



Executive Committee

Tue 6 Sep
2022
6.30 pm

Council Chamber,
Redditch Town Hall,
Walter Stranz Square
Redditch
B98 8AH

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

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a
difference*

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

**Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square, Redditch, B98 8AH
Tel: (01527) 64252 (Ext. 3072)
e.mail: jess.bayley-hill@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk**

GUIDANCE ON FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

At the current time, seating at the meeting will be placed in such a way as to achieve as much space as possible for social distancing to help protect meeting participants.

Please note that this is a public meeting.

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

GUIDANCE FOR ELECTED MEMBERS ATTENDING MEETINGS IN PERSON

Members and Officers who still have access to lateral flow tests (LFTs) are encouraged to take a test on the day of the meeting. Meeting attendees who do not have access to LFTs are encouraged not to attend the meeting if they have common cold symptoms or any of the following common symptoms of Covid-19 on the day of the meeting; a high temperature, a new and continuous cough or a loss of smell and / or taste.

The meeting venue will be fully ventilated, and Members and officers may need to consider wearing appropriate clothing in order to remain comfortable during proceedings.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

The usual process for public speaking at Committee meetings will continue to be followed subject to some adjustments which allow for the virtual participation of residents at meetings of the Executive Committee. Members of the public are encouraged to log in virtually, either to speak or observe meetings wherever possible.

Members of the public will be able to access the meeting in person if they wish to do so. Seating will be placed in such a way as to achieve as much space as possible for social distancing to help protect meeting participants. It should be noted that members of the public who choose to attend in person do so at their own risk.

Members of the public who still have access to lateral flow tests (LFTs) are encouraged to take a test on the day of the meeting. Meeting attendees who do not have access to LFTs are encouraged not to attend the meeting if they have common cold symptoms or any of the following common symptoms of Covid-19 on the day of the meeting; a high temperature, a new and continuous cough or a loss of smell and / or taste.

Notes:

Although this is a public meeting, there are circumstances when Council might have to move into closed session to consider exempt or confidential information. For agenda items that are exempt, the public are excluded.

Executive

Tuesday, 6th September, 2022

6.30 pm

Council Chamber Town Hall

Agenda

Membership:

Cllrs:

Matthew Dormer
(Chair)
Nyear Nazir (Vice-
Chair)
Karen Ashley
Joanne Beecham
Peter Fleming

Lucy Harrison
Anthony Lovell
Emma Marshall
Craig Warhurst

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 - 4)

5. Questions on Notice

To consider any Questions on Notice submitted for the consideration of the Executive Committee in accordance with paragraph 16 of the Executive Committee's Procedure Rules.

Any Questions on Notice submitted for Members' consideration will be published in a supplementary pack for this meeting.

6. Nomination of the Community Centre at Easemore Road - Asset of Community Value (Pages 5 - 30)

This report is due to be pre-scrutinised at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee scheduled to take place on Monday 5th September 2022. Any recommendations on this subject arising from that meeting will be tabled at the Executive Committee meeting for Members' consideration.

7. Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England & Wales) Regulations 2015 (Pages 31 - 40)

8. First Homes (Pages 41 - 60)

9. Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (Pages 61 - 114)

10. Finance Improvement/Recovery Plan (Pages 115 - 124)

This report is due to be pre-scrutinised at a meeting of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group scheduled to take place on 1st September 2022. Any recommendations arising from this meeting, subject to being endorsed at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5th September 2022, will be tabled at the Executive Committee meeting.

11. Draft Council Tax Support Scheme 2023/24 (Pages 125 - 136)

12. Budget Framework and Finance and Performance Quarter 1 Monitoring Report (Pages 137 - 184)

This report is due to be pre-scrutinised at a meeting of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group scheduled to take place on 1st September 2022. Any recommendations arising from this meeting, subject to being endorsed at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5th September 2022, will be tabled at the Executive Committee meeting.

13. Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Pages 185 - 212)

Minutes from the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the following dates have been attached:

- 23rd June 2022
- 7th July 2022
- 21st July 2022

There are no outstanding recommendations from these meetings requiring the Executive Committee's consideration.

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, 26th July, 2022

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), Councillor Nyear Nazir (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Karen Ashley, Peter Fleming, Lucy Harrison, Anthony Lovell and Emma Marshall

Officers:

Peter Carpenter, Gavin Day, Kevin Dicks, Clare Flanagan, Sue Hanley and Georgina Harris

Principal Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley-Hill

32. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Joanne Beecham and Craig Warhurst.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

34. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised that at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 21st July, Members pre-scrutinised the UK Shared Prosperity Fund report. The Committee endorsed the recommendations detailed in the report and an extract from the minutes of that meeting had been included in a supplementary pack issued for the Executive Committee's consideration. The Leader urged Members to refer to the discussions at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting when debating this item.

35. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 12th July 2022 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

Chair

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36. UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

The Chief Executive presented a report on the subject of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund for Members' consideration.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund was part of the Government's Levelling Up programme and replaced the EU Structural Fund. There were three key pillars in the UK Shared Prosperity Fund:

- Communities and Place
- Supporting Local Business
- People and Skills

There were also up to 41 interventions that had been identified by the Government that Councils could address in spending the funds. Councils were not obliged to link all of the projects that received funding in the local area to all of the interventions available. Instead, Officers had selected those interventions considered most likely to meet the needs of local communities in the Borough.

Funding had been allocated over a three-year period, from 2022/23 to 2024/25, in the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The amount of funding available over the course of these three years increased from £303,647 in 2022/23 to £1.591 million in 2024/25. In total, £2.5 million had been allocated to Redditch over the three years.

The Council had consulted with local partner organisations, to review how the funding allocated to Redditch should be spent. The funding allocated to Redditch was guaranteed to be received. However, the Council needed to submit an Investment Plan to the Government detailing how this funding would be spent. As part of the proposals detailed in the plan, the Council needed to outline how the funding would be allocated to each of the three key pillars of the programme. In Redditch, it had been decided, based on the outcomes of consultation and local knowledge, that 40 per cent of the funds should be allocated to Communities and Place and 30 per cent each to Supporting Local Business and People and Skills respectively. The Government had subsequently indicated that Councils would be able to vary the allocation of funding to each of these pillars by up to 30 per cent to ensure that there was flexibility built into the scheme.

Local authorities could allocate a proportion of the funding to administering the scheme. In a context in which there were capacity issues within local government, officers were proposing that a small amount of the funding should be allocated to the administrative process.

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Following the presentation of the report, Members discussed the interventions that had been highlighted in the report for the delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund programme in Redditch. Questions were raised about the potential for perceptions of attractions to be added to the list of interventions selected locally, taking into account recent successful events in the town centre. Members were advised that events and attractions in the town centre would be supported by the work of the Redditch Business Improvement District (BID). Work on investing in attractions would include allocating support to cultural and artistic venues. Whilst this had not been included in the current round of interventions, there would be scope to review this at a later date if considered to be necessary.

Reference was made to the need for levelling up work to be undertaken in parts of the Borough, particularly in the district centres. Members commented that this funding would help to support communities living in these parts of the Borough.

Members welcomed the inclusion of green skills in the interventions that had been selected for Redditch. Given the significant number of trees in the Borough, Members suggested that there was the potential for skills to be developed in green industries and for knowledge to be embedded in the local economy.

During consideration of this item, the Chair commented that the report had been pre-scrutinised at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21st July 2022. There had been a detailed debate of the subject at the meeting and many questions had been raised about the UK Shared Prosperity Fund as part of these discussions. At the end of their debate, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had endorsed the recommendations detailed in the report. The Committee was thanked for their hard work in scrutinising the proposals.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Investment Plan be approved for submission to the UK Government;**
- 2) authority to finalise the Investment plan be delegated to the Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Regeneration and Strategic Partnerships and in light of advice from the Local Partnership Board;**
- 3) authority to develop projects to deliver the outcomes contained in the investment plan be delegated to the Head**

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of North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Regeneration and Strategic Partnerships and in light of advice from the Local Partnership Board; and

RECOMMENDED that

- 4) the Medium Term Financial Strategy is amended to include the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Allocation when next reviewed.**

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

Councillor Nyear Nazir, the Council's representative on the Corporate Parenting Board, provided a verbal update on the latest work of the Board.

At a meeting of the Board held on Tuesday 12th July 2022, Members had considered the content of the Independent Reviewing Officer's (IRO's) Annual Report for 2021/22. The Board had been advised that 98 per cent of looked after children in Worcestershire had had reviews. The remaining 2 per cent of children had not received reviews because they did not wish to have reviews, although agencies continued to engage with these children.

During this meeting, the Board had been advised that 294 looked after children from Worcestershire had been placed outside the county. Concerns had been raised about this, although the Board had been informed that this was a relatively low figure. In many cases, children had been placed outside the county so that they could live with relatives or close family friends.

Members were informed that at the Board meeting, Councillor Nazir had been appointed District Champion for employment in care leavers for Worcestershire. There would be a need for Members to work together to ensure that care leavers received appropriate support, including help securing employment, education and training opportunities.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Executive Committee**
2022

6th September

NOMINATION OF AN ASSET OF COMMUNITY VALUE: COMMUNITY HOUSE, EASEMORE ROAD, REDDITCH

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillors Matthew Dormer and Karen Ashley
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Ruth Bamford, Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services
Report Author Clare Flanagan	Job Title: Principal Solicitor Contact email: clare.flanagan@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Wards Affected	Abbey Ward
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	An Effective and Sustainable Council
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Executive Committee consider the contents of the report in relation to Community House and decide to either:-

- (a) Support listing as an Asset of Community Value; or**
- (b) Not support listing as an Asset of Community Value.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Localism Act included the 'Community Right to Bid' which gave communities a right to identify a building or other land that they believe to be of importance to their community's social well-being so that if it comes up for sale there is a six-month period within which they can prepare their bid to buy the asset. The property in question can then be sold on the open market. Community groups have the same rights as any other bidders but there is no preference given to the local community bid. The legislation merely imposes a six months 'moratorium' on a proposed sale.
- 2.2 A nomination has been received for Community House, Easemore Road. The nomination has been submitted by Bromsgrove and Redditch Network ['BARN']. The nomination form is attached at Appendix 1 and the RCNT [Redditch Community Neighbourhood Trust] Business Plan at Appendix 2.

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-
- 2.3 The nomination supports the inclusion of the asset due to the fact that BARN provides a number of services that they believe further the social wellbeing and interests of the local community. RCNT is the Council's principal tenant.
- 2.4 Community House is owned by the Council. For this reason, the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services and Monitoring Officer, referred the assessment of the nomination to an independent third party with expertise in this area of law, to evaluate the nomination under the statutory tests set out in the Localism Act 2011.
- 2.5 The Monitoring Officer also queried whether the decision by the Executive Committee made prior to receipt of the Nomination would be grounds to resist the listing. The conclusion of the external evaluation is set out below.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 None as a direct result of this report.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Localism Act 2011 made provision for a system of listing of assets of community value, giving community groups the right to make nominations, and requiring local authorities to maintain local registers. Further, more detailed rules around the operation of assets of community value, are set out in the Assets of Community Value Regulations 2012.
- 4.2 The test for listing an Asset of Community Value as set out in Section 88 (1) of the Localism Act 2011 is as follows:-

"A building or other land in a Local Authority's area is land of community value if in the opinion of the authority:-

- (a) an actual current use of the building or other land that is not an ancillary user furthers the social well-being or social interests of the local community, and
- (b) it is realistic to think that there can continue to be non-ancillary use of the building or other land which will further (whether or not in the same way) the social well-being or social interests of the local community."

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Independent Evaluation

- 4.3 Counsel confirmed eligibility of the nominating body, BARN, to make the nomination and noted that:
- the property is owned by Redditch Borough Council;
 - a Condition Survey [CS] concluded in November 2021 identified a need for repairs and maintenance over five years amounted to £340,407;
 - the property had been declared surplus and to be sold, on 12 July 2022, noted by Council on 25 July 2022, the same day the Nomination was made;
 - Officers had met with the Chief Executive of BARN, who is also the Treasurer of RCNT, to discuss the Condition Survey, the breakdown of liability as between landlord and tenant and the fact that all options would be considered for the future of the building;
 - That the “Business Plan” submitted with the Nomination indicated that RCNT, the principal tenant was running at a loss and if it continued in occupation of the property, would have the on-going cost of increased rent (on determination of the ‘Concessionary Rents’ scheme, which would be discontinued from 2023/24) in addition to the contribution that would be required for the repairs and maintenance set out in the CS;
 - That a sale of the property would be at market value, which would be a sum well beyond RCNT’s means;
 - That the “realistic” prospect of the use continuing, required to pass the statutory test, means “a sensible and practical idea of what can be achieved”;
 - That no plan or proposal has been formulated and submitted and there is no evidence of any attempts to raise funds or plans setting out, even in a skeleton form, how the aspirations could be achieved through community effort, enthusiasm or otherwise;
 - To satisfy the requirements of section 88(2)(b) there has to be at least some indication that the aspirations are realistic;

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Conclusion

- 4.4 In light of the Executive Committee's resolution, and the Business Plan submitted which demonstrates the applicant to be operating at a deficit and with a relatively low turnover, and the absence of any other proposals on the applicant's part for the continued use of CH for community uses, it is concluded that it is not realistic to think the CH can continue in use for purposes which further the social wellbeing and social interests of the local community. For that reason, it is concluded that the CH should not be listed as it is not considered realistic that it can continue to be used for community purposes (s.88(1)(b)).
- 4.5 Members are reminded that under the process for assets of community value introduced in November 2012, the final decision regarding whether to list an asset rests with the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS**Relevant Strategic Purpose**

- 5.1 The points detailed in this report and action proposed help to support the strategic purpose 'An Effective and Sustainable Council'.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 There are no specific climate change implications arising from this report.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 There are no specific equalities and diversity implications arising from this report.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 There are no specific operational implications for the District. The list of nominated assets is maintained by the Planning Department and it is available to view on the Council's Website.

