and support victims of domestic abuse. The policy would enable the Council to respond to provisions in the Domestic Abuse Bill which, when it came into force in April 2021, would introduce a duty for local authorities to house victims of domestic abuse and their children. The legislation also introduced

a statutory definition of domestic abuse, recognising that it could be physical, emotional and / or coercive.

The policy also highlighted the action that was already taken by the Council to address domestic abuse. For example, the Council worked with a range of partner organisations and was part of multi-agency groups tackling domestic abuse.

In discussing the policy, Members commented that there had unfortunately been an increase nationally in the number of cases of domestic abuse that had been reported during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Council had a history of demonstrating this support, though participation in the White Ribbon Campaign and the Walk a Mile in Her Shoes initiative. The policy recognised that both women and men could be victims of domestic abuse.

During consideration of this item Members questioned whether the trades unions had been consulted about the content of the policy. The Committee was informed that relevant Officers had been consulted but there was some uncertainty about whether the trades unions had also been consulted. Officers undertook to consult with the trade unions after the meeting.

Reference was also made to the availability of training in respect of domestic abuse. It was suggested that this training should be made available to elected Members and that they should all be encouraged to attend. Members were advised that this suggestion would be referred to the next meeting of the Member Support Steering Group, which was responsible for determining Member training arrangements, for further consideration.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the draft Domestic Abuse Policy be adopted; and**
- 2) the Head of Housing and Community Services be given delegated authority to update and amend the policy in line with any new legislation and guidance, as and when required**

44. FEES AND CHARGES 2021/22

The Head of Financial and Customer Services presented the Fees and Charges 2021/22 report. Members were advised that in proposing the charges Officers had considered the potential for charges to be set at a level that would achieve full cost recovery. In some service areas there had been concerns about the potential impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on customers' finances and in

these instances the decision had been taken not to increase the fees.

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

- The balance that needed to be struck between setting fees that were financially prudent whilst also being compassionate towards the needs of customers impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The increase of 50 pence to the fee for the bulky waste collection service and the impact that this could have on customer demand. Concerns were raised that this could result in an increase in fly tipping.
- The extent to which people who had previously paid for a bulky waste collection service were likely to be deterred from paying for the service again due to a 50 pence increase.
- The standard number of items that tended to be disposed of by customers paying for the bulky waste collection service.
- The need for action to be taken to discourage people from fly tipping.
- The fact that an increase had not been made to the fee for the bulky waste collection service for some time.
- The level of increases that had been proposed to fees and charges. Concerns were raised that some charges would be increasing significantly though it was also noted that many would not change and some would only be increasing by the level of inflation.
- The recent meeting of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group at which the report had been pre-scrutinised.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) all of the fees and charges included in Appendix 1 be approved; and**
- 2) subject to the agreement of recommendation 1 above, these fees and charges should be charged by the Council commencing on 1st April 2021.**

45. FINANCE MONITORING QUARTER 2 2020/21

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

The recommendations included a proposal to increase the management fee paid by the Council to Rubicon Leisure Limited. The cost of this would be covered using grant funding that had been

provided by the Government to the Council to help manage the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Council had received £1.6 million funding from the Government during the year for this purpose and £1.1 million remained available to spend.

There was an overspend on the strategic purpose 'Aspiration, Work and Financial Independence' of over £200,000. This was primarily as a result of an overspend on temporary accommodation for rough sleepers and homeless people during the Covid-19 pandemic. The strategic purpose 'Run and Grow a Successful Business' was also overspent by over £750,000. This was largely as a result of the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic had had on Rubicon Leisure Limited.

By contrast, there was an underspend for the strategic purpose 'Communities which are Safe, Well Maintained and Green' of £34,000. This was primarily due to a significant saving in the anti-social behaviour budget of £135,000. However, Bereavement Services had received less income than had been anticipated at the start of the year.

Enabling services were overspent by £281,000. This was primarily due to additional audit costs as well as extra costs associated with the introduction of the new finance ERP system. There had been difficulties with the introduction of this system due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and additional agency staff had had to be employed to help embed the system.

Officers were projecting a £2.4 million variance in the capital programme by the end of the year. The majority of capital projects that had not been delivered as anticipated had been postponed due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, contractors could not necessarily come on site to work when planned.

The Corporate Management Team were working hard to review the Council's budget position. It was hoped that there would be improvements to the accuracy of budget forecasting moving forward.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) had a surplus of over £200,000 by the date of the meeting. This was primarily due to savings in respect of Repairs and Maintenance (R&M) and Management and Supervision costs. During the Covid-19 pandemic it had not been possible for Officers to undertake the full range of R&M work that was required. However, it was anticipated that once the Covid-19 vaccine had been rolled out, the work of the team would increase and therefore this saving was not likely to be sustainable moving forward. The savings in supervision and management costs were mainly due to vacant posts, though the

service reviews that were being undertaken were likely to impact on this budget.

The Committee subsequently discussed the financial position of the Council by September 2020 and in so doing highlighted the following points:

- The recommendations detailed in the report proposed investment in leisure facilities, including the Council's parks and open spaces. Members noted that this was occurring at a time of high visitor numbers in the parks.
- The significant impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Rubicon Leisure Limited like many businesses in the hospitality industry.
- The figures that had been reported in respect of the overspend on the strategic purpose 'Run and Grow a Successful Business' and the fact that two figures had been supplied for this in the report. Officers confirmed that there had been a typographical error and the correct figure would be provided for the Council meeting.
- The savings that had been anticipated for the Dial-A-Ride service at the start of the year and the potential for lost income for the service to be recovered. Officers explained that it was unlikely that the lost revenue would be recovered by the end of the financial year but it was hoped that income targets could be met in the 2021/22 financial year.
- The potential use of the grant funding that had been provided by the Government to help the Council manage the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The Council's financial position moving forward and the likelihood that difficult decisions would need to be taken in order to achieve a balanced budget in the Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 to 2024/25.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the current financial position in relation to revenue and capital budgets for the financial period April 2020 – September 2020 be noted.**

RECOMMENDED that

- 2) **an increase in the 2020/21 Capital Programme of £15k for Digital screens including installation at Arrow Valley Country Park be approved;**
- 3) **an increase in the 2020/21 Capital Programme of £6k for an additional passing bay along the main access to the Arrow Valley Country Park be approved;**

- 4) an increase in the 2020/21 Capital Programme of £19.5k for resurfacing of pathway at Arrow Valley Country Park be approved;
- 5) an increase in the 2020/21 Capital Programme of £10k, for the already approved capital Scheme Café and infrastructure Morton Stanley Park, be approved. This will help towards ensuring all relevant carbon reduction measures are incorporated; and
- 6) an increase the management fee payment to Rubicon Leisure by £373k be approved for the second quarter of 2020 only, from the COVID-19 funding received from the central government along with confirming the first quarter increase (£170k) also being funded from this same funding stream. This is to offset the shortfalls in income that the company is facing in 2020/21.

46. WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES - BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

The Head of Financial and Customer Services presented recommendations that had been agreed at a meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Board held on 1st October 2020.

The recommendations requested additional funding from partner organisations to help cover increases to pension costs for staff, which had been higher than anticipated. Moving forward, a calculation had been made about the proportion of funding that should be contributed towards the cost of the service by each partner authority; the allocation for Redditch was 17.57 per cent.

During the meeting, the Board had considered a request received from Wyre Forest District Council, which provided accommodation for and hosted the IT provision for WRS, to increase the fee paid for these services. Concerns had been raised during the Board meeting about this request for additional funding contributions from partners at a challenging financial time for local government. Members echoed this point during the meeting and it was noted that the Leaders of Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District Councils had communicated their concerns to Wyre Forest District Council on this subject.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1.1 the additional partner liabilities for 2020/21 in relation to increase in WRS pension forward funding rate and recommend the increase to individual partner councils:-

Redditch Borough Council	£13k
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- 1.2 the additional partner liabilities for 2020/21 in relation to the additional increase in pay award of 0.75% from the original estimated 2% and recommend the increase to individual partner councils:-

Redditch Borough Council	£4k
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- 1.3 the refund to Wyre Forest in relation to the change of Pest Control Services and recommend the refund to individual partner councils:-

Wyre Forest District Council	£7k
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- 1.5 the revised budget for 2020/21 and partner percentage allocations for 2020/21 onwards, due to the change in pest control service at Wyre Forest:-

	£'000	Revised %
Redditch Borough Council	564	17.57

47. DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES AND SECTION 151 OFFICER APPOINTMENT - VERBAL UPDATE

The Chief Executive advised that at a recent Appointments Committee meeting Mr James Howse had been appointed as the Council's new Section 151 Officer and Director of Resources. The appointment was a Council decision but as the next meeting of Council was not due to take place until the 25th January 2021 a decision had already been made to ratify the appointment through the urgent decision process.

48. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chair confirmed that there were no recommendations arising from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on

22nd October 2020 requiring the Executive Committee's consideration.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 22nd October 2020 be noted.

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

The Executive Committee considered a recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Budget Scrutiny Working Group about the Council's fees and charges reports. Members were advised that the recommendation applied to future versions of the fees and charges reports and not to the Fees and Charges 2021/22 report.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling Services confirmed that the Chair of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group had phoned him in advance of the Executive Committee meeting to discuss the recommendation. She had explained the rationale for the recommendation and he was satisfied that the proposal would add value to the fees and charges setting process.

During consideration of this item an alteration was proposed to the wording of the recommendation by Councillor Mike Rouse. This alteration was seconded by Councillor Matthew Dormer.

The altered recommendation read as follows:

"Fees and Charges are set following due consideration of the strategy of each service area, taking into account overheads, business benefits deriving from such strategies, cost recovery and the provision of the service."

In discussing the proposed alteration, Members concurred that this did not change the general aim of the recommendation.

Members thanked the Budget Scrutiny Working Group for their hard work. Particular thanks were extended to the Chair of the group.

RESOLVED that in future years

Fees and Charges are set following due consideration of the strategy of each service area, taking into account overheads, business benefits deriving from such strategies, cost recovery and the provision of the service.

50. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

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

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

Councillor Lovell confirmed that he had recently met with Officers to discuss grant funding available to improve water quality in the Borough. Further opportunities to secure grant funding were also being explored.

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

Councillor Dormer commented that there had been a meeting of the Constitutional Review Working Party in November. The outcomes of this meeting had been considered during the November Council meeting.

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

Councillor Nazir informed the Committee that the Worcestershire Young People's Panel had set up a panel to train people in care about how to inform people about what they required from the care system.

Work was being undertaken to help children and young people who were struggling to attend school to find out how to help them to engage with the education system.

Apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers were also being investigated. This work was being undertaken out of recognition that care leavers often struggled to secure employment and educational qualifications and that apprenticeship opportunities might be a useful alternative for some people leaving care.

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

Councillor Dormer explained that there had been a meeting of the Member Support Steering Group in November. During the meeting, the group had discussed the potential for some Members to adopt a paperless approach to participating in Committee meetings. A number of Councillors had since indicated that they would adopt a paperless approach to

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Committee meetings once meetings could take place physically.

e) Planning Advisory Panel – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

Councillor Dormer noted that a meeting of the Planning Advisory Panel had taken place on 1st December 2020. During the meeting Members had considered the Church Green Draft Conservation Area and Management Plan.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 7.53 pm

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

12 January 2021

**REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL –
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES FOR 2021-22 AND THE
MEMBERS ALLOWANCES SCHEME**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor , M Dormer Leader and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management
Portfolio Holder Consulted	
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton
Ward(s) Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	N/A
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

Each Council is required by law to have an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) which recommends the level of allowances for Councillors. The Panel is made up of suitably skilled members of the public who are completely independent of the Borough Council. It also makes recommendations to four other District Councils in Worcestershire. The Panel's report is enclosed for consideration by the Executive Committee and ultimately by the Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to consider the report and recommendations and RECOMMEND to Council

2.1 whether or not to accept all, some or none of the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for 2021-22;

2.2 having considered the Panel's report and recommendations, whether or not changes are required to the Council's scheme of allowances for Members arising from this.

3. KEY ISSUES**Financial Implications**

- 3.1 If the Council makes changes to the current amounts of allowances there may be additional savings or costs. If the Council implements all the recommendations of the IRP, using their current scheme, costs would be decreased in the region of £12,500. It should be noted that the scheme recommended by the IRP only allows for one Special Responsibility Allowance per Councillor and does not include a payment for Executive Members without Portfolio.

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Legal Implications

- 3.2 The Council is required to “have regard” to the recommendations of the Panel. However, it is not obliged to agree to them. It can choose to implement them in full or in part, or not to accept them.
- 3.3 If the Council decides to review its scheme of allowances for Councillors, it is also required to take into account recommendations from the Panel before doing so.

Service/Operational Implications

- 3.4 There are no direct service or operational implications arising from this report. Once the Council has agreed the allowances for 2021-22 Officers will update and publish the Members' Allowances Scheme as appropriate.

Customer/Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.5 None arising from this report.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

Payments to Councillors can be a high profile issue. The main risks are reputational. However, the Council is transparent about the decisions made on allowances. The Allowances scheme and sums paid to Councillors each year are published on the Council's website.

5. APPENDICES

Report and recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel for 2021-22.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Members Allowances Scheme – in the Council Constitution at part 18:

<http://moderngovwebpublic.redditchbc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=379&MId=2511&Ver=4>

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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**Independent Remuneration Panel
for Worcestershire District Councils**

Annual Report and Recommendations for 2021-22

Redditch Borough Council

December 2020

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Recommendations

The Independent Remuneration Panel recommends to Redditch Borough Council the following:

- 1. That the Basic Allowance for 2021-22 is £4,650 representing a 2.75% increase**
- 2. That the Special Responsibility Allowances are set out in Appendix 1**
- 3. That travel allowances for 2021-22 continue to be paid in accordance with the HMRC mileage allowance**
- 4. That subsistence allowances for 2021-22 remain unchanged**
- 5. That the Dependent Carer's Allowance remains unchanged**
- 6. That for Parish Councils in the District, if travel and subsistence is paid, the Panel recommends that it is paid in accordance with the rates paid by Redditch Borough Council and in accordance with the relevant Regulations**

Introduction

The Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) has been appointed by the Council to carry out reviews of the allowances paid to Councillors, as required by the Local Government Act 2000 and subsequent legislation. The Panel has carried out its work in accordance with the legislation and statutory guidance.

The purpose of such allowances is to enable people from all walks of life to become involved in local politics if they choose.

The law requires each Council to 'have regard' to the recommendations of the Panel and we noted that Redditch Borough Council rejected the Panel's recommendation for 2020/21 due to the financial status of the Council.

The work of the Panel in the current year has been significantly influenced by the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent demands it has placed on individual Councils. As important as the work of the Panel is, it was clearly recognised that there were greater priorities for Council Leaders and a need to be realistic about what was required and what could be achieved during 2020.

In view of the above, and in consultation with all constituent authorities it was decided that the report for 2021/22 would focus solely on recommendations in relation to the Basic Award and any consequential change to the value of existing Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs). The evidence base for the recommended changes is set out below.