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7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The register will be maintained to ensure that all assets nominated are included to mitigate any risks associated with assets not being included on the register. Consideration by officers and members will be undertaken at each nomination to ensure a consistent approach is taken.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 - Nomination Form

Appendix 2 – RCNT Business Plan

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Matthew Dormer Councillor Karen Ashley	August 2022
Lead Director / Head of Service	Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services	August 2022
Financial Services		
Legal Services	Principal Solicitor	August 2022

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<p align="center">BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p> <p align="center">ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE – THE COMMUNITY RIGHT TO BID</p> <p align="center">NOMINATION FORM</p>

Section A: About your organisation**A1 Organisation's name and address**

Name of organisation* Bromsgrove and Redditch Network
Address including postcode Community House, 103 Easemore Road, Redditch, B98 8EY

**full name as written in your constitution or rules (if appropriate)*

A2 Contact details

Name: Gary Roskell
Position in organisation: Chief Executive
Address including postcode Community House, 103 Easemore Road, Redditch, B98 8EY
Daytime telephone no. 01527 60282 or
Email address: Provided to the Council
How and when can we contact you?* Email or phone (mobile no provided to the Council)

**by email or phone, and days of the week and/or times of day you would prefer*

A3 Type of organisation

Description	Put a cross against all those that apply	Registration number of charity and/or company (if applicable)
Neighbourhood forum		
Parish Council		
Charity	X	1122980
Community interest company		
Unincorporated body		
Company limited by guarantee	X	5814032
Industrial and provident society		

A4 Number of members registered to vote locally (unincorporated bodies only)

In the case of an unincorporated body, at least 21 of its members must be registered to vote in the Bromsgrove District . If relevant, please confirm the number of such members. If they are registered to vote in the area of a neighbouring local authority, rather than in Bromsgrove , please confirm which area that is.

A5 Local connection

Your organisation must have a local connection, which means that its activities are wholly or partly concerned with the administrative area of Bromsgrove District Council or a neighbouring local authority. In some cases this will be obvious, eg. a parish council in Bromsgrove, or an organisation whose activities are confined to the district. If your connection may not be obvious to us please explain what your organisation's local connection is.

We are the Local Council for Voluntary Service, representing communities and the voluntary sector for 25 years. We are also the local Volunteer Centre.

A6 Distribution of surplus funds (certain types of organisation only)

If your organisation is an unincorporated body, a company limited by guarantee, or an industrial and provident society, its rules must provide that surplus funds are not distributed to members, but are applied wholly or partly for the benefit of the local area (ie. within the administrative area of Bromsgrove or a neighbouring local authority). If relevant, please confirm that this is the case, and specifically which area this applies to.

A7 More about your organisation

What are the main aims and activities of your organisation?

The charities objects (Objects) are specifically restricted to the following:

- (1) To promote any charitable purposes for the benefit of the communities in the local government areas of Bromsgrove and Redditch ("the area of benefit") and in particular the advancement of education, the protection of health and the relief of poverty, distress and sickness;
- (2) The objects for which the Company is formed are to promote the Voluntary Centre for the benefit of the public in the Local Government areas of Bromsgrove and Redditch ("the area of benefit"). The Voluntary Sector shall mean Charities and Voluntary Organisations. Charities are organisations, which are established for exclusively charitable purposes in accordance with the Law of England and Wales.

A8 Your organisation's rules

Please send us a copy of the relevant type of document for your organisation, and put a cross in the next column to indicate which one this is	X
Memorandum and Articles of Association (for a company)	X
Trust Deed (for a trust)	
Constitution and/or rules (for other organisations)	

Part B: About the land or building(s) you are nominating**B1 Description and address**

What it is (eg. pub, local shop)
Community Centre
Name of premises (eg. Post office , Community Centre)
Community House Redditch
Address including postcode (if known) Community House, 103 Easemore Road, Redditch, B98 8EY

B2 Sketch plan

Please include (here or on a separate sheet) a sketch plan of the land. This should show:-

- The boundaries of the land that you are nominating
- The approximate size and position of any building(s) on the land.
- Any roads bordering the site.

Please see plan on page 5 of the Business Plan. The building faces Easemore Road at the front elevation.

B3 Owners and others with an interest in the building or land

You should supply the following information, if possible. If any information is not known to you, please say so.

	Name(s)	Address(es)
Names of all current occupants of the land	Redditch Common Neighbourhood Trust	Same as B1.
Names and current or last known addresses of all those owning the freehold of the land (ie. owner, head landlord, head lessor)	Redditch Borough Council	Walter Stranz Square Redditch B98 8AH
Names and current or last known addresses of all those having a leasehold interest in the land (ie. tenant, intermediate landlord, intermediate lessor)		

B4 Why you think the building or land is of community value

Note that the following are not able to be assets of community value:-

- *A building wholly used as a residence, together with land “connected with” that residence. This means adjoining land in the same ownership. Land is treated as adjoining if it is separated only by a road, railway, river or canal.*
- *A caravan site.*
- *Operational land. This is generally land belonging to the former utilities and other statutory operators.*

Does it currently further the social wellbeing or social interests* of the local community, or has it done so in the recent past? If so, how?

Community House has been a vibrant Community Centre for nearly 35 years. It hosts a wide array of community groups and charities, with some of the charities also based there. The activities that are run by the charities based here and by the groups that operate in the Community Hall allow people to live independent, active and healthy lives whether it is Age UK activities or the many other groups listed above that run activities. All the activities have many positive health impacts around both mental and physical wellbeing (and so supports the Council's priority by helping to reduce isolation, encouraging people to be physically active and improving confidence and self-esteem), and helps people to live their lives independently.

Could it in future further the social wellbeing or social interests* of the local community? If so, how? (This could be different from its current or past use.)

Absolutely. The centre is a valued community asset that is used by thousands of people every year. The centre was due to become the home of the Creative People and Places arts project, Reimagine Redditch, which is bringing an estimated £1.5m into Redditch. More information can be found in the business plan attached.

**These could be cultural, recreational and/or sporting interests, so please say which one(s) apply.*

Section C: Submitting this nomination**C1 What to include**

- The rules of your organisation (question A8).
- Your sketch plan (question B2).

C2 Signature

By signing your name here (if submitting by post) or typing it (if submitting by email) you are confirming that the contents of this form are correct, to the best of your knowledge.

Signature Gary Roskell – signature provided to the Council.
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C3 Where to send this form

You can submit this nomination:-

- **By post to:** Ruth Bamford, Head of Service, Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services, Bromsgrove District Council, Council House, Bromsgrove B60 1AA
- **By email to:** r.bamford@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk



Redditch Common Neighbourhood Trust (R.C.N.T)

Business Plan MAY 2019 - 2022

Community House
103 Easemore Road, Redditch, B98 8EY



From an original painting by Charles Stallard

Registered Charity No. 1112546

Registered Company No. 5507325

BACKGROUND

Redditch Common Neighbourhood Trust (RCNT) was formed in 1988 and granted the lease of the former Territorial Army Drill Hall in Easemore Road, known as Community House, by the Commission for New Towns. Ownership of the hall was subsequently passed to Borough of Redditch who continue to lease the building to RCNT.

Our mission is:

“To promote the effective working of any Charities operating within the Borough of Redditch by the provision of facilities and accommodation calculated to achieve that aim and to apply the same for any charitable purposes directed wholly or mainly for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Borough of Redditch”

RCNT is both a Registered Charity (1112546) and a Registered Company (5507325).

History of Community House

Originally built in 1908, Community House was used as an Artillery barracks for the 3rd(c) battery, South Midlands Brigade, of the 67th Regiment of Royal Field Artillery. The regiment was reformed after the First World War as the 267 battery, which was transferred in 1939 to the new 119 regiment of the Royal Artillery.

In the 1960s, the building was purchased by the Redditch Development Corporation who initially leased it to the Windsor Social Club. Later, as part of an endeavour to provide social and cultural amenities for the town, the Development Corporation leased the building to the Redditch Common Neighbourhood Trust to be used as a community centre for local charities and organisations.

MISSION STATEMENT

R.C.N.T.’s mission is to provide accommodation and ensure the majority of all users will be for the benefit of communities across Borough of Redditch.

Our Objectives

Manage a community building to assist and accommodate the management of charities and community interest organisations by providing a wide range of services wholly or mainly for the benefit of the inhabitants of Borough of Redditch.

Our Aims

- To promote the building for local use.
- Provide office accommodation or meeting rooms to local charities and community interest organisations who provide a service to the communities of Redditch Borough Council.
- To encourage community activities by hiring our community hall.

STRUCTURE

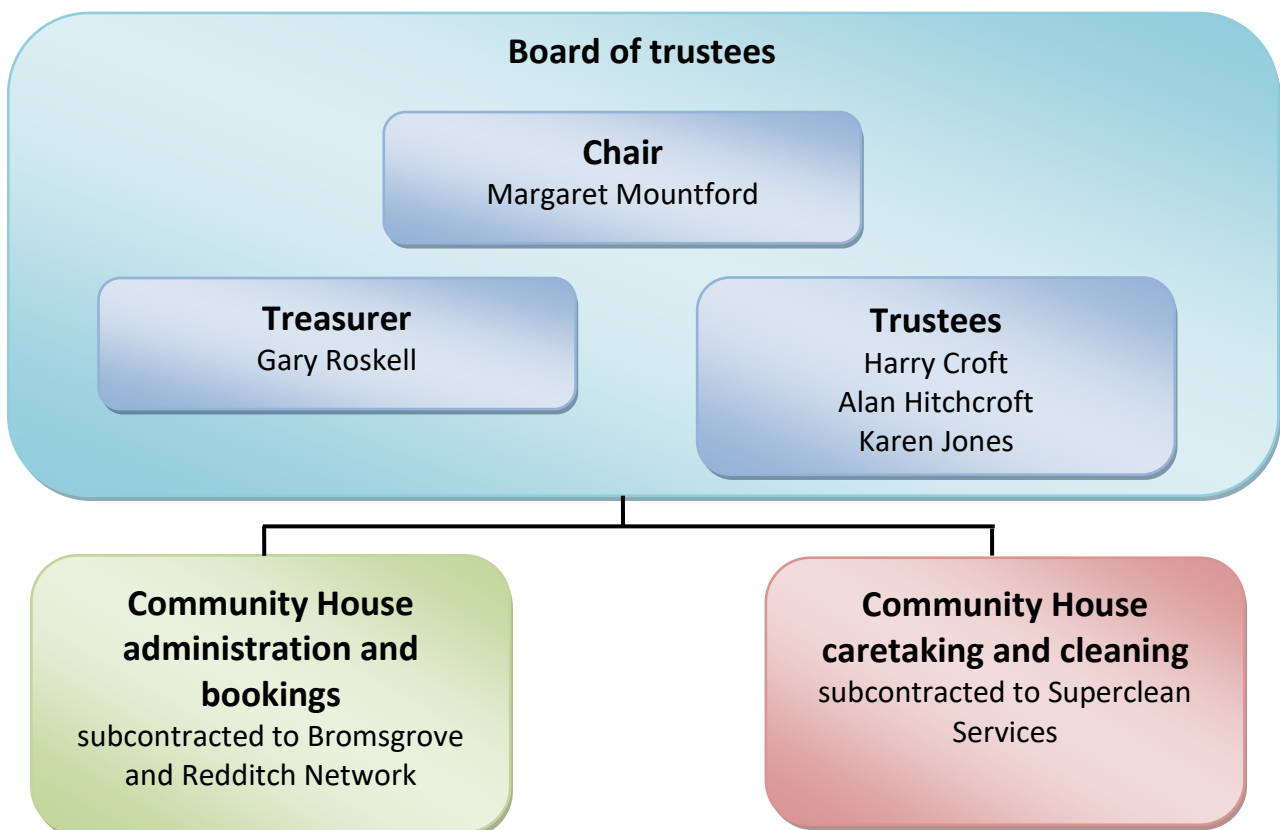
Our team has become well organised over the past few years and a good relationship has formed between the Management Committee and users of the building.

An organisation chart is shown below:

Management Committee 2019 and operational structure

All trustees represent current users or occupiers of the building.

The Board meets 6 times a year.



How does our Business Operate?

Established: 1988

Opening hours: 8:30am-10:00pm (according to demand) 7 days a week.

The Community House building is a large dwelling. One half is the responsibility of the R.C.N.T and the other half is under the management of the Gemini Dance Centre. R.C.N.T supports a split two floor facility made up of office suites, office space, kitchen facilities, restrooms, storage and a large hall space.

Our responsibility is for the management and safe operation internally within the building. Redditch Borough Council (our landlords) have the responsibility of the external requirements of the building and the attached car parking area.

Profile and Advertising

RCNT is a high profile organisation within the charitable sector. We are continually looking for new opportunities to widen our profile.

We do this by:

- Advertising though our web site.
- Sending mail shots to potential organisations and users.
- Making more use of our local press.
- Advertising through social media.
- Supporting current users to promote our service.
- Using local networks (such as Bromsgrove and Redditch Network) to promote services

In 2017 we hosted HRH Duke of Kent to promote some of these services



User Requirements

We aim to meet the needs of our client groups by offering:

- Signage.
- Notice Boards for advertising and information.
- Disability access and cloak room requirements.
- Being Dementia friendly.
- Kitchen usage.
- Recycling Bins.

User Contact

We subcontract RCNT administration to ensure someone is available 5 days a week for bookings, current user contact and administration duties.

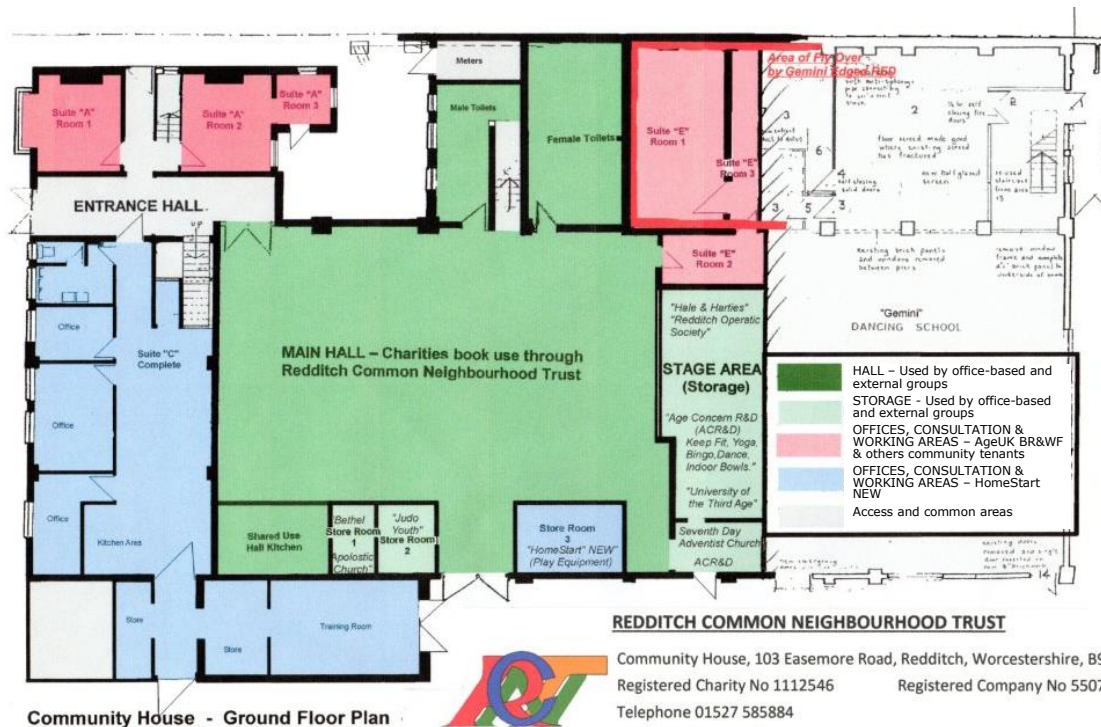
We subcontract a caretaking and cleaning company to manage the caretaking, cleaning and opening and closing of the building.

Two trustees occupy offices on site and are available most days for user enquiries.

Our building

Community House consists of a number of individual offices and a large, well-used community hall.





Finance

Our financial year runs from 1st August to the 31st July of each year, and independently verified by Ormerod Rutter Accountants.

In 2017-2018 our income was £36,461. This was obtained by hires and rent from users of the building.

Expenditure was £42,795. The deficit is chiefly a result of improvements to the building. We have recently installed a new boiler for the building which had improved efficiency, and new kitchen with plumbing into a communal areas to serve the individual offices following Age UK's departure from the suite in the previous year.

RCNT demonstrates a professional, fully accountable transparent approach to all financial matters. All monies raised are fully tracked and used effectively.

Our User Groups:

We operate an equal opportunities policy and encourage varied usage and different opportunities as possible to meet the diverse needs of our local community.





Redditch Common Neighbourhood Trust

Community House, 103 Easemore Road, Redditch, Worcestershire, B98 8EY

USER GROUPS		Per week	Per Annum		Age Group			Ethnic group			
		Average No. of Service Contacts Per wk	No. of Contacts and People Through Door	No. of Service Recipients Throughout Borough	0-24 Years % of Group	25-64 Years %	65+ Years %	White %	Asian %	Afro-Caribbean %	Other %
Age UK BRWF - Services	Office	2	96		0	15	85	88	3	8	1
	Advice Personal	2	96		0	11	89	79	6	13	2
	Chiropody	11	528		0	32	68	94	0	4	2
	Keep Fit/Yoga	85	4,080		0	8	92	99	0	0	1
	Bingo	32	1,536		0	68	32	98	0	2	0
	Art Classes	23	1,104		0	95	5	100	0	0	0
	Carpet Bowls	17	816		0	55	45	100	0	0	0
Tea Dance/Evening Dance	Office/Hall/Storage	76	3,648		0	51	49	98	0	1	1
	Hall										
Bethel Apostolic Church	Religious Services	96	4,608		17	62	21	3	0	97	0
Seventh Day Advent Church	Religious Services	34	1,632		11	80	9	3	6	91	0
Hale & Harties (300 Members)	Recovery Exercises	40	1,920		0	83	17	99	0	0	1
Bromsgrove & Redditch Network	CVS/Volunteer Centre	10	480	628	12	70	18	89	9	2	3
County Youth Team		15	720		100	0	0	22	27	45	6
Other Hall Hires		10	100		56	44	0	90	9	0	1
Home-Start	Family Support	20	960		92	8	0	83	4	13	0
	Family Support/Home Visiting	320		15,360	60	40	0	82	8	10	0
Family Support Volunteers - Training	Play Groups	260	12,480		50	50	0	97	1	0	1
	Parent Support Groups - Training	10	480		50	50	0	94	0	5	1
	Travelling Families Support - Visiting	30	300		50	50	0	90		10	0
		1		24	45	55	0	99	0	0	1

USER GROUPS	Per week Average No. of Service Contacts Per wk	Per Annum No. of Contacts and People Through Door	No. of Service Recipients Throughout Borough	Age Group			Ethnic group		
				0-24 Years %	25-64 Years %	65+ Years %	White %	Asian %	Afro- Caribbean %
Martial Arts	20	960		48	52	0	100	0	0
Olivia's Polish Dance School	240	11,520		95	5	0	100	0	0
Redditch Talking Newspaper	15	720		0	100	0	100	0	0
Audio newspapers Recipients	110		5,280	5	85	10	92	0	7
Repair Café	180	2,160		7	56	37	92	5	2
Tai Chi	60	2,880		0	61	39	89	6	2
University of Third Age	103	4,944		18	51	31	83	4	11
Weight Watchers	200	9,600		2	53	45	83	4	11
Total Users				Average % of each age group			Average % of each ethnic group		
Total contacts and/or reliant on Community House Services - Per Annum				26	50	25	84	3	12
				2,022	68,368	21,292	89,660	84	3

Note: There may be some duplication in the total numbers. For instance, Community House services users may attend other activities or be repeat users on another service

Registered Charity No.1112546

Registered Company No. 5507325

KEY BUSINESS OBJECTIVES 2019 - 2022

Delivery Plan

In the business plan R.C.N.T has identified 3 strategic aims to work towards between 2019 – 2022. Within each aim, we have developed key objectives and outcomes below which include more specific targets and time scales to work towards by 2022.

Aims

1. Ensure all office space is filled, and financial projection and risk analysis is monitored.
2. Improve building spaces to ensure we are meeting the need of users and the building is running efficiently and as environmentally as possible.
3. Ensure a representative range of board members for R.C.N.T, by recruiting directors from diverse variety of backgrounds and skills.

1: Office Accommodation and Financial Risk

- Currently R.C.N.T has 2 office spaces available but are able to offer these offices for short term let usage or meeting rooms while looking for more permanent residents and reducing financial risk. If any of the accommodation becomes vacant R.C.N.T will aim to allow one month to advertise and re fill the space. If the offices remain empty we have a financial risk analysis in which we keep reserves which will support the running costs with reduced income to ensure stability of services. In 2019 the board will review risk analysis and ensure reserves will support running cost for at least 3 months following exit policy.
- Have an awareness of current charities financial stability ensuring office space would be occupied.
- If space became available to have adverts and know where places to advertise to ensure we provide the best service for charitable organisation across Borough of Redditch .
- To monitor and evaluate R.C.N.T services provided ensuring all services users are consulted at least every 2 years.
- Maintenance is carried out up grading to meet green standards where possible within financial constraints.
- The building will be used for its maximum capacity reviewed by the board annually to ensure efficient running and financial stability.

2: Access and Promotion of Building

- The board will carry out an evaluation of current usage of building and ensure all areas can be accessed by users and office accommodation.
- 2019/20 the board will implement six monthly reviews at board meetings to discuss the best way to improve the buildings and wear and tear funding is priority to ensure the improvement/maintenance cost will not affect users above their means.
- Maintain the building and review and replace where financially possible areas of wear and tear and look at building security 2019-2020. Improvements to be identified in line with funding restraints.
- General Maintenance will continue to a high standard.
- Investigation of additional funding streams if required will be carried out.
- Annual Reviews will be conducted in July 2019, July 2020, July 2021, July 2022
Questionnaire to be developed and used annually to all service users.

3: Diverse Board of Directors

- R.C.N.T has representatives from a range of current users of the building so immediate feedback of issues are addressed. During 2019/20 the board will evaluate the current skills and seek additional board member to increase skills.
- The board needs to look at the lack of multi-cultural representation on the board and ensure there are no barriers currently making the access difficult
- By 2020 the board will recruit 2 new board members.
- 2020/2021 new literature is to be developed and distributed promoting R.C.N.T.

We will continue to ensure the building is being used to the best of our ability for the voluntary/charitable/community organisations; providing a diverse support for people across the Borough of Redditch and ensure the structure of R.C.N.T is meeting the needs of its users.

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REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Executive Committee
2022**6th September**Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England & Wales)
Regulations 2015**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Craig Warhurst
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Judith Willis
Report Author	Job Title: Private Sector Housing Manager Contact email: steve.shammon@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 07976325459
Wards Affected	All wards
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	No
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	Finding Somewhere to Live Living Independent, active & healthy lives
Key Decision / Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	
This report contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph(s) of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS**The Executive Committee RESOLVE that:-**

- 1) The Council adopt the enforcement powers under the Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property)(England & Wales) Regulations 2015; and**
- 2) The implementation of these powers are delegated to the Head of Community & Housing Services.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 From 1st of April 2020 the Minimum Energy Efficiency requirement became applicable to all relevant tenancies where there is a legal requirement to hold a valid current Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for the property. The property must meet the minimum E rating to comply with the Regulations, unless an exemption is available and is claimed by being registered in the Public Exemptions Register
- 2.2 The PRS Exemptions Register is for properties that are legally required to have an EPC, are let under a relevant tenancy but

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cannot be improved to meet the minimum standard of EPC band E for one of the following reasons:

- High Cost Exemption – No improvements can be made for less than £3500
- All Improvements Made Exemption - But property remains below EPC 'E' rating
- Wall Insulation Exemption - Cavity wall, external wall and internal wall insulation systems should not be installed due to adverse impact on the structure .
- Consent Exemption- Where a third party consent is required but is being refused.
- Devaluation Exemption – A RICS registered valuers report states the installation of specific energy efficiency measures would reduce the market value of the property by more than 5%.
- New Landlord Exemption – A 6 month temporary exemption for unintended landlords.

2.3 These Regulations have been introduced to make it mandatory for relevant private rented properties to meet a minimum energy efficiency standard to ensure occupants benefit from homes that are both warm and affordable to heat in addition to the wider Government aim of meeting carbon reduction targets.

2.4 Since 01 April 2018 it has been unlawful for a landlord to grant a new letting of a non-compliant or substandard domestic property that has an EPC rating of F or G. As of 01/04/2020 this was extended so that landlords also cannot continue to let such domestic property.

2.5 Where a landlord has failed to take steps to comply, or has submitted misleading information to gain an exemption, a financial penalty under the regulations will be considered appropriate.