This report reflects the above position and contains no new recommendations in relation to the range of wider SRAs (i.e. the multiplier values) for 2021/22. Such recommendations would need to have been supported by research within individual authorities and demanded the time and contribution from officers and members. Given the restrictions presented by Covid it was agreed that this would not be a useful use of resources. The Panel is hopeful, however of being able to undertake a review of SRAs during the reporting cycle leading to the 2022/23 report and in accordance with any previously published commitments.

The Panel acknowledges that in the current challenging times and financial climate there are difficult choices to be made. Whilst ultimately it is for the Council to decide how or whether to adopt the recommendations set out in this report, it is hoped that such recommendations serve as useful.

Background Evidence and Research Undertaken

There is a rich and varied choice of market indicators on pay which can be used for comparison purposes. These include:

- National survey data on a national, regional or local level
- Focussed surveys on a particular public sector
- Regular or specific surveys
- Use of specific indices to indicate movement in rewards or cost of living

As background for the decisions taken by the Panel this year we have:

- Analysed and considered the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) statistics for 2020 which gives the mean hourly wage rate for Worcestershire at £14.78.
- Benchmarked the Basic Allowance against allowances for comparable roles paid by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) "Nearest Neighbour" Councils for each authority
- Taken account of the National Pay Award (2.75%) for the majority of Local Government employees
- Considered the Consumer Price Index information as at November 2020

We give more details about these areas of research at the end of the report.

In 2015, Worcester City Councillors recorded time spent on Council business for a number of weeks. This enabled the Panel to confirm the number of hours per week for front line councillors, which is used to calculate the recommended basic allowance. More detail is given about this under the Basic Allowance heading later in the Report.

The figure being recommended by the Panel of £4,650 for the Basic Allowance appears reasonable and appropriate when compared to other Local Authorities.

Arising from our research, in **Table 1** we have included information showing the Members' allowances budget for Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances paid for 2019-20 as a cost per head of population for each Council. To give context, we have included details of the proportion of net revenue budget spent by each Council on basic and Special Responsibility allowances.

Table 1 - Total spend on Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) as a cost per head of population 2019-20 figures

Authority, population¹ and number of Councillors	Total spend Basic Allowances	Total spend on SRA	SRA as a percentage of total Basic Allowance	Cost of total basic and SRA per head of population	Total of basic and SRA as a percentage of Net General Revenue Fund expenditure
	£	£	%	£	%
Bromsgrove DC (31) 94,744	139,656	64,823	46.42	2.05	1.759
Malvern Hills DC (38) 75,339	164,717	56,054	34	2.81	2.6
Redditch Borough (29) 84,521	126,046	88,189	69.96	2.51	2.523

¹ONS population figures mid 2019. Totals for Basic and Special Responsibility allowances paid are as published by each authority for the 2019-20 financial year.

Worcester City (35) 100,405	152,807	69,441	45.44	2.21	1.36
Wychavon (45) 118,738	198,782	85,594	43.06	2.23	1.77

In **Table 2** we show the average payment per member of each authority of the Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances, which illustrates the balance between the level of Special Responsibility Allowances paid and the Basic Allowance.

Table 2 - Average allowance per Member of each authority (Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances, 2019 – 20 figures)

Authority (number of Councillors)	Amount £
Bromsgrove District (31)	6,596
Malvern Hills District (38)	5,810
Redditch Borough (29)	7,387
Worcester City (35)	6,349
Wychavon District (45)	6,319

Basic Allowance 2021 - 22

Calculation of Basic Allowance

The Basic Allowance is based on:

- The roles and responsibilities of Members
- Their time commitments – including the total average number of hours worked per week on Council business
- A public service discount of 40% to reflect that Councillors volunteer their time
- The Basic Allowance is paid to all Members of the Council

Whilst each Council may set out role descriptions for Councillors, the Panel accepts that each councillor will carry out that role differently, reflecting personal circumstances and local requirements. However, we consider the Basic Allowance to include Councillors' roles in Overview and Scrutiny, as any non-Executive member of the Council is able to contribute to this aspect of the Council's work. It is for this reason that we do not recommend any Special Responsibility Allowance for members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. We also consider that ICT could be included in the Basic Allowance as it is generally more readily available to individuals than in previous years. However, we are comfortable that specific local decisions may be made about how ICT support is provided.

As mentioned earlier, in 2015 Worcester City Councillors recorded the time spent per week on Council business for a number of weeks during the early autumn. This was considered to reflect an appropriate "average" period of time for meetings and other commitments. The results from this survey showed that the average input was 10 hours and 50 minutes

per week. This figure matches the one used for a number of years by the Panel, based on previous research with constituent councils, to calculate the basic allowance.

We reviewed the levels of wage rates for Worcestershire as set out in the ASHE data (details in appendix 2) and the benchmark information available to us from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) "nearest neighbours" authorities as part of our research into the level of basic allowance recommended. We are also aware that the majority of local government employees received an average of 2.75% increase in pay in April 2020 (dependent on scale).

The research information used in the consideration of the Basic allowance is set out at appendix 2.

Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) 2021/22

The basis for the calculation of SRAs is a multiplier of the Basic Allowance as advocated in the published Guidance.

For the reasons as set out in the introduction to the report, no recommendations have been made to change the SRA multiplier rates for 2021/22. As such the recommended rates remain as they were in the 2020/21 report and as detailed in Appendix 2.

Mileage and Expenses 2021-22

The Panel notes that the Council has used the HMRC flat rate for payment of mileage for Councillors and recommends that this continues. It should also be noted that HMRC recommends a 4p per mile payment for electric business vehicles.

The Panel is satisfied that the current levels of subsistence allowances are set at an appropriate level and recommends that these continue.

The Panel notes that the Council's Scheme of Members' Allowances provides that Dependant Carer Allowances are payable to cover reasonable and legitimate costs incurred in attending approved duties and recommends that this provision continues.

Allowances to Parish Councils 2021-22

The Independent Remuneration Panel for Worcestershire District Councils acts as the Remuneration Panel for the Parish Councils in each District.

This year the Panel has not been asked to make recommendations on any matters by any Parish in Bromsgrove/Malvern Hills/Redditch/Worcester City/ Wychavon.

The Independent Remuneration Panel

The Members' Allowances Regulations require Local Authorities to establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel. The purpose of the Panel is to make recommendations to the authority about allowances to be paid to Elected Members and Local Authorities must have regard to this advice. This Council's Independent Remuneration Panel is set up on a joint basis with 4 of the other 5 District Councils in Worcestershire. Separate Annual Reports have been prepared for each Council.

The members of the Panel are:

Caroline Murphy – Caroline has over 20 years' experience of working in public and voluntary sector organisations, including three West Midlands Local Authorities and the Civil Service. She was a senior Education Manager at Wolverhampton City Council until 2011 developing and delivering a large part of the 14-19 Pathfinder, during which time her department was recognised as achieving Beacon Council Status. She has a wealth of experience at building partnerships. Caroline now works as freelance Education, Skills and Development Adviser supporting individuals and organisations with strategic management, quality assurance and improvement, safeguarding, regulation compliance, research and evaluation, data protection and developing policies and procedures. She has worked in a consultancy capacity for a number of organisations, specialising in those who support vulnerable young people. She also spent 14 years as the Vice Chair of Governors of a primary school in Birmingham.

Jonathan Glover – Jonathan has over 30 years experience working in central and local government. He has worked mostly in central government, in a range of departments and disciplines. These include: regional finance and accounts; building management; personnel management; contract management. At a local level he specialised in employment support for people with disabilities. Returning to a regional role, he ensured projects throughout the West Midlands region, which were receiving European Commission grants, complied with EC financial and regulatory compliance. Since leaving the civil service he has worked in both the public and private sector. Jonathan was a governor at his local junior school for eight years. He was vice chair of the full governing body, representing the school at Ofsted inspection and appeal panels; chair of its curriculum sub committee; and a member of personal and finance sub committees. He was a member of several recruitment and interview panels, including for a new headteacher.

Reuben Bergman – Reuben is a Fellow of the CIPD with significant senior HR leadership experience across a range of public sector organisations in both England and Wales. He currently runs a HR Consultancy Business in Worcestershire providing advice and support on managing change, employment law, HR policy development, mediation, management coaching and employee relations. Reuben has led successful equal pay reviews in three separate local authorities and is known for his successful work in managing change and developing effective employee relations. He is a qualified coach, mediator and a Shared Service architect. He has won national awards for his work on employee engagement and the development of an innovative Café style leadership development programme.

Matthew Davies – Matthew qualified as a Social Worker in 2008 and subsequently worked with children and young people in Worcestershire, Jersey and Manchester. Latterly he is employed as a Registered Manager of an independent fostering agency, supporting and supervising approved foster carers to care for children and young people in care.

The Panel has been advised and assisted by:

- Claire Chaplin and Margaret Johnson from Worcester City Council
- Darren Whitney, Amanda Scarce, Jess Bayley and Sarah Sellers from Bromsgrove & Redditch Councils
- Mel Harris from Wychavon District Council

- Lisa Perks from Malvern Hills District Council

The Panel wishes to acknowledge its gratitude to these officers who have provided advice and guidance in a professional and dedicated manner.

Reuben Bergman , Chair of Independent Remuneration Panel

Appendix 1

**Independent Remuneration Panel for District Councils in Worcestershire
Recommendations for 2021/22**

Redditch Borough Council

Role	Rec Multiplier 2020/21 (IRP)	Current Multiplier 2020/21 (Council approved)	Rec Allowance (£) 2020/21 (IRP)	Current Allowance (£) 2020/21 (Council approved)	Rec Multiplier 2021/22 (IRP)	Rec Allowance (£) 2021/22 (IRP)
Basic Allowance for all Councillors	1	1	4,526	4,437	1	4,650
Special Responsibility Allowances:						
Leader	3	3	13,578	13,311, plus 6,656 as portfolio holder	No change from recommendation in 2020/21	13,950
Deputy Leader	1.75	1.75	7,920.50	7,765, plus 6,656 as portfolio holder	No change from recommendation in 2020/21	8,137.50
Cabinet Portfolio Holders	1.5	1.5	6,789	6,656	No change from recommendation in 2020/21	6,975
Executive Members without portfolio	****	1	****	4,437	****	****
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee	1.5	1.5	6,789	6,656	No change from recommendation in 2020/21	6,975

Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Task Groups	0.25	0.25	1,131.50	1,109	No change from recommendation in 2020/21	1,162.50
Chair of Audit, Standards and Governance Committee	0.25	0.25	1,131.50	1,109	No change from recommendation in 2020/21	1,162.50
Chair of Planning Committee	1	1	4,526	4,437	No change from recommendation in 2020/21	4,650
Chair of Licensing Committee	0.75	0.75	3,394.50	3,328	No change from recommendation in 2020/21	3,487.50
Political Group Leaders	0.25	0.25	1,131.50	1,109	No change from recommendation in 2020/21	1,162.50

Appendix 2**Summary of Research**

Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) "Nearest Neighbour" authorities tool.

No two Councils or sets of Councillors are the same. Developed to aid local authorities in comparative and benchmarking exercises, the CIPFA Nearest Neighbours Model adopts a scientific approach to measuring the similarity between authorities. Using the data, Redditch Borough Council "nearest neighbours" are:

- Tamworth Borough Council
- Gloucester City Council
- Stevenage Borough Council
- Kettering Borough Council
- Worcester City Council
- Cannock Chase District Council

Information on the level of Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances was obtained to benchmark the levels of allowances recommended to the Council. The average basic award across all the "nearest neighbour" authorities was £5,377 as at November 2020.

Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) Data on Pay

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/contents.aspx>

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/construct/summary.asp?reset=yes&mode=construct&dataset=30&version=0&anal=1&initse1=>

Published by the Office for National Statistics, the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) shows detailed information at District level about rates of pay. For benchmarking purposes, the Panel uses the levels for hourly rates of pay excluding overtime (currently £14.78 as at December 2020). This is multiplied by 11 to give a weekly rate, which is then multiplied by 44.4 weeks to allow for holidays. This was the number of hours spent on Council business by frontline Councillors which had been reported in previous surveys and substantiated by a survey with Worcester City Councillors in the autumn of 2015. The rate is then discounted by 40% to reflect the element of volunteering that each Councillor undertakes in the role. As a benchmark indicator this would produce a figure of £4,331 per annum

CPI (Consumer Price Inflation)

In arriving at its recommendations the Panel has taken into account the latest reported CPI figure available to it, published by the Office for National Statistics. This was 0.9% in November 2020.

Local Government Pay Award

The Panel was mindful of the latest Local Government pay award implemented from 1st April 2020. For the majority of Local Government employees this resulted in a pay increase of 2.75%.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

12 JANUARY 2021

DECLARATION OF LAND SURPLUS TO REQUIREMENT AT BERKELEY CLOSE AND BADGER CLOSE, WINYATES AND LEDBURY CLOSE, MATCHBOROUGH

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Matthew Dormer
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton - Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
Ward(s) Affected	Winyates and Matchborough
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	No
Key Decision	Yes

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

This report seeks approval to declare the following sites in Redditch surplus and available for disposal:

- 1.1 Land adjacent to No. 29 Berkeley Close, Winyates Green;
- 1.2 Land adjacent No. 34 Badger Close, Winyates West;
- 1.3 Land adjacent No. 46 Badger Close, Winyates West;
- 1.4 Land adjacent No. 54 Ledbury Close, Matchborough East.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

the land adjacent to No. 29 Berkeley Close, Winyates Green, land adjacent No. 34 Badger Close, Winyates West, land adjacent No. 46 Badger Close, Winyates West and land adjacent No. 54 Ledbury Close, Matchborough East, be declared surplus to Council requirements and disposed of at market value.

3. KEY ISSUES**Financial Implications**

- 3.1 The sale of this land will generate capital receipts to the General Fund, and all capital receipts from disposals are deemed to be a Corporate capital resource available for allocation in line with Corporate priorities.

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government issued guidance in giving Local Authorities greater freedoms with how capital receipts can be

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

12 JANUARY 2021

used to finance expenditure. This Direction allows for the following expenditure to be treated as Capital, 'expenditure on any project that is designed to generate ongoing revenue savings in the delivery of public services, and/or transform service delivery to reduce costs, and/or transform service delivery in a way that reduces costs or demand for services in future years, for any of the public sector delivery partners.'

Legal Implications

- 3.2 Although the Council may dispose of its land or property in any manner it wishes, the Council is required to dispose of any interest in land at Best Value in accordance with Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972. To achieve this requirement it is normal for the Council to market the sites for sale to achieve the highest capital receipts possible.

Service/Operational Implications

The four sites are described in details as follows:

3.3 **Land adjacent to No. 29 Berkeley Close, Winyates Green**

Appendix 1 (Drawing Nos. P2049/157A and P2049/158A refers). This site was left vacant by the former Development Corporation for unknown reasons when delineating the adjacent private residential sites. As a consequence it has become overgrown over the years. Outline Planning approval was given on 24 September 2020 (all matters reserved for subsequent consideration), for the erection of 2 No. 3-bed dwellings.

Following this approval, an application has been made for the Stopping Up of the Footpath that runs adjacent to No. 29 Berkeley Close, under section 257 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as this stub footpath is adopted. No problems are anticipated at this stage in the requisite Stopping Up Order being made within the next few months.