2.6 The Local Authority has discretion to decide the amount of penalty subject to the maximums prescribed by the Regulations for each type of breach. The prescribed maximums for letting a substandard property for are

- a) Less than 3 months - £2000
- b) 3 months or more - £4000
- c) Registering false information on the PRS Exemptions register - £1000
- d) Failure to comply with a compliance notice - £2000

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- 2.7 In determining an appropriate level of financial penalty officers will use the Financial Penalty Matrix prescribed at Appendix A which takes account of influencing factors.
- 2.8 It is a requirement that all aggravating or mitigating circumstances are taken into consideration and that any penalty is proportionate and defensible on appeal.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 This work will be continued within the existing service resources. Any financial penalty from the Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property)(England & Wales) Regulations 2015 received by the Council will be applied to the costs of the enforcement functions in relation to the Private Rented Sector.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Local housing authority has a legal duty to enforce the Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property)(England & Wales) Regulations 2015. There is an appeal process to the Residential Property Tribunal. The private rented sector plays an important role in meeting the diverse housing needs that exist in the Borough. It is therefore important that the accommodation is regulated effectively to ensure it is energy efficient to benefit the occupants and environment. While the majority of landlords carry out their legal duties and obligations, the small minority of landlords may disregard their legal obligations if there is no deterrent.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS**Help Me Find Somewhere to Live**
Living independent, active & healthy lives

- 5.1 A home that is warm is an integral part of maintaining health and the ability to maintain a warm home at minimal costs in terms of energy consumption and finances is crucial. With energy costs increasing rapidly it is essential that the private rental sector meets the standards required, being a sector most likely to include vulnerable persons and those on lower incomes where a higher percentage of income is spent on energy costs..

Climate Change Implications

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- 5.2 Thermally efficient homes will reduce energy consumed for heating and therefore contribute to lowering of emissions and overall carbon footprint across the Borough.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 The application of these regulations will have a positive impact on many family households living in private rented sector accommodation from improvements in thermal efficiency and reduced energy consumption.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 There are no staffing implications, envisaged at this stage. Initial stages of enforcement are to be undertaken through a Joint Project with Wyre Forest District Council using funding awarded for a successful bid which included for staffing and other resources. Formal enforcement will be undertaken by existing staff in the course of general Private Sector Housing duties. No health and safety implications have been identified to staff by the introduction of new regulations.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 There is a risk of legal challenge if the process is not followed correctly, which could result in Residential Property Tribunal over-turning Notices and penalty fines imposed by the Council. A Private Sector tenant could apply to the Housing Ombudsman if they feel the council has failed to act in a case of non-compliance.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 - Financial Penalty Matrix.

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2015/9780111128350/contents

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder		

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Lead Director / Head of Service		
Financial Services		
Legal Services		
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)		
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)		

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REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Appendix 1****Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Properties) (England & Wales)
Regulations 2015****Financial Penalty Matrix**

	Low Culpability	High Culpability	Notes
Low Harm	25%	50%	% = Proportion of Maximum Penalty
High Harm	50%	100%	

Notes

If two or more Penalty Notices apply, the combined maximum per property per breach will be £5,000.

Officers may wish to adjust the penalty from that determined in the matrix if there are particular aggravating or mitigating factors. These may come to light during the investigation and will need to be included in the Penalty Notice.

Also, factors may be provided in representations from a landlord in his request to review after the Penalty Notice has been served. Officers will have regard to these factors and may adjust the penalty to increase or reduce as they feel appropriate.

Landlords will be provided with a minimum of one month and normally 6 weeks to request a review, presenting any information they wish considered as part of that review. The landlord will be served a notice after the review with an explanation of any adjustment made.

Any representations received will be considered in a case review by the manager of the investigating officer and subject to legal advice prior to determination of whether to confirm, vary, withdraw the financial penalty or allow more time for payment to be made.

The proceeds of any financial penalty received under these regulations will be applied to the costs of the enforcement functions in relation to the private rented sector.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

If a local authority confirms that a property is (or has been) let in breach of the Regulations, they may serve a financial penalty up to 18 months after the breach and/or publish details of the breach for at least 12 months.

Factors affecting the culpability

Low - Landlords first offence under these regulations

No previous history of non-compliance with housing related regulatory requirements

Non-compliance due to complex issues partially out of the landlord's control

High - Landlord has a previous history of non-compliance with housing related regulatory requirements and/or landlord has failed to comply with repeated requests to comply.

Landlord has knowingly or recklessly provided incorrect information in relation to exemptions to these regulations

Factors affecting harm

High - A very low EPC rating

Vulnerable tenants occupying the property for an extended period of time since non-compliance

Low - No vulnerable tenants

Higher EPC score, close to the minimum EPC rating (E)

Tables below show the penalty matrix for each type of offence

a) Breach is less than 3 months: Maximum fine £2,000			
	Low culpability	High culpability	Notes
Low harm	£500	£1000	% = Proportion of maximum penalty
High harm	£1000	£2000	

b) Breach is more than 3 months: Maximum fine £4,000			
	Low culpability	High culpability	Notes
Low harm	£1000	£2000	% = Proportion of maximum penalty
High harm	£2000	£4000	

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

c) Providing false or misleading information: Maximum fine £1,000			
	Low culpability	High culpability	Notes
Low harm	£250	£500	% = Proportion of maximum penalty
High harm	£500	£1000	

d) Failing to comply with a Compliance Notice: Maximum fine £2,000			
	Low culpability	High culpability	Notes
Low harm	£500	£1000	% = Proportion of maximum penalty
High harm	£1000	£2000	

Principles the council will take into account when applying a civil penalty:

- Harm to the tenant.** The greater the harm or potential harm to the tenant, the higher the penalty should be.
- Offender's history of failing to comply with their obligations.**
Landlords are expected to be aware of their legal obligations and responsibilities. This could be when actions are seen as deliberate or they should have known they were in breach of their legal duties.
- Punishment of the offender.** The civil penalty route should not be seen as an easy option compared to prosecution. Whilst the penalty should follow the matrix, it is important that it is set at a high enough level to help ensure that it has a real economic impact on the offender and has demonstrated that there are consequences for not complying with their responsibilities.
- Prevent further offences.** The level of the penalty should be set high enough, so it is likely to deter the offender from repeating the same offence again, or any other offence.
- Deter others from committing similar offences.** Although it is not made known to the public when someone is served a civil penalty, it is possible landlords may find out as in their local area landlords become aware through informal channels. By setting a high enough penalty it should both punish the offender and deter other landlords from doing the same.
- Remove financial benefit.** The offender may have obtained a financial benefit as a result of committing the offence, so it is crucial to ensure they have not benefited as a result of the offence. It should not be cheaper to offend than to ensure a property is well maintained and

properly managed.

Culpability - Responsibility for a fault or wrong. Being culpable, is a measure of the degree to which a person, can be held morally or legally responsible for action and inaction.

Harm - The damage to something which is caused by a particular course of action.

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First Homes Local Connection Criteria

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Craig Warhurst
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Judith Willis Head of Community and Housing Services
Report Author	Job Title: Amanda Delahunty Strategic Housing and Enabling Manager Contact email: a.delahunty@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881269
Wards Affected	No specific ward relevance
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	Not Applicable
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	Affordable and Sustainable Homes
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive is asked to RESOLVE that:-

- 1) The Council adopts the First Homes Policy (Appendix 1) and delegate authority to the Head of Community Services in consultation with the Housing Portfolio holder to make an amendments to the Policy to reflect any future Government Guidance.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Government has introduced a new affordable housing product known as First Homes. First Homes are discounted market sale units with the criteria to be classed as First Homes set through legislation. They:
 - a) must be discounted by a minimum of 30% against the open market value;
 - b) are sold to a person or persons meeting the First Homes eligibility criteria;
 - c) on their first sale, will have a restriction registered on the title at HM Land Registry to ensure this discount (as a percentage of current

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market value) and certain other restrictions are passed on at each subsequent title transfer; and,

d) after the discount has been applied, the first sale must be at a price no higher than £250,000 (or £420,000 in Greater London).

- 2.2 The vendor will need to provide a market value undertaken by a Valuer who is qualified by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors.
- 2.3 There is a requirement that developments providing affordable housing will have a minimum of 25% of affordable homes as First Homes. The Government has given local authorities flexibility to include a local connection criteria where they consider this to be appropriate.
- 2.4 In August 2021 the Government invited housebuilders to take part in a First Homes Pilot to deliver 1,500 homes by 2023 and provided templates for Section 106's, application packs and conveyancer packs to facilitate this on the 4th March 2022 (updated on the 12th May 2022). Whilst the Council is not required to have a First Homes Policy, the results of the HEDNA suggested sufficient need for First Homes in order for a local connection criteria to be introduced.

Local Connection

- 2.5 It is proposed to include a local connection criteria for First Homes applicants due to the numbers of applicants unable to access the open market in the district due to high house prices that are inaccessible to those with lower quartile and median incomes. The local connection criteria used is similar to that used in the Council's housing allocations policy and lasts for three months from the date of when the property is first marketed.
- 2.6 In determining whether the household has a local connection the Council will agree a connection exists in the following circumstances, noting that if an applicant has no connection that meets the qualification criteria and claims a connection on the basis of special circumstances then the decision to allow them on the list can be made by a Senior Officer:
 - a) Where the local connection arises due to residency - applicant(s) must have lived in Redditch Borough for a minimum period of two years or have resided in the Borough for three out of the last five years at the point of application.
 - b) Where the local connection arises due to employment - applicant(s) must have been in permanent, paid employment in the Borough

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immediately prior to the application or have a certified offer of employment in the Borough.

- c) Where the local connection arises due to close family - applicant(s) must have a close family member living in the Borough for a minimum period of three years, immediately prior to the application.

2.7 In determining permanent employment we will give consideration to the Local Government Association guidelines which state that this is employment other than that of a casual nature.

2.8 In determining close family member we mean mother, father, sister, brother or adult child (aged 18 and over).

Armed Forces

2.9 Members of the UK armed forces stationed abroad will be considered as living in the United Kingdom for the purposes of applying for social housing.

2.10 The Secretary of State has the power to prescribe in Regulations criteria that may not be used by local housing authorities in deciding what classes of persons are not qualifying persons (s. 160ZA(8)(b)). These Regulations require that local housing authorities do not use local connection (within the meaning of s. 199 of the Housing Act 1996) as a criterion in deciding whether the following are not qualifying persons:

- a) persons who are serving in the regular forces or have done so in the five years preceding their application for an allocation of housing accommodation.
- b) bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where their spouse or partner's death is attributable (wholly or partly) to their service and the bereaved spouse or civil partner's entitlement to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation then ceases.
- c) seriously injured, ill or disabled reservists (or former reservists) whose injury, illness or disability is attributable wholly or partly to their service.

2.11 The Council recognises the contribution that armed forces personnel have made and will waive the local connection requirement to those applicants as described above.

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- 2.12 The Council will also extend the provision above to include divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Service Personnel who are required to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Council will be bringing forward a fees and charges report in October 2022 to implement a charge of £150.00 per First Homes application to cover the costs of processing. Officers are not expecting this to provide anything other than a small amount of income as there are unlikely to be many First Homes provided in the next few years because the major sites have already been approved without this requirement. Therefore, it is anticipated that this work can be carried out within existing resources.
- 3.2 Should numbers start to increase the Council will need to review the additional administrative and legal burden and whether there is a need to increase capacity. There may also be opportunities for additional technology to support processing of applications.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The national guidance for First Homes is set out in the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) published on the 24th May 2021.
- 4.2 From the 28th June 2021 local authorities are required to deliver First Homes as a proportion (25%) of their usual Affordable Housing delivery through their local plan policies. The NPPG sets out transitional arrangements for current applications. First Homes are not required from any applications determined before 28th December 2021 or 28th March 2022 where there have been substantive preapplication discussions relating to the proposed Affordable Housing contribution.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES – IMPLICATIONS**Relevant Strategic Purpose**

- 5.1 This policy supports the Finding Somewhere to Live strategic purpose by giving affordable housing priority to those with a local connection.

Climate Change Implications

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- 5.2 There are no climate change implications.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.1 The Governments equalities impact assessment on First Homes is provided through the following link
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975121/EQIA_First_Homes.pdf

Operational Implications

- 6.2 The introduction of First Homes will place a greater burden on local authorities in terms of processing and agreeing applications from prospective purchasers. The introduction of a local connection criteria will add to this burden. This function will be provided by the Strategic Housing Team and the Legal Property Team.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 If a local connection is not implemented the First Homes product may be sold to a significant proportion of First Time Buyers who do not have a local connection to the Borough.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Redditch First Homes Policy

**Executive
2022****6th September****9. REPORT SIGN OFF**

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Craig Warhurst Portfolio Holder for Housing and Procurement	5 th August 2022
Lead Director / Head of Service	Judith Willis Head of Community and Housing Services	11 th August 2022
Financial Services	Peter Carpenter Interim Deputy Section 151 Officer	11 th August 2022
Legal Services	Clare Flanagan Principal Solicitor	5 th August 2022
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	The Government has conducted it's own Equalities Impact Assessment	
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)	Not applicable	



Redditch Borough Council

First Homes

Policy

September 2022

Introduction

This policy sets out the Council's approach to delivering First Homes in accordance with national guidance and in compliance with the Council's adopted Local Plan policies on the delivery of Affordable Housing. In due course, a new Local Plan will be adopted containing the Council's refreshed Affordable Housing policies, which will include provisions for the delivery of First Homes.

First Homes are a specific type of discounted sale homes which meet the definition of Affordable Housing for planning purposes.