3.4 **Land adjacent No. 34 Badger Close, Winyates West**

Appendix 2 (Drawing No. P2049/151 refers). The majority of this site was a former play area which for some reason was adopted by the County Council when originally constructed. Outline Planning approval was given on 4 December 2019 (all matters reserved for subsequent consideration), for the erection of 1 No. 3-bed dwelling.

Following this approval, an application was made for the Stopping Up of the Footpath (Play Area), under section 257 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as this play area was adopted, the Order now being in force.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

12 JANUARY 2021

3.5 Land adjacent No. 46 Badger Close, Winyates West

Appendix 3 (Drawing No. P2049/159 refers). All of this site which for some reason, which is unknown to us, was adopted by the County Council when originally constructed. It is intended to submit an Outline Planning application for 1 No. 3-bed bungalow, and if successful, apply for an appropriate Stopping Up Order. At this stage no problems are anticipated with achieving both proposals.

3.6 Land adjacent No. 54 Ledbury Close, Matchborough East

Appendix 4 (Drawing Nos. P2049/164 and P2049/165 refers). The majority of this site was a former play area which for some reason was adopted by the County Council when originally constructed. It is intended to submit an Outline Planning application for 1 No. 4-bed dwelling, and if successful, apply for an appropriate Stopping Up Order. At this stage no problems are anticipated with achieving both proposals.

There are a number of works to be accommodated with this proposal, that being the construction of a new diverted footpath link, and small car parking area, together with diversion works for various Statutory Undertakers' equipment.

However, with the proposed provision of a 4-bed dwelling, the additional income expected for the site, over and above a 3-bed dwelling, should compensate for these additional works required.

Customer/Equalities and Diversity Implications

None.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

Failure to achieve best value for the land is mitigated through the process for selling at market value.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Land adjacent to No. 29 Berkeley Close, Winyates Green
Indicative Layout and Site Location Plan.

Appendix 2 - Land adjacent No. 34 Badger Close, Winyates West
Site Layout.

Appendix 3 - Land adjacent No. 46 Badger Close, Winyates West
Site Location Plan.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

12 JANUARY 2021

Appendix 4 - Land adjacent No. 54 Ledbury Close, Matchborough East
Indicative Layout and Site Location Plan.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Planning Applications and Stopping Up Orders.

7. KEY

None.

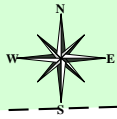
AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Pete Liddington

email: pete.liddington@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Tel.: 01527 534108

Appendix 1



Notes:
Proposed Layout Schedule
 Site Area - 0.06 ha (0.15 acres)
 Dwelling Types
 2 No. 3 bed houses
 Total = 2 No. dwellings
 Density - 33.33 No. dwellings/ha
 4 No. car parking spaces

Extent of site area

Date	Rev	Details
02/04/2020	A	House footprints, orientation and rear garden lengths amended

Project:
Proposed Residential Development
Berkeley Close, Winyates Green

Drawing:
Indicative Layout
(Planning Application)

Drawn:	PTL	Scale:	1/200 @ A3
Surveyed:	OS	Date:	Feb 2020

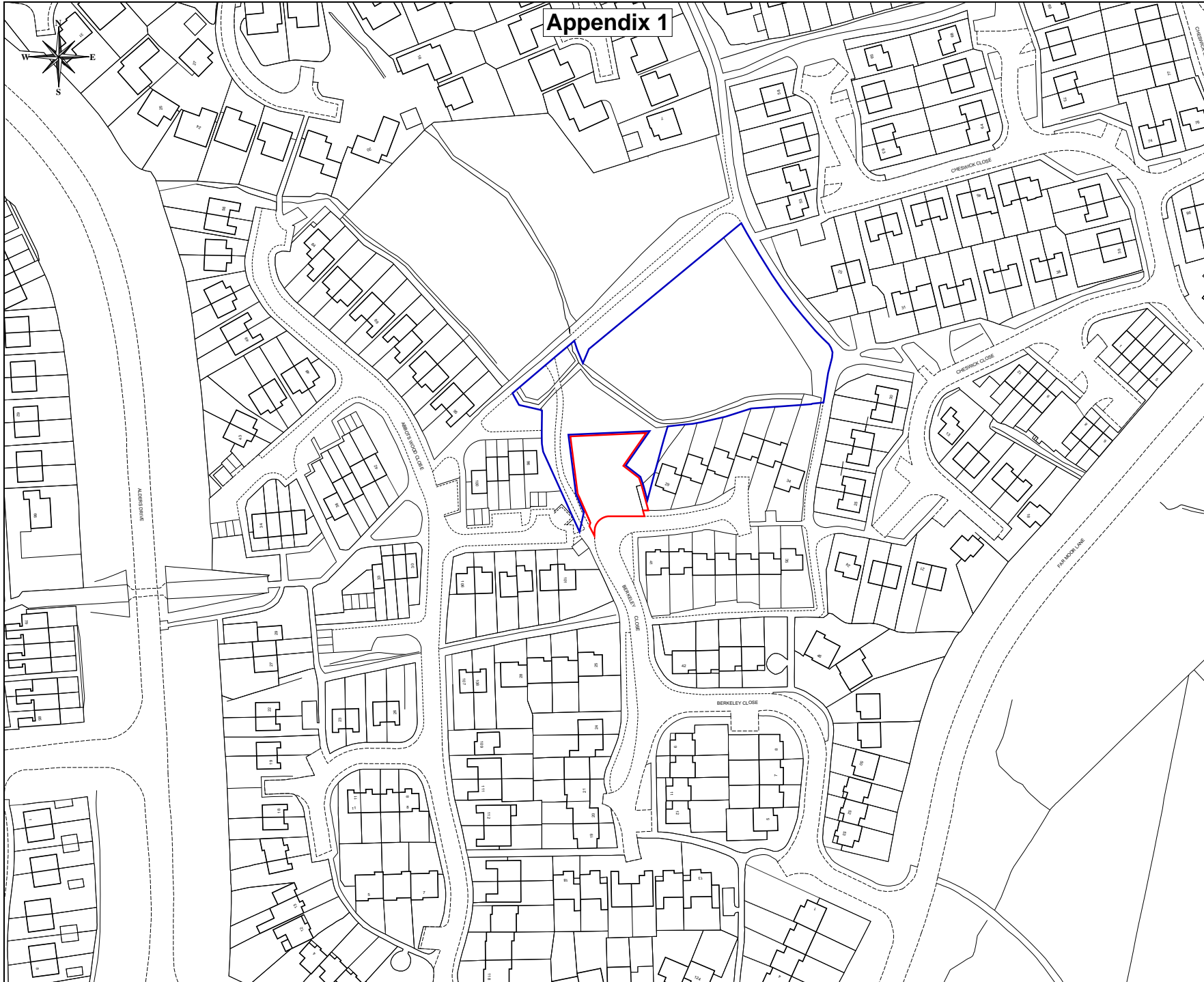
Drawing No: **P2049/157A**

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 Town Hall
 Walter Stranz Square
 Redditch
 Worcs B98 8AH



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Appendix 1



Notes:

Date	Rev	Details
02/04/2020	A	Red and blue line amended

Project:
**Proposed Residential Development
Berkeley Close, Winyates Green**

Drawing:
**Site Location Plan
(Planning Application)**

Drawn:	PTL	Scale:	1/1250 @ A3
Surveyed:	OS	Date:	Feb 2020

Drawing No: **P2049/158A**

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Appendix 2



Notes:
Proposed Layout Schedule
 Site Area - 0.02 ha (0.05 acres)
 Dwelling Types
 1 No. 3 bed house
 Total = 1 No. dwelling
 Density - 50.0 No.dwellings/ha
 2 No. car parking spaces

Extent of site area within ownership of Redditch BC

Date	Rev	Details

Project:
Proposed Residential Development Adjacent No. 34 Badger Close Winyates West

Drawing:
Site Layout (Planning Application)

Drawn:	PTL	Scale:	1/500 @ A3
Surveyed:	OS	Date:	Jun 2019

Drawing No: **P2049/151**

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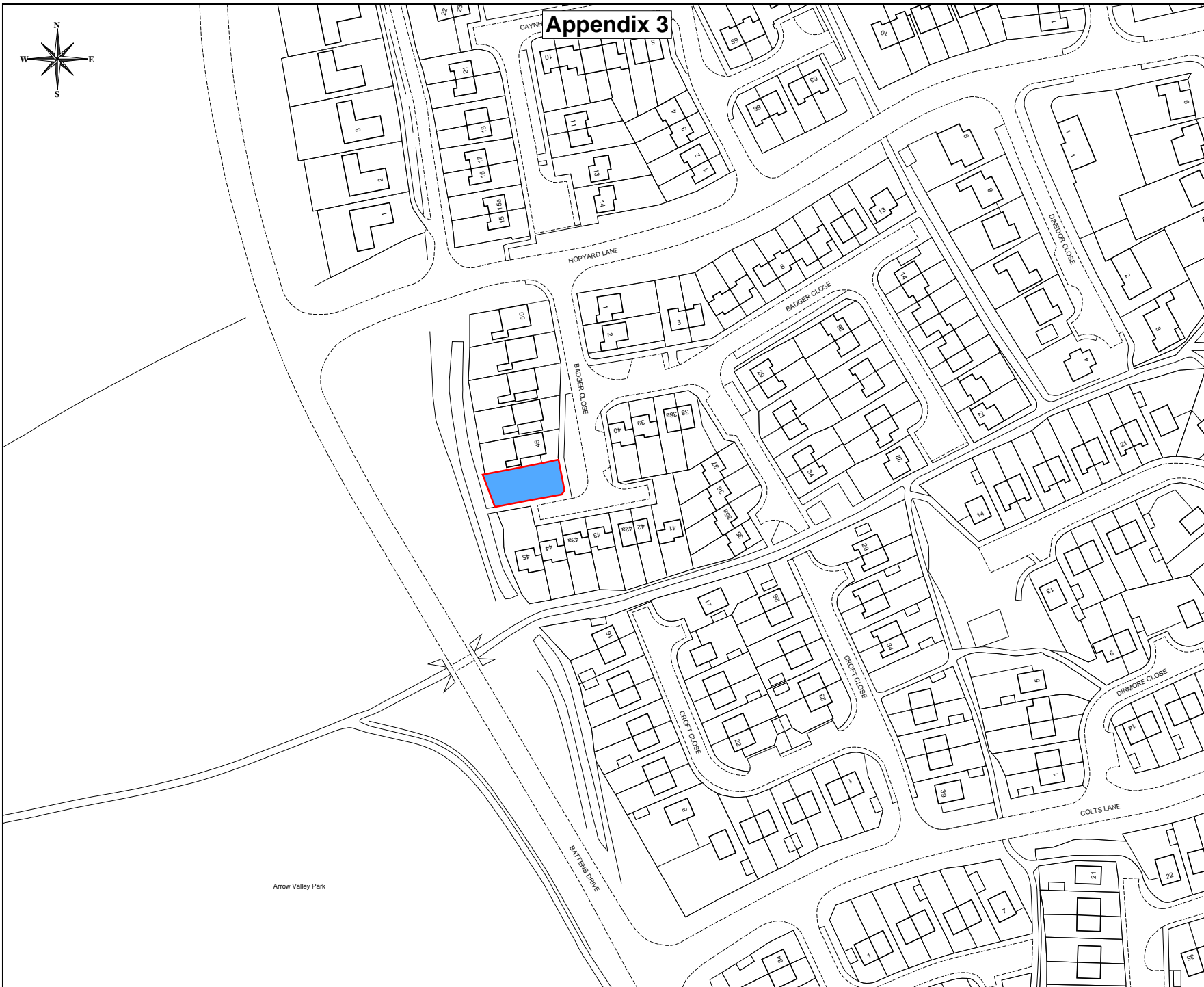


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Appendix 3



Arrow Valley Park

Key	
	Extent of site area in ownership of Redditch BC
	Existing adopted highway

Date	Rev	Details

Project:
Proposed Residential Development Adjacent No. 46 Badger Close Winyates West

Drawing:
Site Location Plan (Planning Application)

Drawn:	PTL	Scale:	1/1250 @ A3
Surveyed:	OS	Date:	Mar 2020

Drawing No: **P2049/159**

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Appendix 4



Notes:
Proposed Layout Schedule
 Site Area - 0.04 ha (0.10 acres)
 Dwelling Types
 1 No. 4 bed house
 Total = 1 No. dwelling
 Density - 25 No. dwellings/ha
 3 No. car parking spaces

Date	Rev	Details

Project:
Proposed Residential Development
 Land adjacent No. 54 Ledbury Close
 Matchborough East

Drawing:
Indicative Layout
 (Planning Application)

Drawn: PTL	Scale: 1/500 @ A3
Surveyed: OS	Date: Jul 2020

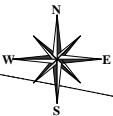
Drawing No: **P2049/164**

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Appendix 4



Key

	Extent of site area forming Planning Application
	Existing adopted highway to be Stopped Up

Date	Rev	Details

Project:
Proposed Residential Development
Land adjacent No. 54 Ledbury Close
Matchborough East

Drawing:
Site Location Plan
(Planning Application)

Drawn:	PTL	Scale:	1/1250 @ A3
Surveyed:	OS	Date:	Jul 2020

Drawing No: **P2049/165**

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EXECUTIVE**12th January 2021****Homelessness Prevention Grant Allocation for 2021/22**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Craig Warhurst
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Judith Willis – Head of Community Services
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor Consulted	No
Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 This report seeks Members approval to award the new Homelessness Prevention Grant which uplifts and combines Flexible Homelessness Support Grant and Homelessness Reduction Grant to specific schemes recommended by the Strategic Housing Manager. Additionally, it seeks to delegate authority to the Head of Community and Housing Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to allocate any underspend of Homelessness Prevention grant during 2020/21 on schemes to prevent homelessness and assist those who actually become homeless.
- 1.2 The purpose of the Homelessness Prevention Grant fund is to give local authorities control and flexibility in managing homelessness pressures and supporting those who are at risk of homelessness. The Government expects local authorities to use it to deliver the following priorities:
- To fully enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act and contribute to ending rough sleeping by increasing activity to prevent single homelessness
 - Reduce family temporary accommodation numbers through maximising family homelessness prevention
 - Eliminate the use of unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation for families for longer than the statutory six week limit.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS**2.1 The Executive Committee RESOLVE that:-**

The Homelessness Prevention Grant is allocated to the initiatives in 3.7. which meet the criteria for grant allocation

EXECUTIVE**12th January 2021**

Delegated authority be granted to the Head of Community and Housing Services following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing to award any unallocated Grant during the year or make further adjustments to current initiatives in line with Government priorities in 1.2 as necessary to ensure full utilisation of the Grant for 2021/22.

3. KEY ISSUES**Financial Implications**

- 3.1 The Council has been notified that it will receive £314,926 Homelessness Prevention Grant 2021/22 which is ring fenced by the MHCLG for the prevention of homelessness. The Temporary Accommodation Management Fee previously received through the DWP has been amalgamated into this grant.
- 3.2 The amount the Council would have ordinarily expected from the former Temporary Accommodation Management Fund of £66,380.

Legal Implications

- 3.3 The Council has statutory duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 to assist those who are threatened with homelessness or experiencing actual homelessness and has placed additional duties on the Council regarding preventing and relieving homelessness
- 3.4 The Homelessness Prevention Grant has been ring fenced to homelessness prevention and tackling homelessness by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Service / Operational Implications

- 3.5 The main provisions of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 have extended the period during which the Council has to treat someone as threatened with homelessness from 28 to 56 days. This applies to all eligible households who approach the Council for homeless prevention assistance regardless of any priority need, intentionality or local connection criteria.
- 3.6 There is also a duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants for up to 56 days. The Council's resources now have a greater focus on preventing homelessness wherever possible.
- 3.7 Proposed Allocation of Homelessness Prevention Grant of £314,926.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE****12th January 2021**

Initiatives	£ (up to)
Redditch Nightstop - Outreach Worker to support 21 to 35 year olds and prevent homelessness or work towards planned moves into suitable and sustainable accommodation.	31,500
CCP Rough Sleeper Outreach Service - 2.8 FTE posts across Bromsgrove and Redditch	53,537
Fry Accord – 18 units of supported accommodation for Ex Offenders or those likely to offend	Up to £15,000
St Basils – Provide 23 units of accommodation for young people aged 16- 23 years of age additional funding to provide 24 hour cover following a reduction in funding from County Council	14,200
Newstarts - Furniture Project to provide furniture for homeless households.	5,000
Homelessness Prevention - Spend to Save budget for use by Housing Options Officers	17,060
Temporary Accommodation Management – as 3.1 above	66,380
CCP Rapid Response Winter Weather Team – rapid outreach for any rough sleepers during the coldest months	3,500
St Basils Smallwood Almshouses - Progression Coach to offer additional support that can operate outside of normal office hours to fit around a young persons education, training and employment.	25,700
Housing Options - Tenancy Ready Officers providing training and support to housing applicants to obtain and sustain accommodation.	61,332
Total	£293,209

- 3.8 Delegated authority be granted to the Head of Community and Housing Services following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing to use any unallocated Grant during the year or make further adjustments

EXECUTIVE**12th January 2021**

to current initiatives as necessary to ensure full utilisation of the Grant for 2021/22.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.9 The Homelessness Prevention Grant will benefit customers by providing quality supported accommodation to young people and offenders, prevent homelessness and tackle rough sleeping.
- 3.10 These schemes and functions play a role in meeting the Council's Strategic Purposes:
- Help me live my life independently (including health and activity)
 - Help me find somewhere to live in my locality
 - Help me to be financially independent (including education and skills)
- 3.11 The grant will also benefit the larger community as opportunities to prevent homelessness will be maximised.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 If the recommended schemes are not approved there is a risk that more households who are threatened with homelessness, or who are in housing need, will have limited alternative options. There is also therefore the risk that they may have to make a homeless approach and this could consequently lead to the following negative outcomes:
- Increased B&B costs
 - Increased rough sleeping in the Borough
 - Impacts on physical and mental health, educational achievement, ability to work and similar through increased homelessness

- 4.2 All partner recipients of Grant will enter into a grant agreement and have regular monitoring with officers on the delivery of the service

5. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

6. KEY**AUTHOR OF REPORT**

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

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**CHANGES TO THE COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME
2021/22****EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**Date 30th November 2020**CONSULTATION ON CHANGES TO THE COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME
WITH EFFECT FROM 1ST APRIL 2021**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr David Thain
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Cllr David Thain
Relevant Head of Service	Chris Forrester
Ward(s) Affected	All wards
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 Each year the council is required to review its Council Tax Reduction Scheme in accordance with the requirements of the schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and to either maintain the scheme or replace it.
- 1.2 Council Tax Reduction (CTR) was introduced from 1 April 2013 when it replaced the central government funded Council Tax Benefit regime. From its inception, the funding available to the council from government has reduced year on year.
- 1.3 As with the majority of authorities within England, the council has changed its scheme each year to for a number of reasons including:
- Adjust the level of support in line with the funding available from central government; and
 - To aid administration.
- 1.4 This report details the changes and makes recommendation to members for the 2021/22 scheme.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Executive Committee is asked to RECOMMEND the introduction of a new income banded / grid scheme for working age applicants with effect from 1st April 2021 to implement a modern, future proofed scheme and reduce the administrative burden placed on the council by the introduction of Universal Credit

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**CHANGES TO THE COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME
2021/22****EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**Date 30th November 2020**3. KEY ISSUES****Financial Implications**

- 3.1 The current Council Tax Reduction scheme costs approximately £5.396m which is borne by the Council's Collection Fund. Costs are shared between the Council and the Major Precepting Authorities in proportion to the share of Council Tax.
- 3.2 The approach and 'shape' of the scheme is changing, and the overall approach will be to provide additional support to those households on the very lowest incomes. There is no intention to reduce the level of support available to other households. Based on current modelling, were the new scheme to be in place at the current time, the costs would be £5.717m.
- 3.3 Financial modelling has been undertaken and will continue to be undertaken throughout the project and this will be particularly important given the effect of the COVID-19 crisis on the incomes of households within the Borough Council's area.
- 3.4 Whilst the expected costs of the scheme for 2021/22 are slightly higher, the overall level of Council Tax Reduction as a proportion to Council Tax Base has reduced significantly year on year since 2013 as shown below. The overall proposed costs level for 2021/22 is considerably lower in terms of the percentage of the taxbase than when Council Tax Reduction was introduced in 2013.

Tax Year	Maximum % Reduction	Gross Council Tax £000s	Total CTR awarded £000s	CTR as % Gross CTax
2013/14	100	42,374	6,166	14.55
2014/15	80	43,571	5,272	12.10
2015/16	80	44,735	5,138	11.49
2016/17	80	46,487	5,088	10.94
2017/18	80	47,777	4,969	10.40
2018/19	80	50,312	4,913	9.77
2019/20	80	53,088	4,974	9.37
2020/21	80	55,418	5,396	9.74

Legal Implications

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

Before making a scheme, the authority must:

- (a) consult any major precepting authority which has power to issue a precept to it,

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- (b) publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit, and
- (c) consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme.

- 3.6 In addition, in order to set a new scheme, the Council is obliged to make a resolution by 11th March of the year prior to the scheme coming into place.
- 3.7 The purpose of this report is to recommend that the new scheme be implemented with effect from 1st April 2021

Background / Service Implications

- 3.8 Council Tax Reduction (CTR) was introduced by Central Government in April 2013 as a replacement for the Council Tax Benefit scheme administered on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). As part of the introduction, the Government:
- Placed the duty to create a local scheme for **Working Age** applicants with billing authorities.
 - Reduced initial funding by the equivalent of ten per cent from the levels paid through benefit subsidy to authorities under the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme; and
 - Prescribed that persons of **Pension age** would be dealt with under regulations set by Central Government and not the authorities' local scheme.
- 3.9 Since that time, funding for the Council Tax Reduction scheme has been amalgamated into other Central Government grants paid to Local Authorities and also within the Business Rates Retention regime. It is now generally accepted that it is not possible to identify the amount of funding actually provided from Central Government sources.
- 3.10 The current Council Tax Reduction scheme administered by the Council is divided into two schemes, with pension age applicants receiving support under the rules prescribed by Central Government, and the scheme for working age applicants being determined solely by the local authority.

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

The main issues with the current scheme

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

The need to assist low income households and assist in the collection of Council Tax

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

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Reduction, the reality is that, since it's introduction, low income taxpayers, the poorest households, have been unable to pay the balance leading to additional costs, court and enforcement action and, in some cases, the amounts demanded have been written off as uncollectable. For information, in 2019, Council Tax of £1.094m has been demanded from working age CTR claimants and an amount of £0.412m 37% of the amount demanded remained unpaid.

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

Council Tax Reduction and the roll out of Universal Credit

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

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

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

The need for a simplified approach to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

- 3.22 The existing scheme is based on an 'old fashioned;' means tested benefit scheme. It has major defects namely:
- It is complex for customers to understand and is based on a complex calculation of entitlement;
 - The administration for staff is complex, with staff having to request significant amounts of information from applicants;
 - Staff have to undergo significant training to be proficient in processing claims;

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- The timescales for processing applications is lengthy, mainly due to the complexity and evidence required to support the applications; and
- The administration of the scheme is costly when compared to other discounts for Council Tax.

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

The recommended approach for the 2021/22 Council Tax Reduction Scheme

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

(a) The level of support available to the poorest households:

(b) The problems with the introduction of full-service Universal Credit; and

(c) The significant increase in administration costs due to the high level of changes received in respect of Universal Credit;

3.25 Work has been ongoing throughout this year on a new scheme which is now complete. Consultation now needs to be undertaken with the public and the precepting authorities. If accepted by the Council, the new scheme will take effect from 1st April 2021.

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

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

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Discount Band	Discount	Single Person	Single person with one child	Single person with two or more children	Couple	Couple with one child	Couple with two or more children
Income Ranges							
Band 1	100%	£0 to £95.00	£0 to £150.00	£0 to £210.00	£0 to £140.00	£0 to £195.00	£0 to £255.00
Band 2	75%	£95.01 to £115.00	£150.01 to £180.00	£210.01 to £240.00	£140.01 to £160.00	£195.01 to £225.00	£255.01 to £285.00
Band 3	50%	£115.01 to £135.00	£180.01 to £210.00	£240.01 – £270.00	£160.01 to £180.00	£225.01 – £255.00	£285.01 to £315.00
Band 4	25%	£135.01 to £155.00	£210.01 to £240.00	£270.01 – £300.00	£180.01 to £200.00	£255.01 to £285.00	£315.01 to £345.00
	0%	Over £155.00	Over £240.00	Over £300.00	Over £200.00	Over £285.00	Over £345.00

- It is proposed that the highest level of discount will be at a maximum level of liability (100%), Band 1, and all current applicants that are in receipt of a 'passport benefit' such as Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance (Income Based) and Employment and Support Allowance (Income Related) receive maximum discount:
- All other discount levels are based on the applicant's (and partner's, where they have one) net income;
- The scheme allows for variation in household size with the levels of income per band increasing where an applicant has a partner, and / or dependants
- There will be no charges made where an applicant had non-dependants living with them. This is a significant change and means that the administration of the scheme will be more straightforward whilst also protecting low income families where adult sons and daughters for example remain at home;
- To encourage work, a standard £25 per week disregard will be provided against all earnings. This will take the place of the current standard disregards and additional earnings disregards. Where a family also receives a childcare disregard (for childcare costs not paid for by Central Government schemes), the income levels in the 'grid scheme' are set at a higher rate;
- Disability benefits such as Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Allowance will continue to be disregarded;

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- Where any applicant, their partner or dependant child(ren) are disabled, a further disregard of up to £40 will be given, thereby maintaining the current level of support to those with disabilities;
- Carer's Allowance and the Support Component of Employment and Support Allowance will be disregarded;
- Child benefit and Child Maintenance will continue to be disregarded;
- The total disregard on war pensions and war disablement pensions will continue;
- Extended payments will be removed;
- Second Adult Reduction will be removed; and
- Reducing the capital limit to £6,000.

How the new scheme will address the problems with the current Council Tax Reduction

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

- **The scheme will require a simplified claiming process.** All applicants will see a significant reduction in the claiming process and, where possible, Council Tax Reduction will be awarded automatically. For Universal Credit applicants *any* Universal Credit data received from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will be treated as a claim for Council Tax Reduction. Where information is received from DWP, the entitlement to Council Tax Reduction will be processed automatically without the need to request further information from the taxpayer. These changes will have the following distinct advantages namely:
 - (a) **Speed of processing** – all claims will be able to be calculated promptly and largely automatically without the need to request further information which inevitably leads to delays;
 - (b) **Maximising entitlement to every applicant.** As there will no requirement for Universal Credit applicants to apply separately for Council Tax Reduction, and for all other applicants, the claiming process will be simplified significantly. Entitlement to Council Tax Reduction will be maximised with a reduced risk of loss of discount or the need for backdating;

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- (c) **Maintenance of collection rates** – the new scheme will avoid constant changes in discount, the need for multiple changes in instalments and therefore assist in maintaining the high collection rates currently achieved. The increased level of discount will assist all those applicants on the lowest levels of income, again improving the overall collection rate;
- **The income bands are sufficiently wide to avoid constant changes in discount.** The current Council Tax Reduction scheme is very reactive and will alter even if the overall change to the person's liability is small. This is leading to constant changes in Council Tax liability, the need to recalculate monthly instalments and the requirement to issue a large number of Council Tax demands. The effect of this is that Council Tax collection is reduced. The new scheme, with its simplified income banding approach will have the following advantages:
 - Only significant changes in income will affect the level of discount awarded;
 - Council Taxpayers who receive Council Tax Reduction will not receive multiple Council Tax demands and adjustments to their instalments; and
 - The new scheme is designed to reflect a more modern approach, where any discount changes it will be effective from the day of the change rather than the Monday of the following week;

Transition to the new scheme and the Exceptional Hardship Scheme

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

Other Options considered

- 3.31 The alternative to introducing a new scheme for Council Tax Reduction from 2021/22 is to leave the existing scheme in place. This would be a short-term

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option; lead to increasing costs of administration; and in the longer term, significantly affect the collection of Council Tax and the effectiveness of the scheme to support households within the Borough Council's area.

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

3.32 As required by the legislation, the Council has consulted with both major preceptors and also the public. In the case of the public consultation, a full consultation was undertaken until 9th November 2020.