This guidance includes guidance on the development of First Homes Exception Sites.

Background

The national guidance is set out in the Written Ministerial Statement and the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG), which were both published on 24 May 2021.

From the 28 June 2021 local authorities are required to deliver First Homes as a proportion (25%) of their usual Affordable Housing delivery through their local plan policies. The NPPG sets out transitional arrangements for current applications. First Homes will not be required from any applications determined before 28 December 2021 or 28 March 2022 where there have been substantive preapplication discussions relating to the proposed Affordable Housing contribution.

The Council will be flexible in considering revised proposals to include First Homes in applications which will be granted permission before the above dates.

The main criteria of First Homes, as set out in national guidance, are:

- a. First Home must be discounted by minimum of 30% against the market value;
- b. After the discount has been applied, the first sale must be at a price no higher than £250,000. This does not apply to subsequent sales, and
- c. The discount is passed on to future purchasers, secured through a section 106 agreement.
- d. The home is sold to a person who meets the First Homes eligibility criteria.

The First Homes eligibility criteria require the purchaser (or all purchasers if a joint purchase):

- a. To be a first-time buyer, as defined by paragraph 6 of Schedule 6ZA of the Finance Act 2003.

- b. To have a household annual income of no more than £80,000, and
- c. Should have a mortgage or home purchase plan to fund a minimum of 50% of the discounted purchase price.

Subsequent sales must also be to a person or persons who meet the First Homes eligibility criteria.

The developer/owner will be expected to enter into a s106 legal agreement to secure the above provisions.

The discount

The minimum discount will be 30% of the open market value. A developer may choose to offer a higher discount

The discount percentage will be applied to all future sales and will be secured in perpetuity through a s106 agreement as a planning obligation.

Any review of the First Homes policy and affordability may lead to the introduction of a higher discount.as appropriate.

The vendor will need to provide a market value undertaken by a Valuer who is qualified by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors.

The price cap

The cost of a First Homes dwelling to the first-time buyer shall be no more than £250,000 after the discount has been applied. The price cap applies to only the first sale and may be exceeded by future house price rises on subsequent sales.

Exemptions to First Homes

Some categories of Affordable Housing are exempt from the requirement to deliver a proportion as First Homes, including specialist housing, such as housing for older people, supported housing, developments which are Affordable Housing only, self-build and custom- built housing, and Build to Rent. See also paragraph 65 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Rural Exception Sites are not specifically exempted from the requirement to provide First Homes, except where all the homes are Affordable Housing (see below section on First Homes Exception sites).

Current Local Plan policy

This guidance summarises the national guidance on the delivery of First Homes, to which the Council will have regard in determining planning applications. It also sets out how this national guidance interacts with current Local Plan policies and supplementary guidance in the delivery of Affordable Housing.

The council expects First Homes, as included within the definition of Affordable Housing, to comply with the requirements Redditch Borough Council Local Plan No 4 [Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 4 - redditchbc.gov.uk](http://redditchbc.gov.uk)

The Council's Local Plan states that contributions towards affordable housing will not normally be sought from development of 10 units or less, and which have a maximum combined gross floorspace of no more than 1000 sq m (gross internal area). On sites of 11 or more dwellings (net), a 30% contribution towards the provision of affordable housing will be expected. On-site provision should be made and must incorporate a mix of dwelling types and sizes, which reflect the site's characteristics, the development as a whole, and meets the needs identified in the Borough Council's most up to date Strategic Housing Market Assessment or other up to date local housing need surveys, and in consultation with the Borough Council's Housing Strategy Team. The Borough Council will seek to negotiate the mix of affordable housing tenures on individual schemes taking account of local needs, the housing mix in the local area and the impact on viability. A mix of the following tenures will generally be sought: Social rented; Intermediate housing/ Affordable rent.

Affordable Housing contribution

As stated above, the Affordable Housing contribution required by policy of 30% of all dwellings on major residential developments. The preferred tenure split is:

- Social Rent two third
- Affordable Home Ownership one third.

Developments required to provide First Homes should deliver 25% of the Affordable Housing quantum (See below for worked example)

Paragraph 65 NPPF requires at least 10% of all dwellings on major housing developments, subject to the exemptions listed, to be available as Affordable Home Ownership, which includes First Homes. There is, therefore, a shortfall of Affordable Home Ownership dwellings to make up the 33.33% Affordable Home Ownership.

The Council's preferred tenure to make up this shortfall of Affordable Home Ownership is Shared Ownership. The Council will consider other forms of

Affordable Home Ownership, including First Homes.

Example at 30%

A residential development of 200 dwellings is liable for a minimum 30% Affordable Housing contribution.

Affordable Housing (AH) units	$200 \times 30\% = 60$
First Homes units	$60 \times 25\% = 15$
One third Affordable Home Ownership (AHO) units	$200 \times 30\%/3 = 20$
Shortfall of AHO	$20 - 15 = 5$
Remainder of AH as Social Rent	$60 - (15 + 5) = 40$

Table ① Affordable Housing tenure split

AH tenure	No. AH units	% total units (200)	% Affordable Housing
First Homes	15	7.5	25
Other AHO*	5	2.5	8.33
Social Rent	40	20	66.67
Total	60	30	100

*The other Affordable Home Ownership units may be additional First Homes or Shared Ownership.

In those cases where a reduced Affordable Housing contribution has been agreed due to viability considerations, 25% of that contribution will be First Homes. The remaining Affordable Housing tenures will prioritise Social Rent and ensure that 10% of all dwellings on site are Affordable Home Ownership.

Financial contribution

All Affordable Housing, including First Homes, is expected to be delivered on-site, unless it can be robustly justified as inappropriate, in which case a financial contribution in lieu, of equivalent value to what would have been provided on-site, may be acceptable. Any financial contribution made in lieu of affordable housing will be used towards the funding of additional affordable housing.

Marketing/Disposal/Monitoring

See Appendix 2: Application Process

The First Homes will be marketed and sold by the Developer. The developer will

need to ensure First Homes are advertised with all relevant information to ensure the eligibility criteria can be met.

The developer will be responsible for paying for all advertising and processing of potential purchasers' applications to the Council. The developer selects the potential purchaser(s) and only one purchaser per plot/home is passed through at any one time to the Council for the eligibility check and authorisation processes. A prior declaration will need to be completed to confirm the potential purchaser is eligible. Fees will be introduced for the eligibility checks and authorisation processes per sale, as well as for monitoring the purchase and sales activities through initial and subsequent sales.

Any local eligibility criteria (local connection) will apply for a maximum of three months from when a home is first marketed. If a suitable buyer has not reserved a home after three months, the eligibility criteria will revert to the national criteria set out above, to widen the consumer base.

If, following six months of marketing and having taken all reasonable steps to sell the property (including, where appropriate, reducing the asking price) the property fails to sell it should be expected that the seller (either the developer or a future First Homeowner) compensates the Council for the loss of the affordable housing unit with a financial contribution.

This financial contribution should be the value of the discount the First Home was to be sold for, as a percentage of the final sale price (or, as much as possible of that value once the value of all lending against the property has been cleared) and net of any additional Stamp Duty liability incurred.

Re-sales of First Homes will be subject to the same discount and eligibility criteria and will need to accord with the same marketing and compensation (in the event of no sale) processes as required on the initial sale by the developer.

The above provisions and related terms for implementation will be secured through a Section 106 agreement.

Local connection requirement

In addition to the national eligibility criteria for First Homes owner occupiers, the Council will require all applicants and purchasers of First Homes to have a local connection to Redditch Borough Council, as set out in the Redditch Homes Allocations Policy.

Local Connection

The Council will apply a local connection criteria for First Homes applicants as there are affordability issues in the Borough due to high house prices that are inaccessible to those with lower quartile and median incomes (see appendix 1). The local connection criteria is extracted from the Council's Housing allocations policy which

was consulted upon prior to implementation.

In determining whether the household has a local connection the Council will agree a connection exists in the following circumstances;

- Where the local connection arises due to residency - applicant(s) must have lived in Redditch Borough for a minimum period of two years or have resided in the Borough for three out of the last five years at the point of application.
- Where the local connection arises due to employment and the applicant(s) has been in permanent, paid employment in the Borough immediately prior to the application or the applicant(s) has a certified offer of employment in the Borough.*
- Where the applicant(s) has a close family member living in the Borough for a minimum period of three years, immediately prior to the application.

In determining permanent employment, we will give consideration to the Local Government Association guidelines which state that this is employment other than that of a casual nature.

In determining close family member, we mean mother, father, sister, brother or adult child (aged 18 and over).

Armed Forces

Members of the UK armed forces stationed abroad will be considered as living in the United Kingdom for the purposes of applying for social housing.

The Secretary of State has the power to prescribe in Regulations criteria that may not be used by local housing authorities in deciding what classes of persons are not qualifying persons (s. 160ZA(8)(b)). These Regulations require that local housing authorities do not use local connection (within the meaning of s. 199 of the Housing Act 1996) as a criterion in deciding whether the following are not qualifying persons:

- a. persons who are serving in the regular forces or have done so in the five years preceding their application for an allocation of housing accommodation.
- b. bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where their spouse or partner's death is attributable (wholly or partly) to their service and the bereaved spouse or civil partner's entitlement to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation then ceases.
- c. seriously injured, ill or disabled reservists (or former reservists) whose injury, illness or disability is attributable wholly or partly to their service.

The Council recognises the contribution that armed forces personnel have made and will waive the local connection requirement to those applicants as described above.

The Council will also extend the provision above to include divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Service Personnel who are required to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence.

This local connection requirement is subject to the time limit of three months from when the home is first marketed, after which it will revert to national eligibility criteria, as set out in paragraph 008 NPPG: First Homes.

First Homes Exception sites

Entry level exception sites (paragraph 72 National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF)), allow for the development of affordable housing on sites under one hectare in size not already allocated for housing and adjacent to existing settlements, excluding Green Belt areas or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It was intended that they would be suitable for first time buyers.

Entry level exception sites are being replaced by First Homes exception sites, which will be consistent with the provisions applying to entry level schemes, as above, and as set out in the Written Ministerial Statement. Although primarily for the development of First Homes, other types of Affordable Housing can be considered where there is evidence of a significant local need. A small proportion of market housing may be included where it is needed to enable a scheme to proceed, as explained in the First Homes NPPG.

The Council will support proposals for First Homes exception sites, where it can be demonstrated that the need for such homes is not being met elsewhere in the Borough.

Rural Exception Sites are not specifically exempted from the requirement to provide First Homes, except where all the homes are Affordable Housing. Where a small proportion of market housing is included to ensure the economic viability of the development, 25% of the Affordable Housing units should be provided as First Homes where evidence of a local need can be demonstrated.

Transitional arrangements

The national guidance came into effect on 28 June 2021, with transitional arrangements for sites with planning permission already granted or determined before 28 December 2021, which will not be required to provide First Homes (see paragraphs 020 – 022 NPPG: First Homes)

Applications where significant pre-application discussions on the Affordable Housing contribution have taken place and which are determined before 28 March 2022 will not be required to provide First Homes although the council will consider proposals to amend the tenure mix to include First Homes.

See Appendix 3: Transitional arrangements.

Appendix 1 First Homes HEDNA Tables

1.1 Affordable Need: Home Ownership

1.1.1 .

1.1.2 In Redditch, a household income of just over £40,000 is required to purchase entry-level (lower quartile) properties (assuming a property price of £165,000, a 15% deposit and a loan to income ratio of 3.5). Based on CAMEO income data, it is estimated that 32% of all households within the district can afford this, and only 18% of all private renters. It is households that fall into the 'gap' between being able to afford lower quartile market rents and open market property prices are the ones targeted for affordable home ownership products (such as First Homes, Help to Buy Equity Loans, Help to Buy Shared Ownership, and Rent to Buy). Using the CAMEO Income data, it is estimated that around 25% of all households in Redditch sit in this 'gap', and 30% of private renter households.

Affordable Home Ownership Supply

1.1.3 Affordable home re-sales data has been used to estimate the flow of stock that could be offset against the identified level of need. Affordable home ownership sales data from MHCLG suggests that, on average, five shared ownership properties per year have been re-sold in Redditch between 2016 and 2019. As with the calculation of affordable need (rent), no element of committed supply is included in the affordable home ownership calculation, as new affordable housing is a 'one-off' element of supply, rather than part of the flow of properties through re-sales. It is important to note, however, that any new affordable dwellings should be netted off during monitoring.

1.1.4 Combining the identified level of need (43 per year) with the re-sales data (5 per year) results in a net annual need for 39 affordable homes (for ownership) per year to 2040 (Table 72).

Need for Affordable Home Ownership

Step 1: Current Need		
1.1	Current households in private rent	4,800
1.2	No. private rent households in 'gap' between open market rent and purchase (1.1 x 30%)	1,423
1.3	No. seeking to become a homeowner (EHS) (1.2 x 16%)	228
1.4	Annual quota of current need (1.3 / 19)	12
Step 2: Future Need		
2.1	New household formation (gross p.a.)	751
2.2	No. newly-forming households in 'gap' open market rent and purchase (2.1 x 26%)	196

2.3	Newly-forming households seeking to become a homeowner (EHS) (2.2 x 16%)	31
Step 3: Affordable Housing Supply		
3.1	Shared ownership resales per annum	5
3.2	Affordable Home Ownership committed supply	0
3.3	Total supply (3.1 + 3.2)	5
Step 4: Estimate of Annual Housing Need		
4.1	Gross need for Affordable Home Ownership (1.4 + 2.3)	43
4.2	Total annual supply (3.3)	5
NET Annual Affordable Housing Need (to purchase)		39

¹ See Appendix E **Error! Reference source not found.** for a summary of the costs associated with these affordable home ownership products.

¹ MHCLG CORE

1.2 Implications of First Homes on Affordable Housing

1.2.1 With the introduction of the First Homes scheme in June 2021, there is now a requirement for 25% of all affordable housing units delivered by developers through planning obligations to be First Homes . For the remaining 75% of affordable housing, social rent should be delivered 'in the same percentage as set out in the local plan', with the remainder of affordable housing tenures delivered in line with the proportion set out in local plan policy.

1.2.2 The implications of this of the identified affordable need are summarised below in Table 73, based on the proportional split between social rent, affordable rent, and affordable home ownership as identified in the analysis above.

1.2.3 With First Homes accounting for 25% of the total, and social rent accounting for 46%, the remaining 29% is split between affordable rent (6%) and shared ownership (23%).

Table 93: CAMEO income bands: Redditch

Income Band	CAMEO Income Group Description	% Redditch Households	% UK Households
1	Many households with an income of over £100K +	0.4%	0.7%
2	Many households with an income of between £75 - £100K	1.6%	2.4%
3	Many households with an income of between £50 - £75K	8.5%	10.1%
4	Many households with an income of between £40 - £50K	12.4%	13.3%
5	Many households with an income of between £30 - £40K	25.1%	19.5%
6	Many households with an income of between £20 - £30K	30.0%	23.2%

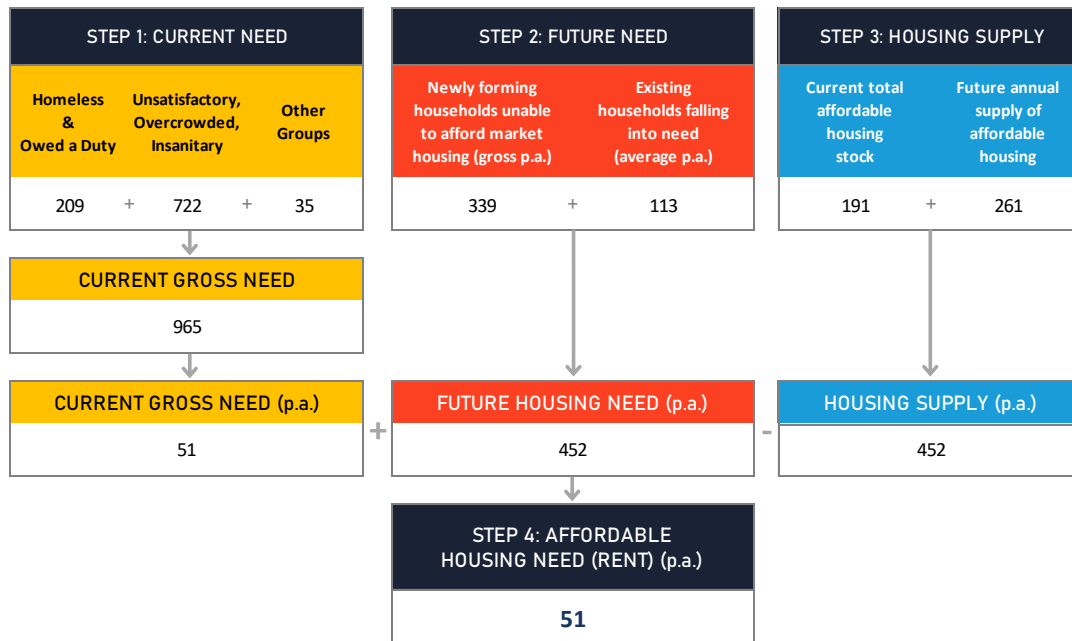
7	Many households with an income of between £10 - £20K	19.5%	26.5%
8	Many households with an income of less than £10K	2.4%	4.1%

Source: CAMEO Income, TransUnion; Royal Mail PAF 2020

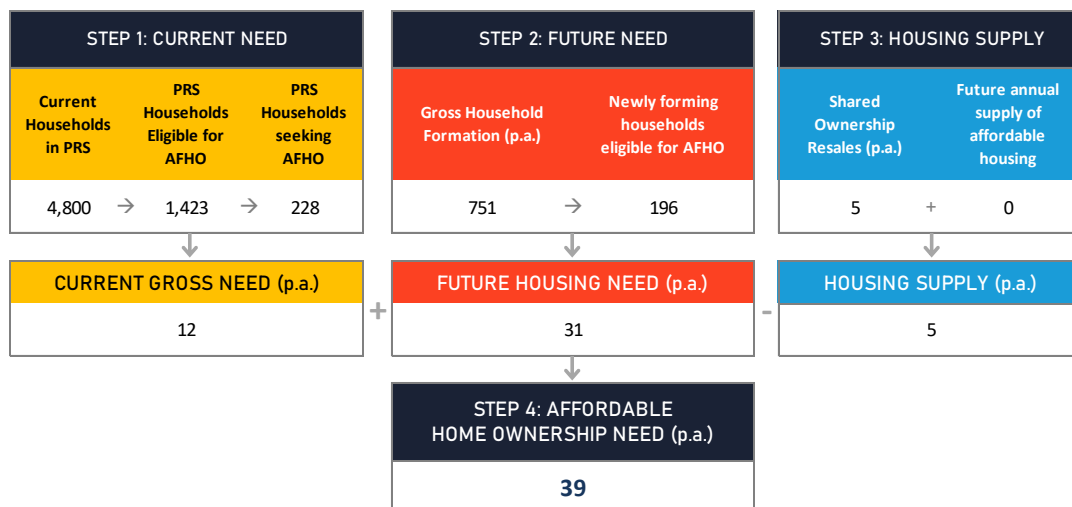
¹ [PPG First Homes](#)

Affordable Housing Need Summary (2021–2040)

Affordable Need: Social & Affordable Rent









Affordable Housing: Home Ownership



Net Annual Affordable Need (2021–2040)

90	Social Rent	46%
	Affordable Rent	11%
	Affordable Home Ownership	43%

Appendix 2 Application Process

	Pre-sale set-up	Customer reservation	Authority to Proceed and Authority to Exchange		Exchange and completion	
 Customer		Customer enquires and chooses to buy specific First Home Conveyancer selected	Completes application pack, including supporting evidence Pays reservation	Submits mortgage application Completes legal declarations with conveyancer	Customer pays deposit	Customer moves in
 Local authority	Local eligibility criteria set s.106 agreements		Local authority receives completed application pack, checks criteria are met and issues Authority to Proceed and conveyancer pack	Local authority receives conveyancer's legal undertaking that the transaction is compliant and issues Authority to Exchange		Receives confirmation of completion and updates record
 Development	Homes identified Pre-sale valuations Marketing s. 106 agreements		Assists in completion of application pack and submits to local authority			
 Mortgage adviser		Assurance that customer can borrow (potentially with DIP)	Assists in completion of application pack			
 Mortgage lender				Mortgage application Lender values for mortgage offer and conveyancer confirms transaction at MV less the discount	Lender provides mortgage funds for legal completion	
 Conveyancer		Lender provides mortgage funds for legal completion		Conveyancer follows standard instruction pack Submits full legal declarations and undertaking to the local authority	Exchange of contracts	Final legal confirmations Registers restriction at HMLR Informs local authority

Appendix 3 Transitional arrangements

Determinations before key dates

	28 June 2021	28 December 2021	28 March 2022
No FH			
No FH			
FH required			
Pre-28/3/22 with significant pre-app engagement on AH – no FH required			

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Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Craig Warhurst
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Judith Willis Head of Community and Housing
Report Author	Amanda Delahunty Job Title: Strategic Housing and Enabling Manager Contact email:a.delahunty@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881269
Wards Affected	No specific ward relevance
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finding Somewhere to Live• Aspiration, work and financial independence• Living independent, active and healthy lives• Communities with are safe, well maintained and green
Non Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 Executive is requested to RESOLVE that: -

- 1) the draft Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-25 and action plan at Appendix 1 be approved for public consultation.**
- 2) delegated authority be given to the Head of Community and Housing Services following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing to agree any changes that may be required following the consultation process.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 requires all housing authorities to have a homelessness strategy in place which is based on a review of all forms of homelessness in their district. The current Worcestershire Homelessness Strategy comes to an end on the 31st December 2022.**

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- 2.2 This new Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (Appendix 1) sets out how the Worcestershire local housing authorities and Worcestershire County Council will work together to prevent and relieve homelessness.
- 2.3 It is intended that this Strategy will sit under the existing Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership Plan.
- 2.4 In developing this Strategy a comprehensive assessment of the nature and extent of homelessness across the County was carried out by analysing homelessness data and taking account of the views of customers and partner organisations
- 2.5 A consultation event was held on 14th June 2022 chaired by Homelessness Link to consider housing from both a strategic and client-based perspective. This event included partners from a variety of statutory and voluntary organisations as well as delegates with lived homelessness experience.
- 2.6 Service users were also consulted and supported to complete a questionnaire to feedback on their experiences.
- 2.7 There continues to be a high demand for social and affordable housing that outstrips supply and the cost of living crisis will undoubtedly impact on an already challenging private sector market making access to private rented housing more difficult. It is also anticipated that there will be increasing demand from those fleeing wars creating a further impact on suitable housing options. This strategy sets out how we will continue to deliver services and respond to the changes that lie ahead.
- 2.8 The top four reasons for homelessness are end of Assured Shorthold Tenancies (AST), family and friends no longer willing to accommodate, other and relationship breakdown (non-violent). This is comparable throughout the county.

	Prevention %			Relief %		
	18/19	19/20	20/21	18/19	19/20	20/21
End of AST	33.6	33.2	23.1	10.2	13.8	6.8
Family/Friends no longer willing to accommodate	26.6	27.1	31.9	21.1	27.8	27.9
Other	15.7	15.7	15.7	16.9	17.1	18.6
Relationship Breakdown (non-violent)	7.2	9	12	16.1	14.5	15.6

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- 2.9 This draft strategy is based around 3 priorities: Prevention, Intervention, and Recovery. This approach aligns with the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy.
1. Prevention: timely support before someone becomes homeless.
 2. Intervention: targeted support to get people off the streets.
 3. Recovery: the need for accommodation and support.
- 2.10 Across all the strategy themes it is a priority to ensure that the safeguarding of all adults including those who sleep rough is explicitly stated and addressed within service aims, learning from the Worcestershire Rough Sleeper Thematic Review and embedding the recommendations throughout the strategy and service delivery.
- 2.11 The action plan has been divided to reflect the three priorities of the strategy.
- 2.11 The strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis and this will include the review of current actions and identification of any new actions required for years two and three.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 None

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Council has a duty under the Homelessness Act 2002 to conduct a review of the nature and extent of homelessness in its District every 5 years and to develop a strategy setting out how services will be delivered in the future to tackle homelessness and the available resources to prevent and relieve homelessness.
- 4.2 The Homelessness Reduction Act came into force in April 2018, and places new legal duties on local housing authorities so that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness will have access to early meaningful help, irrespective of their priority need status, so long as they are eligible for assistance.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

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- 5.1 The Strategy provides a framework for a range of services which support the following Council's strategic purposes:

- Finding Somewhere to Live
- Aspiration, work and financial independence
- Living independent, active and healthy lives
- Communities with are safe, well maintained and green

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 There are no direct climate change implications from the strategy itself but individual actions/services may have an impact.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 The strategy seeks to deliver a range of services for homeless households and draws on ways to improve the work of the Council in developing services and preparing links, pathways and referrals between services to prevent homelessness in the first place or minimise its impact when it happens. The design of services which tackle the root causes of homelessness such as poverty, health inequalities and adversity in childhood will include ensuring that providers have appropriate policies in place to make sure that there is no adverse impact on equalities groups.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 The delivery of the Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy actions will be overseen by the Strategic Housing Team.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 If the Strategy is not approved the Council will not be legally compliant. Furthermore, it is likely that more households who are threatened with homelessness, or who are in housing need, will have limited options for support to sustain their accommodation or find alternative suitable accommodation that meets their needs. If they have to make a homeless approach this could 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

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8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Executive**6th September 2022**

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Craig Warhurst	5 th August 2022
Lead Director / Head of Service	Judith Willis	10 th August 2022
Financial Services	Peter Carpenter	10 th August 2022
Legal Services	Clare Flanagan Principal Solicitor	5 th August 2022
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	Not applicable	
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)	Not applicable	

**Worcestershire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
2022 – 2025**

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Foreword by the Chair of Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership

I am very pleased to introduce Worcestershire's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. This is Worcestershire's fourth homelessness strategy and as I reflect back over the life of the previous strategy I could not have predicted that we would have had to respond to a global pandemic, an economic crisis and the displacement of so many people through war. So it is with some trepidation that we look to the future to present this, our fourth strategy.