Major Preceptors

3.33 All major preceptors were requested for their views on the recommended new scheme. The Council received the responses shown in Appendix 3

Public Consultation

3.34 The public consultation produced 43 responses full details are provided in Appendix 2.

3.35 The Council suggested 11 options for changes and the overall responses were as follows:

Option 1 – The introduction of an income banded scheme to replace the current scheme for all applicants of working age

Yes: 47.62%, No: 23.81%, Don't Know: 28.57%

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

Yes: 66.67%, No: 22.22%, Don't Know: 11.11%

Option 3 – To remove non-dependant deductions from the scheme

Yes: 44.44%, No: 33.33%, Don't Know: 22.22%

Option 4 – Disregarding Carers Allowance, the support component of the Employment and Support Allowance and the housing element of Universal Credit

Yes: 70.59%, No: 23.53%, Don't Know: 5.88%

Option 5 - To reduce the maximum limit of capital from £16,000 to £6,000

Yes: 82.35 %, No: 17.65%, Don't Know: 0%

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

Yes: 82.35%, No: 11.76%, Don't Know: 5.88%

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

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Yes: 82.35%, No: 11.76%, Don't Know: 5.88%

Option 8 – Removing the Extended Reduction provision

Yes: 58.82%, No: 29.41%, Don't Know: 11.76%

Option 9 - Removal of Second Adult Reduction from the scheme

Yes: 76.47%, No: 5.88%, Don't Know: 17.65%

Option 10 – Any new claim or change in circumstances which changes Council Tax Reduction entitlement will be made from the date on which the change occurs, (rather than on a weekly basis as at present)

Yes: 100%, No: 0%, Don't Know: 0%

Option 11 – Extending the 'backdating' provisions within the scheme

Yes: 88.24%, No: 11.76%, Don't Know: 0%

- 3.36 It can be seen from the above that the overall response to the changes have been positive and that the consultees largely support the recommended new Council Tax Reduction scheme.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

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

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4. RISK MANAGEMENT

4.1 The following risks are associated with the project:

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
Property <i>No risk</i>	N/A	N/A
Community Support <i>Potential Changes to the support of some working age applicants</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where an applicant may receive less Council Tax Reduction, they may apply for additional support under the Council's Exceptional Hardship Fund • In cases, where applicants have the lowest income, they may receive more support under the proposed scheme. 	There is an opportunity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernise the current scheme; • Enable a scheme that will be fit for purpose; and • Reduce administration.
Timescales <i>It will be essential to meet project timescales if the new scheme is to be introduced for the 2021/22 financial year.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work has already been completed with scheme design and extensive modelling. 	
Project capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources have already been allocated to the project which are sufficient 	
Financial / VfM <i>Changes to the scheme could potentially lead to changes in overall scheme costs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive modelling has been undertaken to estimate the costs of the scheme. This will continue throughout the life of the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has indicated that it is not looking to make savings from scheme changes. The Council will provide additional support to those households on the

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Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
		very lowest of incomes
Legal <i>Failure to set the scheme in accordance with the legislation and failure to comply with the legal requirements for developing a new CTR scheme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project has been undertaken strictly in accordance with legislative requirements 	
Innovation <i>Failure to maximise the potential of change and automation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Throughout the implementation, we will look to take advantages of the latest automation of claims and the gathering of data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There will be more opportunity to enhance customer's online experience by receiving immediate decisions of discounts being granted.
Reputation <i>Failure to implement the new scheme on time or failure to deliver a comprehensive and robust scheme</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project is following previous successful implementations by other Local Authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is an opportunity for the Council to enhance its reputation by developing an up to date an effective Council Tax Reduction scheme

5. APPENDICES**Appendix 1 – First & Second Stage Equality Impact Assessment;****Appendix 2 – Results from the public consultation document****Appendix 3 – Responses from the Major Preceptors****AUTHOR OF REPORT**

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Equality Assessment Record

Title of Service, Policy, Procedure, Spending Review being Proposed	Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2021/22
Name of Service Area	Revenues and Benefits
Name of Officer completing this assessment	Lisa Devey & David Riley
Date Assessment Started	30 th November 2020
Name of Decision Maker (in relation to the change)	
Date Decision Made	

Overview

Provide a clear overview of the aims of the service/policy/procedure and the proposed changes being made. Will the current service users' needs continue to be met? Why is the change being proposed? What needs or duties is it designed to meet?

To introduce a simplified Council Tax Reduction scheme with effect from 1st April 2021 and to increase the level of support to the poorest households.

In addition, the implementation of Universal Credit within the area requires the Council to change its approach to Council Tax Reduction, given the high administrative burden of monthly changes and alterations to applicants' income.

There is a requirement to introduce a simplified, more supportive scheme which can be easily administered without significant additional costs being placed on the Council. The current scheme is too reactive to minor changes in applicant's income leading to constant changes in Council Tax liability.

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

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

The changes will provide the following:

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

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

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

Details

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

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

Evidence and data used to inform your equality impact assessment

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

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

The **current modelling data** is shown below:

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

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

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

Engagement and Consultation

Consultation has taken place with the Major Preceptors (Fire and Rescue, Police and the County Council). **Details of their responses are shown within Appendix 3 of the report.**

A full public consultation will be undertaken **until 9th November 2020 and the results of which are shown within Appendix 2 of the reports**

It can be seen that the consultation has received an overall positive response.

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

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

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

Impact of proposal

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

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

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

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

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

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

How will you monitor any changes identified?

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

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



Action Required	By Whom	By When	Completion Date
Recommended – It is recommended that the new proposed Council Tax Reduction scheme be implemented from 1 st April 2021			

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




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

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

1. Background to the Consultation

1. I have read the background information about the Council Tax Reduction Scheme: This question must be answered before you can continue.											
									Response Percent	Response Total	
1	Yes									97.67%	42
2	No									2.33%	1
Statistics	Minimum	1	Mean	1.02	Std. Deviation	0.15	Satisfaction Rate	2.33	answered	43	
	Maximum	2	Variance	0.02	Std. Error	0.02			skipped	0	




2. Paying for the Scheme

2. Should the Council keep the current Council Tax Reduction scheme? (Should it continue to administer the scheme as it does at the moment?)											
									Response Percent	Response Total	
1	Yes									27.59%	8
2	No									48.28%	14
3	Don't Know									24.14%	7
Statistics	Minimum	1	Mean	1.97	Std. Deviation	0.72	Satisfaction Rate	48.28	answered	29	
	Maximum	3	Variance	0.52	Std. Error	0.13			skipped	14	




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

									Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question								100.00%	3
1	Protect those on low incomes not just pensioners									
2	Money is as tight as it is now, please don't increase the Council Tax anymore. It's horrible for people who are not on benefits but are affected by this virus situation. The Government only helps those who are on benefits. There are people who have to depend on savings.									
3	Due to people's hours cut because of covid 19. People only picking up 63% of wages it is impossible to pay for council tax									
									answered	3
									skipped	40

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

4. Do you agree with this change to the scheme?										Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes								47.62%		10
2	No								23.81%		5
3	Don't Know								28.57%		6
Statistics	Minimum	1	Mean	1.81	Std. Deviation	0.85	Satisfaction Rate	40.48	answered	21	
	Maximum	3	Variance	0.73	Std. Error	0.19			skipped	22	

5. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?										Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question									100.00%	6
1	This change will mean that households with higher income will pay more - instead of low income people. Working age people should contribute to their council tax. Councils should not expect higher income households to pay in for low income households!!!!										
2	Just bring down the Council Tax people have to pay every year. The amounts keep creeping up. Not everyone can afford to burn money.										
3	Leave it as it is										
4	It would help if I could understand the survey. Why is it so complicated? I really wanted to help make changes for the poorest people in our area.										
5	Taking Pip and DLA in as income										
6	What's the evidence for why it needs to change?										
									answered	6	
									skipped	37	

6. The current Council Tax support scheme requires all working age claimants to make a contribution to their Council Tax liability. The proposed scheme will mean the claimants on the lowest income do not make payments to their Council Tax. Do you think the scheme should require a minimum contribution from each working age resident?										Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes								47.62%		10
2	No								42.86%		9
3	Don't Know								9.52%		2
Statistics	Minimum	1	Mean	1.62	Std. Deviation	0.65	Satisfaction Rate	30.95	answered	21	
	Maximum	3	Variance	0.43	Std. Error	0.14			skipped	22	

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

7. Do you agree with this change to the scheme?										
									Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes								66.67%	12
2	No								22.22%	4
3	Don't Know								11.11%	2
Statistics	Minimum	1	Mean	1.44	Std. Deviation	0.68	Satisfaction Rate	22.22	answered	18
	Maximum	3	Variance	0.47	Std. Error	0.16			skipped	25




8. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?										
									Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question								100.00%	3
1	Money is as tight as it is now, please don't increase the Council Tax anymore. It's horrible for people who are not on benefits but are affected by this virus situation. The Government only helps those who are on benefits. There are people who have to depend on savings.									
2	Parents with more children still have to pay for them: impossible to pay for council tax as well									
3	To have an income grid with an increment for every additional child. People who fall into hardship who have lots of children can't get rid of them! And children cost more to look after than people will receive in benefits. Alleviating child poverty is important.									
									answered	3
									skipped	40

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

9. Do you agree with this change to the scheme?										
									Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes								44.44%	8
2	No								33.33%	6
3	Don't Know								22.22%	4
Statistics	Minimum	1	Mean	1.78	Std. Deviation	0.79	Satisfaction Rate	38.89	answered	18
	Maximum	3	Variance	0.62	Std. Error	0.19			skipped	25



10. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?				Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question			100.00%	3
1	Please help those who are not on benefits but have to depend on savings				
2	Keep as is. Adults living in a home should all contribute where possible.				
3	I think it should remain as is to encourage every adult in the household to work and if they can't they will be receiving another benefit to contribute to the household.				
				answered	3
				skipped	40

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

11. Do you agree with this change to the scheme?										Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes							70.59%	12		
2	No							23.53%	4		
3	Don't Know							5.88%	1		
Statistics	Minimum	1	Mean	1.35	Std. Deviation	0.59	Satisfaction Rate	17.65	answered	17	
	Maximum	3	Variance	0.35	Std. Error	0.14			skipped	26	




12. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?				Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question			100.00%	3
1	I dont see why people on benefits pay less when they get given more money in their benefits than some people that actually work.				
2	Help those who are not on benefit.				
3	Any income regardless of what it is should be counted and treated like a minimum wage earner				
				answered	3
				skipped	40

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

13. Do you agree with this change to the scheme?								
							Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes						82.35%	14
2	No						17.65%	3
Statistics	Minimum	1	Mean	1.18	Std. Deviation	0.38	answered	17
	Maximum	2	Variance	0.15	Std. Error	0.09		

14. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?									
							Response Percent	Response Total	
1	Open-Ended Question						100.00%	3	
1	Just help the people who depend on their limited savings. The Council Tax is far too high :-)							answered	3
2	still have dependant children to provide for								
3	Keep it at 16k. With interest rates at historical lows they'll receive little to no income if in savings. This lump sum may be mental security or a future deposit on a little property. Divorce settlements etc. People's circumstances can change rapidly and I feel that if we take a lump sum to just 6K, People will lose all hope of ever owning their own property.								
							skipped	40	




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

15. Do you agree with this change to the scheme?										
									Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes							82.35%	14	
2	No							11.76%	2	
3	Don't Know							5.88%	1	
Statistics	Minimum	1	Mean	1.24	Std. Deviation	0.55	Satisfaction Rate	11.76	answered	17
	Maximum	3	Variance	0.3	Std. Error	0.13				

16. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?								
							Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question						100.00%	2




16. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Keep as is , otherwise may prevent or discourage people from working additional hours or working if that means they need to pay for childcare.			
2	Needs to be based on individual circumstances			
			answered	2
			skipped	41

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

17. Do you agree with this change to the scheme?							Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes						82.35%	14
2	No						11.76%	2
3	Don't Know						5.88%	1
Statistics	Minimum	1	Mean	1.24	Std. Deviation	0.55	answered	17
	Maximum	3	Variance	0.3	Std. Error	0.13	skipped	26

18. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question		100.00%	1
1	As a disabled person myself, unless the disabled person is completely incapable of doing anything or end of life then all income and outgoings should be assessed.			
			answered	1
			skipped	42

10. Option 8 – Removing the Extended Payment provision

19. Do you agree with this change to the scheme?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes			58.82%
2	No			29.41%
3	Don't Know			11.76%
			answered	17

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




									Response Percent	Response Total
Statistics	Minimum	1	Mean	1.53	Std. Deviation	0.7	Satisfaction Rate	26.47	skipped	26
	Maximum	3	Variance	0.48	Std. Error	0.17				

20. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question		100.00%	3
	1	Continue to provide 4 weeks if necessary on discretionary basis		
	2	Need that support for payments		
	3	keep the extended 4 weeks of council tax payments		
			answered	3
			skipped	40

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


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

							Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes						76.47%	13
2	No						5.88%	1
3	Don't Know						17.65%	3
Statistics	Minimum	1	Mean	1.41	Std. Deviation	0.77	answered	17
	Maximum	3	Variance	0.6	Std. Error	0.19		
							skipped	26

22. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?



			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question		0.00%	0
No answers found.				
			answered	0
			skipped	43

12. Option 10 – Any new claim or change in circumstances which changes Council Tax Reduction entitlement will be made from the date on which the change occurs, (rather than on a weekly basis as at present)

23. Do you agree with this change to the scheme?											
									Response Percent	Response Total	
1	Yes									100.00%	17
2	No									0.00%	0
3	Don't Know									0.00%	0
Statistics	Minimum	1	Mean	1	Std. Deviation	0	Satisfaction Rate	0	answered	17	
	Maximum	1	Variance	0	Std. Error	0			skipped	26	




24. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?											
									Response Percent	Response Total	
1	Open-Ended Question									0.00%	0
No answers found.											
									answered	0	
									skipped	43	




13. Option 11 – Extending the ‘backdating’ provisions within the scheme

25. Do you agree with this change to the scheme?											
									Response Percent	Response Total	
1	Yes									88.24%	15
2	No									11.76%	2
3	Don't Know									0.00%	0
Statistics	Minimum	1	Mean	1.12	Std. Deviation	0.32	Satisfaction Rate	5.88	answered	17	
	Maximum	2	Variance	0.1	Std. Error	0.08			skipped	26	

26. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?											
									Response Percent	Response Total	
1	Open-Ended Question									100.00%	1
	1	Why would people not claim within 1 month. This could have a big impact to end of year budgeting if you get an influx of claims.									
									answered	1	
									skipped	42	

14. Alternatives to changing the Council Tax Reduction Scheme

27. Increase the level of Council Tax to cover the additional administration costs										
									Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes								17.65%	3
2	No								76.47%	13
3	Don't Know								5.88%	1
Statistics	Minimum	1	Mean	1.88	Std. Deviation	0.47	Satisfaction Rate	44.12	answered	17
	Maximum	3	Variance	0.22	Std. Error	0.11			skipped	26

28. Find the additional administration costs by cutting other Council Services										
									Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes								47.06%	8
2	No								47.06%	8
3	Don't Know								5.88%	1
Statistics	Minimum	1	Mean	1.59	Std. Deviation	0.6	Satisfaction Rate	29.41	answered	17
	Maximum	3	Variance	0.36	Std. Error	0.15			skipped	26

29. Please use this space to make any other comments on the proposed scheme.										
									Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question								100.00%	3
1	In essence a simpler scheme which should deliver cost savings. As a society, those with the broadest shoulders should bare some of the weight. I hope that this new system gives a gentle hand up to those in our poorest households.									
2	Increasing council tax for those who can afford while making increased provision for those who can't afford would be fair.									
3	I can't answer 29 without understanding where money is being wasted elsewhere within the council. I believe an independent audit would identify some cost saving areas which would cover some if not all of this rise.									
									answered	3
									skipped	40

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

		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	1
1	Please consider lowering the overall Council Tax bills. We have been over charged.		
		answered	1
		skipped	42

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




		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	1
1	Please consider the people who have to depend on limited savings. Now they don't get interest income from banks. How on earth do you think they can get the money from. Every year, my biggest expenses are the Council Tax and utility bills. I can't get help at all. The high council tax (and poor service) make people depressed.		
		answered	1
		skipped	42

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

		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	2
1	penalised for been on universal credit and working, but if you want everything for free don't work, get given money and don't pay. be paid to live instead of working to earn money to live		
2	Lower Council Tax bills, please.		
		answered	2
		skipped	41

15. About You

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

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		6.25%	1
2	No		87.50%	14
3	Don't Know		6.25%	1
			answered	16

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

									Response Percent	Response Total
Statistics	Minimum	1	Mean	2	Std. Deviation	0.35	Satisfaction Rate	50	skipped	27
	Maximum	3	Variance	0.12	Std. Error	0.09				

34. What is your sex?

									Response Percent	Response Total
1	Male								18.75%	3
2	Female								62.50%	10
3	Prefer not to say								18.75%	3
Statistics	Minimum	1	Mean	2	Std. Deviation	0.61	Satisfaction Rate	50	answered	16
	Maximum	3	Variance	0.38	Std. Error	0.15				