We anticipate that the cost of living crisis will be a huge challenge for those on lower incomes and that loss of accommodation, increases in relationship breakdown and domestic abuse and impact on peoples mental and physical health will be significant.

We saw at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic that a government injection of funding dramatically reduced rough sleeping, and we have developed more effective collaborations with partners such as health and social care to ensure that those who are threatened with homelessness or actually experience homelessness receive the support they need. We want to build on these new partnerships so that we can respond effectively and efficiently to the challenges ahead.

With the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act we have created specialisms within our teams to respond effectively to victims and survivors of domestic abuse to ensure they have safe supported accommodation when they are in crisis.

These statutory enhancements to our service do put additional pressures on local authorities and come at a time when the demand for housing across all tenures is outstripping supply and housing costs are increasing. However, we are always looking for innovative solutions to meet needs and increase options available.

The Homelessness Reduction Act has supported us in our aspiration to tackle homelessness in all its forms, from rough sleeping and sofa surfing to those who experience abuse and harm at home or are living in unaffordable or unsatisfactory housing. Anyone can be affected by homelessness and the effects for families and individuals can be devastating and can impact on health and wellbeing, employment, education, and crime.

We want to support people to be able to access good quality accommodation and lead dignified, fulfilling and rewarding lives that have purpose.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the organisations and individuals who worked with us during the pandemic to help others. I would like to also thank those who have contributed towards the development of this strategy. It sits at strategic partnership level within the umbrella of the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership - recognising that tackling homelessness not only benefits the individual but also benefits the economy, the health of our population, reduces crime and disorder, and reduces costs to the taxpayer.

This strategy will govern our approach for three years. However, given our experiences over the last two years, it is vital that it remains responsive and as such it will be kept under constant review.

Kevin Dicks, Chief Executive of Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils and Chair of the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership

Introduction

The Homelessness Reduction Act provided a catalyst for a change in our approach to homelessness and a framework to formalise and normalise upstream working in partnership with other services. In particular, the Duty to Refer has enabled a step change in early notifications of those threatened with homelessness and whilst there is more that can be done, we now have the structure within which to deliver on this approach. Our work with partners such as health, social care, department of work and pensions (DWP) and criminal justice has improved and become much more collaborative. Our pathways for key client groups have, or are being, strengthened.

We are also working to upskill officers working in homelessness to recognise how each individual or household experience of homelessness is different and will often require a bespoke solution. In particular officers need to understand how adversity in childhood may impact on a person's resilience and provide a trauma informed approach. In doing so we are recognising that more people who approach the service have more complex needs and in response to this we are investing more in support services to help people to get back on track.

We have made significant progress in tackling rough sleeping on the back of the Everyone In initiative and intensive housing support through Housing First and Housing Led initiatives are supporting entrenched clients to sustain accommodation and move away from a street lifestyle.

We continue to see a high demand for social and affordable housing that outstrips supply and we anticipate the cost of living crisis will exacerbate an already challenging private sector market making access to private rented housing more difficult.

We are also anticipating increasing demand from those fleeing wars and are gearing up to look for innovative solutions in response to these households.

This strategy sets out how we will continue to deliver services and respond to the changes that lie ahead.

Executive Summary

This strategy is the result of a collaboration between the local housing authorities, voluntary and community sector and statutory partners.

Why prevention, intervention, and recovery?

Worcestershire's strategy for preventing homelessness and rough sleeping is based around 3 priorities: prevention, intervention, and recovery.

This approach aligns with the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy, published in 2018 which is also based around the 3 principles of:

1. Prevention: timely support before someone becomes homeless.
2. Intervention: targeted support to get people off the streets.
3. Recovery: the need for accommodation and support.

Across all of the strategy themes it will be a priority to ensure that the safeguarding of all adults including those who sleep rough is explicitly stated and addressed within service aims, learning from the Worcestershire Rough Sleeper Thematic Review and embedding the recommendations throughout strategy and service delivery.

1. Prevention

The effects of homelessness for families and individuals can be devastating and can have significant negative impacts on health and wellbeing, employment, education, and crime. It can also have significant costs to communities, local authorities, and public services.

Preventing homelessness is much more cost effective than dealing with its consequences. A range of studies have been completed including by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government whose 2012 figures estimated that the average annual cost of homelessness was between £24,000 and £30,000 per person. More importantly, we also know that preventing homelessness and dealing with the root causes delivers far better outcomes for individuals and communities.

That is why we are so committed to preventing homelessness at the earliest possible opportunity and targeting support at those groups who are more vulnerable to becoming homeless. The large proportion of preventative actions within the strategy reflects this commitment.

Through this strategy we will undertake range of preventative actions, including:

- raising awareness around homelessness and rough sleeping to support earlier intervention, particularly through the development and delivery of a communication plan
- explore opportunities to reduce homelessness due to domestic abuse e.g. Sanctuary scheme, powers to remove perpetrators
- Explore further opportunities to co-locate housing staff with other organisations
- Develop, review and refresh protocols including 16 & 17 year olds, prison leavers, care leavers

- Improve intelligence to shape and inform commissioning of services
- Engage regularly with service users to enhance learning from lived experience
- Promote and encourage sign up to the Duty or Commitment to Refer.
- Review issues within the private rented sector following the rent reform legislation and end of the s21 notices to ensure homelessness from the PRS is reduced.
- Work with partners to explore opportunities for further outreach provision from their services e.g. GP drop ins, joint home visits, mental health outreach

2. Intervention

There will always be some people who find themselves homeless or threatened with homeless however good our homelessness prevention response is. We want to ensure that any homelessness is rare, fleeting and non-recurring.

Therefore, we must put in place comprehensive and rapid interventions to help those in crisis, and offer a range of accommodation and support choices to meet specific needs and complexities

We will strengthen our approach to tenancy sustainment across tenures by developing and embedding support services across the county through a community-based approach and ensuring that support is flexible to meet individual support needs.

In particular, we will explore opportunities to fund a specialist mental health role to work specifically with homeless households.

3. Recovery

We want to increase the supply of, and access to, affordable and supported housing, so that people can recover successfully from homelessness. Alongside this we will enable support for those who have multiple and complex needs to try to ensure that homelessness does not reoccur, and longer-term housing solutions are maintained.

Affordable and supported housing supply in Worcestershire is an on-going problem locally, as it is nationally. Demand far outstrips the supply. During the pandemic, government intervened in unprecedented fashion to ensure stability for millions of residents by effectively making it impossible to undertake evictions or repossessions in this country. As a result of this intervention activity levels around homelessness remained relatively stable nationally and locally new, creative ways of working across health services and housing services have developed around, for example, the needs of rough sleepers. However, we are now starting to see an increase in homelessness approaches as these interventions have ended.

This is also compounded by the fact that an overwhelming number of individuals presenting as homeless have multiple and complex needs resulting in exclusion from social rented tenancies and whilst accommodation in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) can be sourced, it has limited levels or no support and is difficult to sustain.

Through this strategy we will

- explore opportunities for a greater range of supported and step-down accommodation, including accommodation for rough sleepers and safe accommodation for survivors of domestic abuse
- review the provision of accommodation and support for young people to ensure no young person will be placed in emergency bed and breakfast with shared facilities, other than in exceptional circumstances
- engage with landlords from the private rented sector to enable access to accommodation across the districts
- work with partners to link households into meaningful activity and services, increase the take up of education and training, and review peer mentoring services
- upscale our response to digital safety

Update from previous strategy

The previous Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy 2019 – 2022 was developed during the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the publication of the national Rough Sleeper Strategy in 2018. The primary focus was around increasing prevention services and the supply of accommodation and mirrored the national strategy by addressing prevention, intervention and recovery. During the strategy lifetime the Corona virus pandemic struck and the way services were delivered to homeless households and rough sleepers across the county changed profoundly, particularly in response to Everyone In. As a consequence, the strategy was given a refresh in 2021 and the action plan was revised.

This section outlines the principal aims and achievements of the strategy, including the revised actions from 2021.

1	Increased prevention services through developing toolkits and providing advice and assistance to over 4k households	6	Learn from those with lived experience to improve services- 24 service users interviewed as part of the RSI2022-25 and review process in North Worcestershire
2	Encouraged partners to use the Alert system and sign up to and use the Duty or Commitment to Refer through training sessions, local homelessness forums and county events.	7	Enhanced services to Rough Sleepers including a single service offer, motivational interviewing, Psychologically Informed Environment (PIE) services, meaningful activities and Housing First
3	Greater information available to customers through social media posts, refreshed websites, face to face and written materials	8	Explored information sharing through protocols, panels and IT systems – rough sleeper, prevention and domestic abuse panels established
4	Raised awareness of homelessness through schools and GP (social prescribers) to support early intervention	9	Investigated joint funding opportunities with regards to Mental Health services for Homeless households and Rough Sleepers
5	Enhanced partnership working through drop-in sessions, regular joint events and meetings	10	Made better use of statistical data to inform service development in relation to Rough Sleepers

Unfortunately, the pandemic did prevent the delivery of some objectives including hosting annual partnership events and establishing a service user group. An unsuccessful funding bid, due to high levels of competition from other councils, meant mental health services specifically for homeless households have not been developed.

National and Local Context

The Homelessness Review includes a more detailed consideration of the national and local context but there are some specific issues that are highlighted below as they are significant pieces of legislation or due to their impact on homelessness.

Welfare Benefits

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 made changes to the rules concerning a number of welfare benefits including the introduction of Universal Credit which replaced a combined six benefits for working age people who have a low household income – Employment and Support Allowance, Income-based Job Seekers Allowance and Income Support, Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit and Housing Benefit.

It also introduced an ‘underoccupancy penalty’ which reduced the amount of benefit paid to claimants in social housing if they are deemed to have more bedrooms than their household size required and limited the total amount of money available to benefit claimants and the total benefits paid to a single person may not now exceed £350pw, the maximum available to families is £500pw including housing costs. This created a number of challenges to existing tenants underoccupying social housing in making up the rent shortfall and for those with larger families to afford their rent. In the Spending Review 2021 the Government announced an adjustment to the taper rate of Universal Credit and the increase in the work allowance to support recovery from the pandemic and to help mitigate some of the impact of ending the Universal Credit uplift.

There were some mitigations including the Household Support Fund and one off Homelessness Prevention Grant to support vulnerable private renters which targeted those unable to work or facing additional financial pressures.

Declining social housing supply and housing affordability

Across the county there is very high demand for social housing with nearly 12,000 households on the housing registers. High employment levels and economic growth bring major opportunities for Worcestershire but also present significant challenges, including high housing costs and a shortage of accommodation which is affordable to local people especially those with low incomes.

There was a sharp reduction during 2021/22 in social housing lettings across the county due to pandemic down to 700 from a high of 1478 in 2018/19¹. There is also a mismatch between the social housing available for letting. For example approximately 50% of vacancies in Wyre Forest are for older people, and yet less than 10% of the households on the housing register are over 65. Part of the issue is the overall decline of social housing numbers as a consequence of the right to buy and right to acquire, for example in 2018/19 113 homes were sold across the county through the Right To Buy or the Right to Acquire.

In many parts of the county the supply of private rented properties at or close to local housing allowance levels is very restricted. In addition. most new social housing

¹ Worcester letting data not included

properties are at “affordable” rather than “social” rent trapping households into benefit dependency.

Incomes and the cost of living

Across the county there is a difference in household income. The average gross salary varies from £28.6k in Wyre Forest to £33.5k in Redditch but is well below the UK average of £38.1k. Affordability of housing is also an issue in parts of the county with only Wyre Forest and Worcester city median house price to median salary ratio lower than the England and Wales average of 7.69. The unemployment rate across the county is lower than the national average ranging from 3.5% in Wychavon to 4.7% in Redditch.

The impact of Covid-19, Brexit and the war in Ukraine has affected the cost of living (particularly food and fuel) and inflation is at it's highest since the 1970s. This will have an impact on household disposable income and is likely to lead to many more people experiencing economic hardship, including some of those who have previously been relatively well off. It will also exacerbate existing poverty and those who have no credit history or savings to fall back on are likely to be particularly affected.

In terms of protected characteristics, evidence from the Cabinet Office identifies that Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) people are more likely than non-BAME people to experience housing issues in relation to quality of housing, cost of renting as a proportion of income and overcrowding. In Worcestershire female employees earn less than their male counterparts in every area.

During the pandemic the lockdowns led to a reduction in income for many households and a consequent increase in rent arrears in both the social housing and private rented sector. Additional funding was given to local authorities in 2022 to support those in rent arrears and those generally experiencing hardship through the Household Support Fund and Vulnerable Renters funding. The use of food banks (distribution of food parcels) nearly doubled between 2019/20 and 2021/22.

Provision for rough sleepers

The “Everyone In” initiative commenced in March 2020 during Covid restrictions to provide accommodation to everyone in need including those not normally entitled to assistance under homelessness legislation. This scheme enabled councils to work with clients who had previously not engaged with housing and support services. We have learnt lessons along the way, and this has resulted in different working practices, being more person focused with a greater understanding of the complexities behind rough sleeping and the cycle of repeat homelessness. In 2020/21 the county made a successful bid for Rough Sleeper Initiative funding. This was extended in 2021/22 and a further bid has been made for 2022-25. This has enabled the councils to enhance localised provision and housing supply for rough sleepers.