35. Age

									Response Percent	Response Total
1	18-24								0.00%	0
2	25-34								25.00%	4
3	35-44								37.50%	6
4	45-54								12.50%	2
5	55-64								0.00%	0
6	65-74								0.00%	0
7	75-84								0.00%	0
8	85+								0.00%	0
9	Prefer not to say								25.00%	4
Statistics	Minimum	2	Mean	4.38	Std. Deviation	2.74	Satisfaction Rate	42.19	answered	16
	Maximum	9	Variance	7.48	Std. Error	0.68				




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

									Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes								12.50%	2
2	No								62.50%	10
3	Don't know								0.00%	0

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

								Response Percent	Response Total	
4		Prefer not to say						25.00%	4	
Statistics	Minimum	1	Mean	2.38	Std. Deviation	0.99	Satisfaction Rate	45.83	answered	16
	Maximum	4	Variance	0.98	Std. Error	0.25			skipped	27

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

							Response Percent	Response Total	
1	Prefer not to say						25.00%	4	
2	White British						68.75%	11	
3	White Irish						0.00%	0	
4	White Gypsy or Irish Traveller						0.00%	0	
5	Any other White background						6.25%	1	
6	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White & Black African						0.00%	0	
7	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White & Black Caribbean						0.00%	0	
8	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups - White & Asian						0.00%	0	
9	Any other multi mixed background						0.00%	0	
10	Asian or Asian British Pakistani						0.00%	0	
11	Asian or Asian British Indian						0.00%	0	
12	Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi						0.00%	0	
13	Asian or Asian British Chinese						0.00%	0	
14	Any other Asian background						0.00%	0	
15	Black African						0.00%	0	
16	British Caribbean						0.00%	0	
17	Black British						0.00%	0	
18	Any other Black background						0.00%	0	
Statistics	Minimum	1	Mean	1.94	Std. Deviation	0.9		answered	16
	Maximum	5	Variance	0.81	Std. Error	0.22		skipped	27

38. Other Ethnic Group

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question		100.00%	1

38. Other Ethnic Group		
	Response Percent	Response Total
1 Anglo Saxon and Viking		
	answered	1
	skipped	42

16. Next steps....

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REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCILEXECUTIVE COMMITTEE12th January 2021HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT RENT SETTING 2021/22

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Craig Warhurst, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Chris Forrester
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	N/A
Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

To present Members with the proposed dwelling rent increase for 2021/22.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to **RECOMMEND** to Council that

- **the actual average rent increase for 2021/22 be set as September 2020 CPI, 0.5%, plus 1% resulting in an increase of 1.5%.**

3. KEY ISSUESFinancial Implications

- 3.1 The rent increase above is in line with Government guidance on rent increases. It is set as September 2020 CPI, 0.5%, plus 1% resulting in an increase of 1.5%.
- 3.2 As members are aware the system of housing revenue account subsidy ceased on the 31st March 2012 and was replaced with a devolved system of council housing finance called self-financing. The proposal in the form of a financial settlement meant a redistribution of the 'national' housing debt. This resulted in the Council borrowing £98.9 million from the Public Works Loan Board.
- 3.3 Self-financing placed a limit (Debt Cap) on borrowing for housing purposes at the closing position for 2011/12 at £122.2 million, however, the debt cap has now been removed and officers are currently reviewing implications of this change on councils future Social housing growth strategy.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE****12th January 2021**

- 3.4 The Direction on the Rent Standard 2019 issued by the Government in February 2019 confirmed that from 1 April 2020 weekly dwelling rents can be increased in line with CPI inflation (Consumer Price Index), plus 1% for the 5 year period through to 2024/25. This is the second year following the new rent standard guidance.

2021/22

- 3.5 For 2021/22, based on the legislative changes, the actual average rent increase will be 1.5%. The average rent on a 52 week basis will be £80.63 or £87.35 on a 48 week basis. This compares to the average for 2020/21 on a 52 week basis of £79.28 and £85.89 on a 48 week basis.

Legal Implications

- 3.6 Section 21 of the Welfare and Reform Act 2016 required 'In relation to each relevant year, registered providers of social housing must secure that the amount of rent payable in respect of that relevant year by a tenant of their social housing in England is at least 1% less than the amount of rent that was payable by the tenant in respect of the preceding 12 months.' This has now come to an end, and on 4 October 2017, DCLG announced that "increases to social housing rents will be limited to CPI plus 1% for 5 years from 2020."
- 3.7 Consultation on a new rent direction took place between September and November 2018. The response to the consultation was published on 26 February 2019 with the Government confirming the October 2017 announcement.

Service/Operational Implications

- 3.8 The Council needs to approve the rents in a timely manner in order to allow officer time to notify the tenants of the annual rent. Tenants must have 28 calendar days' notice of any change to their rent charge.

Customer/Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.9 The rent increase will be applied by the same percentage regardless of property size. The equality and diversity implications of the changes will be evaluated and considered as part of the decision making process.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCILEXECUTIVE COMMITTEE12th January 2021

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 There is a risk to that rents are not approved in sufficient time to allow for notification of tenants of the increase. This will be monitored throughout the process.

5. APPENDICES

None

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

12th January 2021

COUNCIL TAX BASE 2021/22

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr. David Thain, Corporate Management Portfolio Holder
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Chris Forrester
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	Not Applicable
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

To enable Members to set the Council Tax Base for 2021/22

2. RECOMMENDATIONS**2.1 The Committee is asked to RECOMMEND that**

- 1) the calculation of the Council's Tax Base for the whole and parts of the area for 2021/22, be approved; and
- 2) in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992, the figures calculated by the Redditch Borough Council as its tax base for the whole area for the year 2020/21 be 26,158.13 and for the parts of the area listed below be:

Parish of Feckenham	367.22
Rest of Redditch	<u>25,790.91</u>
Total for Borough	<u>26,158.13</u>

3. KEY ISSUES**Financial Implications**

- 3.1 The tax base has been calculated and adjusted by the estimated amount of Council Tax Support discounts awardable.

Legal Implications

- 3.2 The Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992 require a billing authority to notify its major precepting bodies (and its Parishes, if required) of the Tax Base, for the whole or part of the area for the following financial year. The precepting bodies - Worcestershire County Council, West Mercia Police & Crime Commissioner and

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

12th January 2021

Hereford & Worcester Fire & Rescue Authority - need this information in order to calculate and notify the Borough Council of their precept requirements for 2021/22. This will enable tax setting resolutions to be finalised and bills to be produced early in March 2021.

- 3.3 The legislation also requires a billing authority to calculate the tax base for any "special areas" within its boundary. There are no such areas in the Redditch Borough.
- 3.4 It is necessary to outline the method by which these calculations have been carried out so that the Council can formally adopt them for the purposes of the 1992 Regulations.

Service/Operational Implications

- 3.5 In October 2020, form CTB1 was submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government. This analyses the draft Valuation List of properties into the various bands and then provides further details of those properties which are subject to the full charge, those entitled to discounts and those which are exempt.
- 3.6 This report is a summary of that return updated to include any known changes since November. It also makes provision for anticipated changes which could arise for a variety of reasons such as appeals, new properties or properties falling off the list. An allowance of 2.00% has been made for non-collection of the tax.
- 3.7 The Council is required to set a Council Tax Base each year, this forms part of the process of setting the following year budget. Failure to do so will result in the Council not being a Well Managed Organisation.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.8 The Tax Base for 2021/22 has been calculated to be **26,158.13**. Once this has been agreed, the County Council, Police & Crime Commissioner and Fire Authority will be notified and the figures will be used in the setting of the Council Tax to be presented to the Executive Committee and approved by the Council in February 2021.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

There is no identified risk associated with the proposal contained in this report.

5. APPENDICES

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

12th January 2021

None

6. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Held within Revenue Services

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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WORCESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS

**VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE
WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD**

THURSDAY, 19TH NOVEMBER 2020, AT 4.30 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors H. Dyke (Chairman), J. Squires (Vice-Chairman), A. D. Kent, H. J. Jones, J. Raine, N. Nazir, E. Stokes (during minute no's 20/20 to 26/20), D. Morris and P. Dyke

Officers: Mr. S. Wilkes, Ms. C. Flanagan, Mr C. Forrester, Ms K. Goldey, Ms. K. Lahel, Mr. M. Cox, Mr. D. Mellors, Mrs. P. Ross and J Gresham

Partner Officers: Mr. L. Griffiths, Worcester City Council, Mr. P. Merrick, Malvern Hills District Council and Wychavon District Council and Mr. M. Parker, Wyre Forest District Council

20/20 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor T. Wells, Malvern Hills District Council and Councillor M. Johnson, Worcester City Council.

21/20 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

22/20 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board held on 1st October 2020, were submitted.

RESOLVED that minutes of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board meeting held on 1st October 2020, be approved as a correct record.

23/20 **INFORMATION REPORT - THE INCREASE IN CHARGES BY WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Members received an information report on the increase in charges by Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC).

The Head of Regulatory Services reminded Members that at the Board meeting held on 1st October 2020, during the presentation of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Budgets 2020/2021; Members had raised some concern with regard to the additional partner liabilities for 2020/2021 in respect of a £13k increase in accommodation

charges and ICT hosting of WRS from Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC).

As requested by Members, the information report before Members provided some background information and the process that was followed leading to this increase.

In 2014/15, before the service moved to Wyre Forest House, a search for accommodation across the local government family in the county was undertaken, as Worcester City Council had decided to sell its accommodation that WRS occupied.

WRS was offered space in Redditch Library, Wyre Forest House and the old Police Station in Pershore. A review concluded that the Wyre Forest offer was the most cost effective and, with office space that was ready to move into without any additional work, it was the easiest to adopt. WRS moved into Wyre Forest House in March 2015.

At the end of January 2020, as Head of Service, he was approached by the WFDC IT Manager and their Director of Finance as the original agreement for accommodation and IT support was coming to an end. The initial conversation covered only IT provision but, in the first week of February, it was confirmed that a similar uplift would be requested for the accommodation. The increases were based on the compounded impact of the rate of inflation over that period. The table below demonstrates how colleagues at WFDC arrived at their final figures:

Year	RPI Annual %
2019	2.6
2018	2.7
2017	4.1
2016	2.5
2015	1.2

Applying these figures on an annual basis looking backwards led to a compound figure of £50,000 per annum for IT provision (up from £44,000,) and £61,000 per annum for accommodation (up from £54,000.) These figures were rounded, so the overall increase to the nearest £1,000 was £13,000.

As Head of Service, he did express his concerns that coming at this point in the year made it difficult to incorporate these increases into the WRS budget as it had been set for the year already. WFDC officers apologised for this issue but as the Head of Service he had had to agree. This was not the first time that the need for the partnership to set a budget in November had caused an issue for one or other partner authorities in their own budget setting process.

The service provided by WFDC IT team was very good and, as part of the annual staff survey, staff still commented on how changing ICT host

had improved their experience of work based IT solutions. The office accommodation at Wyre Forest House was also of an excellent standard, better than many other public buildings in the County.

As Head of Service, he further consulted with the officer members of the Board. Whilst they expressed their disappointment that WFDC had asked for an increase, they did not object outright and had reluctantly accepted that an inflation only increase was difficult to resist.

The potential availability of other suitable accommodation within the local government family, was carried out, however, it was clear that nothing suitable was available at that time with sufficient quantity of space and desk numbers, even before a consideration of cost was made. Only the old Police Station in Pershore remained available and that needed some work to bring it up to standard in order to be suitable. Worcestershire County Council were also approached regarding space at County Hall, but at this time, there was not sufficient available.

Members should also be aware that, officers had to consider the impact on disruptions to the service and the workforce; plus a re-location would also entail officers becoming entitled to a disbursement payment equivalent to the mileage cost of any additional home to work travel for a period of one year after the move. This was a not un-substantial amount the last time the service had had to move from Worcester City Council.

On balance, it was felt that the sensible solution was to pay the uplift and continue with the current arrangements. The increase in spend was within his remit for decision making.

In terms of the service's accommodation, the accommodation and the service received from WFDC ICT was excellent. The partnership was now on a rolling contract that would be reviewed annually.

One of the results of Covid-19 was the increasing ubiquitous nature of working from home and this should give Councils the opportunity to re-consider staff working practices and accommodation needs. This could lead to partner authorities having further capacity available that may be suitable for WRS.

However, with the current pandemic and the way in which resources were stretched, it would not be practical to consider this for 2021/22. From February 2021, the Management Team would certainly explore options for the following year and review the number of desks currently available / in use and realistically look to reduce those numbers.

The Head of Regulatory Services further commented that originally officer members of the Board had indicated that their preferred option was to simply include this increase in the income targets for the year. Given the current situation however, he had felt that it was worth asking Board Members to consider whether they would make an uplift to the budget to cover this.

If the Board did not wish to agree to uplift the budget by this amount, the option of reverting to fund this with income remained.

Councillor A. D. Kent, Bromsgrove District Council, took the opportunity to thank the Head of Regulatory Services for his detailed report. However, he was still disappointed that the democratic process had failed and that he had had to make a decision. The Head of Regulatory Services had been put in a difficult position having to make such a decision so late in the day, and he fully understood the position that the Head of Regulatory Services had been put in.

In response to Councillor Kent, the Head of Finance and Customer Services commented that partner authorities based their budgets differently. Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) and Redditch Borough Council (RBC) did not use RPI Annual percentage, they tended to set their budgets using CPI and the actual costs of delivering a service.

The Head of Regulatory Services further commented that BDC, as the host authority for WRS had not increased their charges since the inception of WRS in 2010. The costs had originally included ICT costs, which had over time been reduced when WRS moved into their current accommodation in 2015/2016. Staffing numbers across WRS had reduced by half. Members stated that the costs of BDC hosting the shared service was something that needed to be discussed with all partner authorities and Board Members.

Members were in agreement and expressed their disappointment that very little notice of a 12% increase had been given to WRS. Members also commented that officers needed to assess the costs of disrupting the service against moving to other premises in the future. However, Members also agreed that a review of the office accommodation needs of WRS was definitely needed going forward.

The Chairman took the opportunity to inform the Board that, she had fed back the comments and concerns raised at the last meeting of the Board to her respective authority.

The Head of Regulatory Services further informed the Board that the current contract with Wyre Forest District Council was due to expire on 23rd March 2021; therefore, there had not been sufficient time to look at alternative accommodation; and realistically officers were dealing with the current pandemic. However, between now and February 2021 officers would look at the number of desks required; and that going forward his management team would conduct a rigorous review of the requirements of the service with a potential reduction for 2022/2023. The service had tried to keep as much of the hosting costs, as possible, within the local government family.

RECOMMENDED that the additional partner liabilities for 2020/2021 in relation to the increase in accommodation charges and ICT hosting from Wyre Forest District Council, be approved as follows:-

Bromsgrove District Council	£2k
Malvern Hills District Council	£2k
Redditch Borough Council	£2k
Worcester City Council	£2k
Wychavon District Council	£3k
Wyre Forest District Council	£2k
Total	£13k

24/20

INFORMATION REPORT - COVID ACTIVITY COSTINGS

Members were provided with an information report on Covid Activity costings, as requested by Board Members at the last meeting of the Board on 1st October 2020. During that meeting Board Members had thanked officers for all of the hard work they were doing on Covid related activities and had suggested that they would like to see additional funding being made available to support the service.

The Head of Regulatory Services explained that the WRS Management Team were giving active consideration to bidding to the Chief Executives for additional resources but that a paper would be brought forward to outline current spending levels on Covid related activity.

When the first lockdown commenced at the end of March 2020, it quickly became clear that local authorities were going to incur significant additional costs for work related to controlling the pandemic. The Secretary of State had made an announcement declaring that both Environmental Health Officers and Trading Standards Officers would be responsible for enforcement of the business closure and control provisions that required some businesses to close, others to operate by delivery only and moved many hospitality businesses towards takeaway only activities.

Bromsgrove District Council, the host authority had immediately asked all of its services to record all Covid related activity so that estimates of cost could be given to central government, in order that support payments might match the actual costs. WRS officers were already required to record the time taken on the majority of their activities, so it was a relatively simple exercise to add some additional coding into their

time recording system and to ask officers to use these to record how much time was spent on Covid related activities.

Because we have our fee earner model for charging out WRS officers for commercial activities it was a very straight forward exercise to convert the figures to a monetary amount that reflected the full cost of the officer undertaking the activities.

The Head of Regulatory Services drew Members' attention to the table at Appendix A to the report, which contained the monthly totals, starting in April 2020 for the cost of undertaking Covid related activities on behalf of the six councils and the cost of the team embedded in the Local Outbreak Response Team.

Given the nature of the pandemic, WRS had not sought to allocate these costs geographically to individual partners. This would go against the "One Worcestershire" approach that all seven councils in the County had taken towards tackling the pandemic.

Members will note that these amounts are not insubstantial. The service had been fortunate that the Food Standards Agency had opted to put a moratorium on routine food hygiene inspections at the beginning of the pandemic. This allowed for the vast majority of staff resource that would otherwise have been dedicated to food related work to be put into the pandemic response.

As the economy re-opened, with the service being in essence an economic regulator, the pressures on the service and its staff had grown. Balancing business as usual activity had become more difficult and additional agency staffing resource had been brought in to support the efforts. This would be funded by the monies due from Worcestershire County Council to cover the cost WRS officers who formed part of the Local Outbreak Response Team. These pressures will only grow as numbers of cases rise and it was almost certain that more capacity would be required for the service to both deliver pandemic controls and respond to what we all referred to as "business as usual" activities.

The Head of Regulatory Services highlighted that the Community Environmental Health team had been re-organised to deliver both Covid controls and an embedded unit within the Local Outbreak Response team, as detailed in the table on page 22 of the main agenda report.

Originally 3 members of the Technical Services team were moved into Community Environmental Health to help deal with capacity issues. They had now moved back into Technical Services to deliver income generation activities.

Work in the Local Outbreak Response team was being funded by monies from Worcestershire County Council (WCC) that central government had already provided for the disease response. This

covered the cost of the additional capacity brought in to deal with business as usual activities.

WCC was currently awaiting confirmation from central government on further funding bids to provide additional capacity for backwards contact tracing within the Local Outbreak Response Team, for delivery by WRS; and for dealing with referrals from the national contact tracing system to deal with those people who had a positive test but had not responded to calls from the national system. This was known as “lost to follow up.” WRS would pick up this work along with district colleagues to deliver this service aspect, including door knocking where local telephone calls did not lead to a response.

As Members will be aware, WRS had been entrusted with delivering the project referred to nationally as Covid marshals and locally as Covid Advisors. The district councils had pooled this funding for WRS to deliver this advisory work, but the funding was also earmarked for additional enforcement work. A proportion of the funding could be used to cover the cost of things like out-of-hours enforcement, so we avoided being short of capacity during the week and additional capacity generally. Work had commenced on recruiting this team and the first deployments took place over the weekend of 7th/ 8th November 2020.

This report should serve as a reminder to partners that, although many areas of local government are striving to move into Recovery phase, WRS remained an embedded part of the Response phase and would be for the medium term.

WRS would do its best to contribute to the Recovery phase as it did during last year’s winter flooding events.

Members thanked the Head of Regulatory Services for a really useful report and stated that WRS were really central to the response to the Covid pandemic.

In response to Members’ questions, the Head of Regulatory Services drew Members’ attention to the table of expenditure as detailed on page 23 of the main agenda report.

There were 6/7 FTE (full time equivalent) officers working on Covid compliance and 3/4 on outbreak response. So approximately 1/3rd of that amount £70k would be covered by the monies received from WCC, who had agreed to £162k of funding up to the end March 2021. £120k costs of Covid enforcement had been undertaken by the district councils.

In response to Members, the Technical Services Manager explained that Covid advisors were ‘paired up’ and spread out, with particular attention paid to any areas with high rates of infection that have been flagged up. Enforcement action could be taken if deemed necessary. Officers were responding where there were identified areas of concern and in areas with rising numbers. Marshalls were deployed to areas with the highest

number of reported cases. Covid Marshalls had been received well by businesses, shoppers and customers, who had welcomed the provision of face masks when they had forgotten theirs.

Members took the opportunity to thank officers and to recognise the good work that WRS officers were doing in order to help deal with the current pandemic.

The Environmental Health & Trading Standards Manager further commented that officers took the approach 'engage, educate and encourage', enforcement was a last resort.

RESOLVED that the Information Report on Covid Activity Costings, be noted.

25/20

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES - REVENUE MONITORING APRIL - SEPT 2020

Members were asked to consider the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Revenue Monitoring for April to September 2020.

The Head of Finance & Customer Services, Bromsgrove District Council, introduced the report and in doing so drew Members' attention to the Recommendations as detailed on pages 25 and 26 of the main agenda report.

Members were asked to note that the revised budget 2020/2021 was based on the recommended budget funding as stated in agenda item number 4, with regards to the increase in ICT and Rent at Wyre Forest House.

Members were further informed that the report showed a projected outturn 2020/2021 of £17k deficit. This was an estimation to the year-end based on the following assumptions:-

- There were two vacant posts within the service, we have assumed no recruitment to the Business & Relationship Manager for the current year to assist in reducing the projected outturn deficit. This will need to be reviewed at the end of quarter 3. The other vacant post was a Regulatory Apprentice which we hoped to recruit to in the near future.
- If April to Sept spend on pest control continued on the same trend for the rest of year, there would be an overspend on this service of £16k. WRS officers would continue to monitor and analyse this spend and advise of final recharges for 2020/21 as soon as possible. The projected outturn figure to be funded by partners was:-

Redditch Borough Council	£9k
Wychavon District Council	£7k

Members' attention was drawn to the figures detailed in Appendix 1 to the report:

- Savings due to employees working on Local Outbreak Response Team.
- Essential calibration on noise monitoring.
- Reduction in dogs straying and the dog warden had been taken in house.
- Bereavement / Works in Default to be charged to relevant partners.

The Head of Regulatory Services further explained that with regard to the local Covid outbreak team, WRS had started with an estimate of £162k, for the year. The figures quoted in the table were up to the end of October, so there were four more months to go. Staff involved in local outbreak contact tracing work and look to follow up work would have to be included. Therefore, this could go above £181k, back filling of a certain amount of normal WRS business activities would also have to be factored in.

The Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager clarified that officers were not seeing a significant increase or trend in bereavement costs due to the current pandemic.

With regard to Pest Control, the Technical Services Manager stated that there were 3 partner authorities that currently provided a subsidised pest control service.

RESOLVED that

- a) the final financial position for the period April to September 2020, be noted;
- b) partner authorities be informed of their liabilities for 2020/2021 in relation to Bereavements as follows:-

Council	Apr–Sept Actual Bereavements £000	20 for
Redditch Borough Council	5	
Malvern Hills District Council	2	
Worcester City Council	7	
Bromsgrove District Council	5	
Total	19	

- c) partner authorities are informed of their liabilities for 2020/2021 in relation to Pest Control as follows:-

Council	Estimated Projected Outturn Recharge in Relation to Pest Control 2020/21 £000
Redditch Borough Council	9
Wychavon District Council	7
Total	16

- d) partner authorities are informed of their liabilities for 2020/2021 in relation to three additional Technical Officers as follows:-

Council	Estimated Projected Outturn 2020/21 Tech Officer Income Generation £000	Estimated Projected Outturn 2020/21 Tech Officer Animal Activity £000	Estimated Projected Outturn 2020/21 Gull Control £000
Redditch Borough Council	3	2	
Malvern Hills District Council	2	9	
Worcester City Council	2	2	35
Bromsgrove District Council	2	6	
Wychavon District Council	3	9	
Wyre Forest District Council	2	5	
Total	14	34	35

26/20

WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BUDGET 2021/22 - 2023/24

The Head of Finance & Customer Services, Bromsgrove District Council, introduced the report and in doing so highlighted that the recommendations were caveated as starting point assuming that the base budget figure for 2020/2021 had been updated to include all of the increases mentioned at the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board meeting in October 2020, including the additional funding for Wyre Forest District Council for accommodation and ICT costs.

The Head of Finance & Customer Services further drew Members' attention to the Recommendations as detailed on pages 33 and 34 of the main agenda report.

Members were further informed that the following assumptions had been made in relation to the projections:

- 2% pay award across all staff for 2021/22 – 20223/24. This will be subject to the National Pay Negotiations that are ongoing and therefore the final position will reflect any formally agreed increases, the budget also includes any employee entitled to an incremental increase.
- No inflationary increases in supplies and services, premises or transport.
- Pension back-funding will be paid by all partners.

The unavoidable salary pressures were not able to be met currently by WRS making additional income, in the main due to the pressures created by the pandemic and the response to it. The normal sources of income (local authorities,) were not currently focused on the areas of work that WRS delivered for income generation purposes and WRS officers were at the heart of the response locally. Therefore, an increase to partner funding would be required, as detailed on page 35 of the main agenda report.

Clearly, should the situation with the pandemic improve in the second half of 2021/2022, WRS Officers would be looking to move forward with the programme of income generation and the benefits of this may be seen in an underspend that could be returned to partners at year end. Hence, an upfront investment this year would give certainty to the service and the partners in terms of cost, with the potential for a return on investment if the pandemic situation eased.

In addition to the base budget there were three additional technical officers working on income generation, animal activity and gull control. Officers were unable to include these officers into the base budget as the income generation officer was a temporary agreement agreed by partner councils and the animal activity and gull control officer recharge percentage basis was different to the agreed partner recharge allocations.

RECOMMENDED that partner authorities approve the following for 2020/2021:

- 1.1 the 2021/22 gross expenditure budget of £3,739k as shown in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 the 2021/22 income budget of £529k as shown in Appendix 1.
- 1.3 the revenue budget and partner percentage allocations for 2021/2022 onwards:

Council	£'000	Revised %
Bromsgrove District Council	468	14.59
Malvern Hills District Council	412	12.82
Redditch Borough Council	564	17.57
Worcester City Council	532	16.58
Wychavon District	748	23.29
Wyre Forest District Council	486	15.15
Total	3,210	

- 1.4 the additional partner liabilities for 2021/2022 in relation to unavoidable salary pressure.

Bromsgrove District Council	£9k
Malvern Hills District Council	£8k
Redditch Borough Council	£10k
Worcester City Council	£10k
Wychavon District Council	£14k
Wyre Forest District Council	£9k
Total	£60k

- 1.5 the additional partner liabilities for 2021/2022 in relation to three Technical Officers.

Council	Tech Officer Income Generation £000	Tech Officer Animal Activity £000	Tech Officer Gull Control £000
Bromsgrove District Council	5	6	
Malvern Hills District Council	4	10	
Redditch Borough Council	6	2	
Worcester City Council	5	4	30
Wychavon District Council	7	9	
Wyre Forest District Council	5	5	
Total	32	36	30

27/20

ACTIVITY & PERFORMANCE DATA - QUARTERS 1 AND 2

The Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager, WRS, presented the Activity and Performance Data for Quarters 1 and 2, 2020/2021; and in doing so highlighted that the first half of the year had seen extraordinary circumstances with officers helping to control the pandemic.

Members' attention was drawn to the following:-

Activity Data

The Food Standards Agency suspended the Food Hygiene inspection programme at the beginning of lockdown in March and this continued throughout the second quarter. This explained the low number of inspections, reflecting that the service was engaging mainly with new entrants to the sector or those wanting re-rating. Clearly any allegations of serious misconduct were also followed up and food service requests did show an increase through the quarter. Numbers of licensing complaints and enquires began to grow during quarter 2, in line with the re-opening of licensed premises and the growth in wider licensed activities. Applications also began to rise to the kind of levels one might expect.

Planning application numbers rose during quarter 2, going back towards their normal trajectory as the economy re-opened. Environmental Information Requests, often associated with the planning and development process were also returning to

more normal levels during this period.

As we always see during the summer months, nuisance/ pollution complaints showed their characteristic peak. Noise complaint numbers exceeded the number for the same period in the previous two years, this time by a significant proportion, 12% or more above the previous two year's equivalent periods.

Performance

Quarter 2 saw a broader report of performance measures than the starting quarter. The year continued reasonably well from a customer satisfaction perspective with the non-business customer measure at 74.4% and business customers at 97.7%. Given the pressures on the service during the first six months of the year, this was seen as good. At the same point last year, customer satisfaction was at 73.8% and business satisfaction at 98.3%. People who felt better equipped to deal with issues was at 72.3% compared with 63% this time last year.

Processing of taxi driver license renewals remained good with a county-wide average of 97.4% done within 5 working days.

Compliments outnumber complaints by 3:1 (24:78) and staff sickness was looking reasonably good at 0.95 days per FTE. This was better than the previous year's figure at Q1 (2.91 days per FTE.)

Income as a proportion of budget was at 4.37%. This was as expected down on previous years due to the pandemic and our usual customer based of local authorities not requiring our services at the same level. At the same point last year, just over £160,000 had come in compared with just over £130,000 this year. maintain comparability, we have not included income for measures to combat the pandemic in the calculation.

The Chairman took the opportunity to thank officers for a comprehensive report.

RESOLVED that the Activity and Performance Data Quarters 1 and 2, 2020/2021, be noted and that Members use the contents of the report in their own reporting back to their respective partner authority.

28/20

INFORMATION REPORT - IT UPDATE

The Technical Services Manager, WRS, presented the Board with an Information Report that provided an update on IT, following a request from the Board at the meeting held in October 2020.

The Technical Services Manager referred Members to the Gantt chart as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report.

The first phase of replacement laptops had been completed. Officers continued to work on improving the look of the WRS website on Umbraco 8. Discussions were taking place with the host authority,

Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) on whether WRS would be able to take payments on behalf of the other partner authorities.

Councillor A. D. Kent, BDC, thanked officers for the brilliant update and Gantt chart, as this detailed what had been delivered. Councillor Kent also took the opportunity to thank the Head of Regulatory Services for taking the time to have further discussions with him, regards the concerns he had raised at the last meeting of the Board.

RESOLVED that the Information Report – IT Update, be noted.

29/20

THE NEW STATUTORY STANDARDS FOR TAXIS AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLES

The Acting Licensing and support Services Manager, WRS, provided the Board with a report that detailed the new statutory standards for Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles.

Members were informed that in July 2020, following a number of high profile enquiries into criminal offences involving taxi drivers, the Secretary of State for Transport had issued the long awaited, new 'Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards' to licensing authorities aimed at safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

The standards set out a range of measures to protect passengers and the Department for Transport would require an update from each licensing authority by January 2021.

The recommendations in the Standards were detailed on page 84 of the main agenda report.

WRS officers believed that, in light of the recommendations set out in the Standards, that all of the district councils' current hackney carriage and private hire licensing policies would need to be reviewed carefully with a view to implementing the changes. This review would ultimately lead to the drafting of a new cohesive policy document that brought together each district council's procedures on taxi and private hire vehicle licensing. This would include, but not be limited to, policies on convictions, a "fit and proper" person test, licence conditions and vehicle standards.

RESOLVED that the new statutory standards for Taxis and Private Hire vehicles and the guidance as referred to in the report, be noted.

The meeting closed at 6.03 p.m.

Chairman

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Account description	Revised Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget
	2020 / 2021	2021 / 2022	2022 / 2023	2023 / 2024
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Employees				
Monthly salaries	2,848	2,935	3,012	3,090
Training for professional qualifications	0	0	0	0
Medical fees (employees')	2	2	2	2
Employers' liability insurance	25	25	25	25
Employees' professional subscriptions	2	2	2	2
Sub-Total - Employees	2,877	2,964	3,041	3,119
Premises				
Rents	58	58	58	58
Room hire	2	2	2	2
Trade Waste	1	1	1	1
Sub-Total - Premises	61	61	61	61
Transport				
Vehicle repairs/maint'ce	3	3	3	3
Diesel fuel	8	8	8	8
Licences	1	1	1	1
Contract hire of vehicles	4	4	4	4
Vehicle insurances	5	5	5	5
Van Lease	9	9	9	9
Fares & Car Parking	5	5	5	5
Car allowances	70	70	70	70
Sub-Total - Transport	105	105	105	105
Supplies & Service				
Equipment - purchase/maintenance/rental	22	22	22	22
Materials	9	9	9	9
Clothing, uniforms & laundry	2	2	2	2
Training fees	23	23	23	23
General insurances	19	19	19	19
Printing and stationery	17	17	17	17
Books and publications	2	2	2	2
Postage/packaging	11	11	11	11
ICT	40	40	40	40
Telephones	21	21	21	21
Taxi Tests	22	22	22	22
CRB Checks (taxi)	26	26	26	26
Support service recharges	100	100	100	100
Support service recharges - ICT	50	50	50	50
Sub-Total - Supplies & Service	363	363	363	363

	Budget 2020 / 2021 £000's	Budget 2021 / 2022 £000's	Budget 2022 / 2023 £000's	Budget 2023 / 2024 £000's
Contractors				
Consultants / Contractors' fees/charges/SLA's	227	229	229	229
Advertising (general)	5	5	5	5
Grants and subscriptions	13	13	13	13
Sub-Total - Contractors	245	247	247	247
Income				
Grants / Primary Authority / Food Training / Contaminated Land / Stray Dogs / Ad Hoc	-370	-372	-372	-372
Funding approved for unavoidable Salary Pressures				
Sub-Total - Income	-370	-372	-372	-372
Income				
Funding from partners for Technical Officers	-70	-97	-100	-104
Sub-Total - Income	-70	-97	-100	-104
Additional Income				
Income to be found due to unavoidable salary pressures		-60	-134	-208
Sub-Total - Income	0	-60	-134	-208
DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP BUDGET	3,210	3,210	3,210	3,210
21-22 Partner Percentages				
Bromsgrove District Council	14.59%			
Malvern Hills District Council	12.82%			
Redditch Borough Council	17.57%			
Worcester City Council	16.58%			
Wychavon District Council	23.29%			
Wyre Forest District Council	15.15%			
Total	100.00%			

	Budget	Contribution Technical Officers	Partner Contribution	Unavoidable Salary Pressures	Total Partner Contribution
	2021 / 2022	2021 / 2022	2021 / 2022	2021 / 2022	2021 / 2022
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Budget 2021 / 22					
Bromsgrove District Council	468	11	479	9	488
Malvern Hills District Council	412	14	426	8	434
Redditch Borough Council	564	8	572	10	582
Worcester City Council	532	39	571	10	581
Wychavon District Council	748	16	764	14	778
Wyre Forest District Council	486	10	496	9	505
Total	3,210	98	3,308	60	3,368

	Budget	Contribution Technical Officers	Partner Contribution	Unavoidable Salary Pressures	Total Partner Contribution
	2022 / 2023	2022 / 2023	2022 / 2023	2022 / 2023	2022 / 2023
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Budget 2022 / 23					
Bromsgrove District Council	468	12	480	20	500
Malvern Hills District Council	412	14	426	18	444
Redditch Borough Council	564	8	572	23	595
Worcester City Council	532	39	571	22	593
Wychavon District Council	748	18	766	31	797
Wyre Forest District Council	486	10	496	20	516
Total	3,210	101	3,311	134	3,445

	Budget	Contribution Technical Officers	Partner Contribution	Unavoidable Salary Pressures	Total Partner Contribution
	2023 / 2024	2023 / 2024	2023 / 2024	2023 / 2024	2023 / 2024
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Budget 2023 / 24					
Bromsgrove District Council	468	12	480	31	511
Malvern Hills District Council	412	15	427	28	455
Redditch Borough Council	564	8	572	36	608
Worcester City Council	532	40	572	34	606
Wychavon District Council	748	18	766	48	814
Wyre Forest District Council	486	10	496	31	527
Total	3,210	103	3,313	208	3,521

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 3rd December,
2020

Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

Present:

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

Also Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer - Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships
Councillor Nyear Nazir - Portfolio Holder for Community Services and Regulatory Services
Councillor Mike Rouse - Portfolio Holder for Leisure

Officers:

Sue Hanley, Mike Dunphy, Ostap Paparega, Rebecca Pritchett and Mary Worsfold

Democratic Services Officers:

Jess Bayley and Jo Gresham

47. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Pattie Hill.

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of any Party Whip.

49. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

Chair

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the minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 22nd October 2020 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

50. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no registered public speakers on this occasion.

51. CIVIL CONTINGENCIES ANNUAL REPORT

The Civil Contingencies Manager presented the Civil Contingencies Annual Report and in doing so highlighted the following to Members:

- It had been recommended in 2018 that the Corporate Emergency Plan be updated annually. Officers confirmed that this year the plan had been updated in March 2020.
- The Storm Dennis floods were considered a significant incident during 2020 and that all learning from that incident had been captured following a detailed debrief.
- A debrief exercise was carried out in respect the Council's response to of Covid-19 after the first lockdown. Initially the uptake in response was low due to the heavy workload of officers. However, once the information was received 18 recommendations were made and accepted by the Chief Executive. All actions, except for one, were undertaken within 4 weeks. It was clarified that due to the nature of the outstanding recommendation and the way in which it needed to be implemented the recommendation would be ongoing and monitored closely.

The Chair invited Councillor Nazir as Portfolio Holder for Community Services and Regulatory Services to comment on the report. She thanked officers for their work during a difficult period.

The Deputy Chief Executive reported to Members that the CMT continued to meet three times a week to discuss any Covid-19 related issues including business continuity and service-related issues.

RESOLVED that

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the Civil Contingencies Annual Report be noted.

52. SKILLS IN THE LOCAL WORKFORCE - VERBAL PRESENTATION

The Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWEDR) presented a verbal update in respect of Skills in the Local Workforce. During the presentation, the following was highlighted for Members consideration:

- Support programmes around employment around skills and apprenticeships were currently being developed by NWEDR
- There were a number of providers who delivered courses for 16-21-year olds. It was reported that the skillsets targeted in the courses included CV preparation, communications and working in teams. In addition to these, there were topic specific courses such as customer service and construction along with Maths and English. Independent providers delivered these courses as did the Heart of Worcestershire College (HoW).
- Worcestershire County Council provided a skills site support through their website. A Skills Hub service had recently been launched and was available to employers and individuals.
- A number of apprenticeship grants were available to young people and that initiatives were in place to enable young people to be matched with suitable placements and vacancies within the Borough.
- That the provision of courses from HoW College was aligned with the supply and demand from local businesses and employers. Officers reported that there were 4 top sectors that accounted for employment in the Borough. These were identified as manufacturing, wholesale and retail, professional services and human health and social work. It was reported that new sectors were also emerging including digital technology and artificial intelligence and although these might have an impact on manufacturing and retail they would also provide an enormous opportunity for young people. Officers advised that it was important, to ensure that young people were equipped with the correct skills and knowledge to undertake jobs within these sectors. Members were advised that the college did provide some relevant

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courses in these areas but that discussions were ongoing to ensure that the right infrastructure was in place to face challenges and maximise potential opportunities.

- That initiatives and support measures were communicated to local businesses and individuals through various business networks and channels. Although it was considered a challenge to reach every single business and individual.

Members were interested in whether intervention could be made earlier in young peoples' education in respect of training and skills available. It was confirmed that there was an initiative that was currently underway in the Borough named 'Opening Doors to Business'. This scheme promoted the opportunities to a greater number of schools across a variety of ages. It was reported that an initiative called 'Stem Works' was being undertaken by WCC in Primary Schools.

The Chair invited Councillor Dormer, as Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships to comment on the presentation. He acknowledged that there were challenges in this area for the Borough and that the perception of available employment in the Town needed to change going forward.

The Chair questioned whether local businesses could do more to engage with young people and it was agreed that although there were projects in place, such as mentoring, to increase engagement in the Borough more needed to be done regarding the provision of relevant courses in order to close the skills gap in the Borough.

RESOLVED that

the Skills in the Local Workforce presentation be noted.

53. CHURCH GREEN DRAFT CONSERVATION AREA AND MANAGEMENT PLAN CONSULTATION - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Principal Conservation Officer presented a report in respect of the Church Green Draft Conservation Area and Management Plan consultation. During the presentation, the following matters were highlighted for Members' consideration:

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- The Conservation Area around St Stephen's Church was originally designated in 1971 with later extensions in 1978 and 2006 after further appraisals
- A summary of the Church Green Conservation Area and areas of special interest
- That a high number of buildings within the area were Designated Heritage Assets
- That the positive features of the Conservation Area would act as a focus for the future regeneration of the Redditch Town Centre
- The areas for concern within the Conservation Area included poor state of shop-fronts, parking around St Stephens' Church and vacant units.

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

- The opportunity for regeneration of the shops within the Conservation Area in order to make positive changes to the Town Centre
- The condition of the long-term vacant premises and the impact this had on business owners desire to take on these premises
- The positive outcomes of refurbishment of the shop fronts in the area
- The issue of parking on Unicorn Hill, and any future changes that could be made would increase the footfall for the shops in this area and encourage visitors to visit
- That raising awareness of heritage buildings within the Church Green area and signposting facilities would increase use within the area
- Improvement of the link between the Kingfisher Shopping Centre and Church Green. Officers reported that this was an area that was being looked at for improvement including removal the of street clutter to encourage greater use of the area
- The importance of the strong history of Redditch and its promotion in the future.

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The Chair invited Councillor Dormer, as Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships and Councillor Rouse, as Portfolio Holder for Leisure (including Heritage) to comment on the report and the following was highlighted:

- That the inclusion of electric car chargers and other modern infrastructure would be allowed within the Conservation Area. It was reported that as long as the inclusion was sympathetic to the area these types of changes would be permitted.
- The future introduction of increased pedestrian areas within the Conservation Area
- The agreement for the greater need for parking in the area. It was explained that this issue was currently being addressed by the Council but was an ongoing matter.

It was clarified to Members that formal recognition of the area being 'At Risk' by English Heritage did not indicate that the heritage buildings were at risk of falling down but more that it would be considered an area that was at risk of losing its heritage features. It was confirmed that if the area was recognised as 'At Risk' by English Heritage this would boost the possibility of access to funding in the future.

At the end of the debate the Committee

RECOMMENDED that

- a) that the Executive supports the draft Church Green Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan; and**
- b) that the Executive approves a 6-week public consultation period. The result of this consultation will be reported back to the Executive in due course.**

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

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Members considered the latest edition of the Executive Committee's Work Programme which covered the period 1st January 2021 to 30th April 2021. It was highlighted to Members that the following item had been moved to June 2021 (meeting date still to be confirmed):

- Matchborough and Winyates District Centres - Regeneration

The Democratic Officer confirmed that the following items were due to be considered by the Budget Scrutiny Working Group:

- Finance Monitoring Quarter 2 - 2020/2
- Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22 to 2024/25 - Update Report
- Flexible Homelessness Support Grant and Homelessness Reduction Grant 2021/22

The Chair requested that further information in respect of the New Cemetery Provision and Rubicon Leisure be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme be updated to include the items for pre-scrutiny detailed in the preamble above;**
- 2) the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday 27th October 2020 be noted; and**
- 3) the content of the Executive Committee's work programme for the period 1st January 2021 to 30th April 2021 be noted.**

55. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Senior Democratic Officer confirmed that there were no other changes to the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme other than the changes that had been agreed under the previous item.

RESOLVED that

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the content of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme be noted.

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

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

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

Councillor Wheeler introduced the verbal update in respect of this item and advised Members that the group had met once since the last meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10th November 2020. The items considered at the meeting included:

- An update on Housing Revenue Account and any actions currently being undertaken for financial year 2020/2021
- The outcomes and financial implications of the Stock Condition Survey
- An interview with the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services and her role in respect of Fees and Charges

Councillor Wheeler informed the Committee that a recommendation to Executive Committee had been made by the Budget Scrutiny Working Group in respect of the future setting of Fees and Charges. Councillor Wheeler advised Members of the recommendation and its context.

The next meeting was to take place on 7th December 2020 where Fees and Charges were to be considered.

b) Dementia Task Group – Councillor Michael Chalk

Councillor Chalk reported that one meeting had taken place since the last meeting had taken place. Age UK had been in attendance for that meeting and had provided a great deal of information and detail in respect of the services they provide

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in their support of people diagnosed with Dementia. The task group had agreed at their last meeting that an attendee to discuss the types of dementia would be invited to the next meeting.

He reported that the Task Group were re-focussing, and that a draft report was being prepared.

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

Councillor Fry advised Members that there had been no meetings of the working group since the last Committee meeting, however, a meeting was scheduled for January 2021.

At the end of the update the Committee agreed

In order to support the Council's objectives around Commercialism and help ensure that we have a transparent and robust approach to setting charges in a sustainable and equitable way the Budget Scrutiny Working Group.

RECOMMENDED that

Fees and Charges are set following due consideration of the strategy of each service area, taking into account overheads, cost recovery and the provision of the service.

RESOLVED that

the update reports be noted.

57. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

Councillor Michael Chalk introduced the item regarding External Scrutiny Bodies for Members' consideration and in addition to the written updates that he provided he explained to Members that there had been one West Midlands Combined Authority meeting since the Committee last met. He advised that this was a private

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meeting in respect of the Budget and further information would be provided to Members in due course.

Councillor Chalk informed Members that at the last meeting of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee it was reported that Covid-19 patient numbers were relatively low in hospitals across the County.

RESOLVED that

the updates be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 7.52 pm