Survivors of Domestic Abuse

The Local Housing Authorities and County Council have well established partnership working including a recently established Domestic Abuse Partnership Board which is a successor to the longstanding Domestic Abuse Forum. The councils have

previously jointly commissioned services for survivors and there is partnership working with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and other partners around commissioning of “Drive” Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) and training.

Domestic Act 2021 Part IV

This legislation has given local authorities (LAs) further duties in relation to homelessness, undertaking a needs assessment, providing appropriate accommodation (with a new accommodation standard) and the provision of Domestic Abuse support. It also imposes a duty on LAs to have a Local Partnership Board and to work in partnership with Local Housing Authorities (LHA) in areas where there are two tiers of local government.

The legislation states that local authority housing duties include offering ‘Safe Accommodation’ and this includes the offer of support from a local expert support service. ‘Safe Accommodation’ consists of self-contained supported accommodation or traditional refuge accommodation. Therefore ‘Bed and Breakfast’ is not considered to be Safe Accommodation.

The legislation also refers to assessing what other duties are owed to the survivor presenting as homeless, under other homeless legislation. Survivors should always be considered as homeless where there is a significant risk of harm should they remain in their property, and appropriate support should be offered.

The recent Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has enhanced the commissioning work with the County Council and they now also fund specialist Domestic Abuse housing staff within the Housing Advice teams and indirectly support the provision of safe houses.

Prison leavers

In Worcestershire the lack of suitable accommodation undermines the ability of individual involved in the Criminal Justice system to settle and increases the future likelihood of their reoffending. The Worcestershire local authorities are in the process of conducting a review of the Criminal Justice Housing Pathway in partnership with Campbell Tickell.

Partners are committed to the development of a new model utilising existing services, assets, and capacity and to modify approaches as necessary to provide a more joined up pathway.

Our ambition for Worcestershire is that the Criminal Justice Housing and Support Pathway will bring together the full range of partners to provide a bespoke response to individuals that will enable rehabilitation and prevent or tackle homelessness.

Health context

The development of Primary Care Networks (PCN) has led to closer working relationships between GPs and District Councils including through the formation of Collaboratives.

The Health and Wellbeing Board acts as a forum in which key leaders from the local health and care system work together to improve the health and wellbeing of their local population. In Worcestershire the Board also has representation from District

Council members and the Chief Executive of Redditch and Bromsgrove (in his role as Chair of the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership). The Board are currently overseeing the review and development of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy which was out for consultation in early 2022.

The population of Worcestershire is ageing, with 23% over 65 compared to 18.6% in England and Wales and this does put additional pressure on health services.

Average life expectancy in Worcestershire for males is 80.1 years and 83.8 for females. These levels are above England's worst life expectancy areas but not as good as its best areas.

Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The Draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy "Being Well in Worcestershire" has been out for consultation and a final version is anticipated in November 2022. This strategy has a particular focus on good mental health and wellbeing. Under this main priority are three sub-priorities of healthy living at all ages and stages of life; safe, thriving and healthy homes; communities and places and quality local jobs and opportunities. The second of these three sub-priorities is particularly relevant to this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, with its focus on tackling health inequalities.

Analysis

The implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) (2017) in 2018 led to a peak in applications in 2018/19 with the new duties owed. Please see Appendix One for more information about the statutory framework. However, this is not a trend that has continued and there has been a decrease in most Districts over the 4 year period. Redditch and Bromsgrove saw a small peak during 2019/20. The level of homeless applications in all districts remained lower in 2020/21 than in 2018/19 (except in Redditch).

Duties have been owed to over 95% of those approaching as homeless in 2018/19 increasing to over 98% in the subsequent years. More duties are owed to those already homeless, under the relief category. The total number of approaches under the relief category reached a peak of 54% in 2020/21 which is attributable to the Covid 19 pandemic and the “Everyone In” scheme.

Countywide the top four reasons for homelessness are end of Assured Shorthold Tenancies (AST), family and friends no longer willing to accommodate, other and relationship breakdown (non-violent). This is comparable throughout the county. More work needs to be done to identify the reasons for homelessness for those in the “other” category.

Table One: Reasons for homelessness at prevention and relief stage

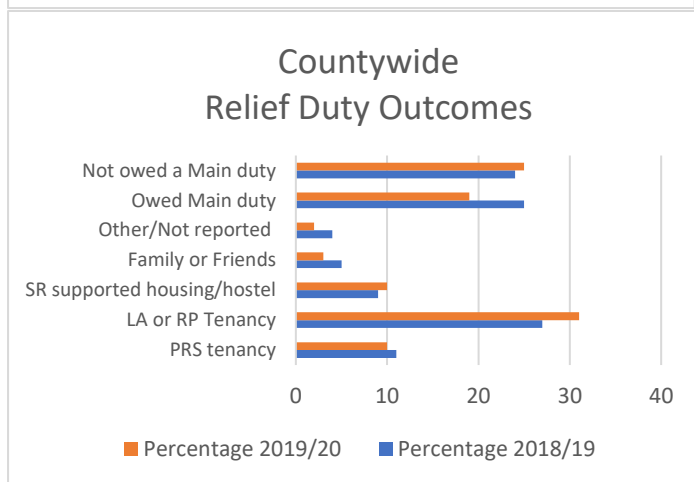
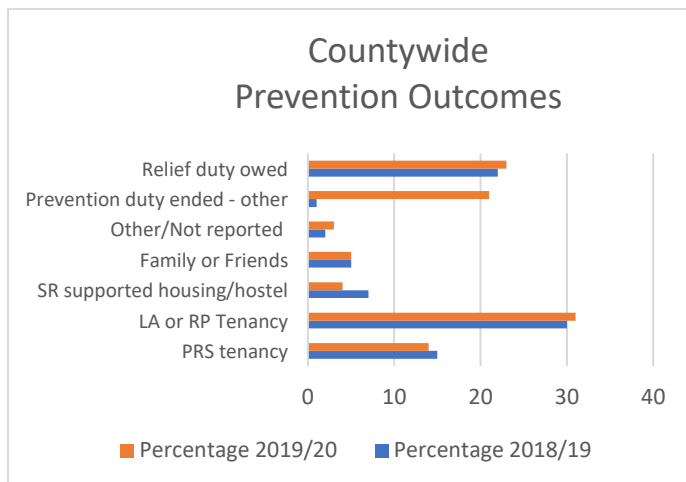
	Prevention %			Relief %		
	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
End of AST	33.6	33.2	23.1	10.2	13.8	6.8
Family/Friends no longer willing to accommodate	26.6	27.1	31.9	21.1	27.8	27.9
Other	15.7	15.7	15.7	16.9	17.1	18.6
Relationship Breakdown (non-violent)	7.2	9	12	16.1	14.5	15.6

The pandemic saw more time spent with family and friends due to lockdown restrictions. Statistics countywide evidence the stress this had on relationships with the increase in homelessness due to family and friends no longer willing to accommodate and non-violent relationship breakdowns. More notably, the number of homeless presentations due to domestic abuse saw an 8-9% increase between 2018/19 and 2020/21, prior to the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Table Two: Homeless presentations due to Domestic Abuse

	Prevention %	Relief %	Total %
2018/19	4.5	12.7	17.2
2019/20	4.2	11.9	16.1
2020/21	8.2	17	25.2

In 2018-2020 55-60% of those who had a prevention duty owed and 56% owed a relief duty secured accommodation throughout the County.



Households affected by homelessness

This section considers some specific groups within the homeless cohort affected by homelessness. These are the groups that make up the majority of households that approach us and are often the most vulnerable to becoming homeless. The strategy will cover the context and data relating to the various groups and then illustrate what currently happens with an overview of current prevention, intervention and recovery elements of service delivery.

Single People

Context

Single people are often most exposed to changes to welfare benefits and cost of living rises. Affordability issues are likely to be an issue in this cohort. Reflecting this, single homeless people make up a large proportion of applicants on the districts housing registers with the highest age range of between 18 – 34.

Whilst services for single homeless people across the county may differ slightly to reflect the needs and demands specific to each district, the core objectives remain consistent.

Data Collection

In 2020/21 just over 50% of all homeless approaches across the county were from single people. The two most common causes of homelessness in Worcestershire are the loss of private rented accommodation and family or friends being no longer willing to accommodate. The support needs of this group vary but most common support needs across the homeless cohort include mental illness or disability, physical illness or disability and domestic abuse.

Achievements to date

Prevention

The districts are working directly with the private rented sector to prevent tenancies failing and support those in the private sector. This is being achieved by support officers working directly with both the resident and the landlord including through the establishment of Prevention Panels in some local authority areas. These panels meet regularly at a local level and work to find housing and rent arrears solutions as well as coordinated working and information sharing. As part of the role of the panels moving forward, councils will be clear about who is the lead professional for each case.

The Countywide Single Person and Childless Couples Homeless Prevention Support Service is currently provided by Caring for Communities and People (CCP) and is jointly funded by the six LHAs and the County Council. This service's remit is to help councils meet their obligations in providing the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) provision, as well as providing a support service via drop-in sessions and home visits to individuals who are unlikely to be found in priority need.

Districts have various options to overcome any financial barriers including Rent Bond Schemes, Welfare Assistance applications, Discretionary Housing payments, Help to Stay, tenancy training, financial inclusion and CAB work and food bank referrals.

Early intervention is less easy to achieve when homelessness is predominantly caused by sudden personal crisis, going forward further work is required to engage private sector landlords, to embed approaches such as the 'Help to Stay' scheme and to promote the support and services we can offer.

Intervention

Where homelessness cannot be prevented, we work to act quickly to intervene by developing clear pathways for specific client groups. Where temporary accommodation is required, we have support officers in place who work with clients individually to develop a housing pathway into sustainable accommodation. Support will include help to identify and undertake meaningful activity, reconnections with friends and family or where this isn't an option then to connect to the People Like Us project (Plus) that helps tackle social isolation and loneliness across the county for 18+.

Recovery

The use of Private Sector Leasing Schemes is being developed across the county to ensure a supply of affordable housing which meets current standards and increases the options open to people. Applicants are also supported as part of this work to ensure a smooth transition into a sustainable tenancy.

Complex needs and Rough Sleepers

Context

The Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy was launched in August 2018. The Government is committed to halving rough sleeping by 2022 and announced in December 2019 a commitment to ending rough sleeping by 2024

Rough sleeping can be a dangerous and isolating experience. People who sleep rough are more likely to be victims of crime and violence. The longer a person remains on the streets or actively engages in street life culture the more likely it will have significant implications on their physical and mental health.

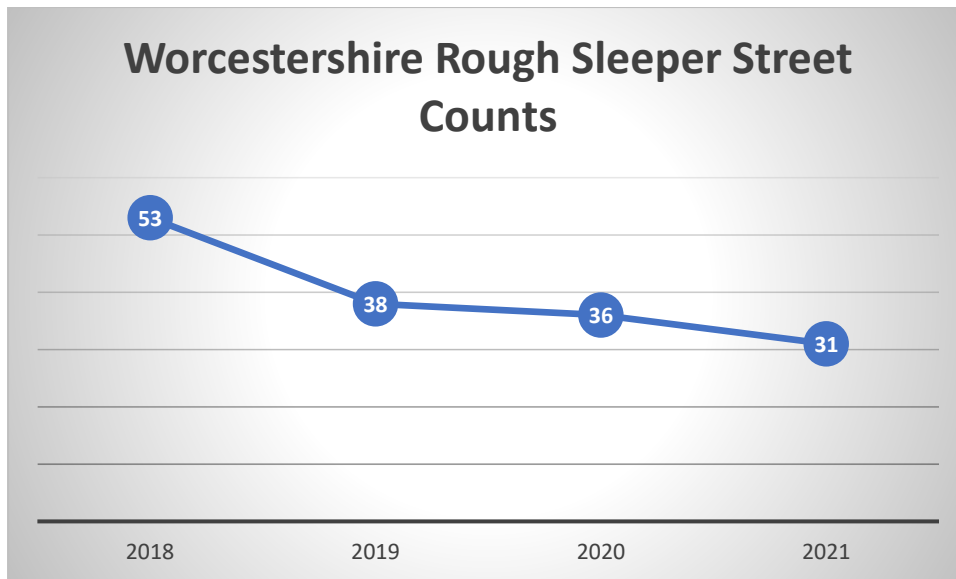
Safeguarding issues are particularly relevant to this group and certain actions in relation to safeguarding have been identified by the Thematic Review of Rough Sleepers, undertaken by the Adult Safeguarding Board in 2020. Those pertinent to the six LHAs are included in the action plan.

One of the positive outcomes of "Everyone In" was to embed the regular rough sleeper meetings. Having regular rough sleeper/prevention meetings at a local level enables the co-ordination of services and information sharing to develop partnerships with all organisations and individuals committed to ending rough sleeping and homelessness. This includes a consideration of any safeguarding issues that need to be flagged with partners or referred to the Adult Safeguarding Team.

Of the homeless population with complex needs or an offending background, there is limited availability of supported accommodation which can be accessed rapidly resulting in households only option of off the street or long term supported housing being outside of the county. Although Supported Housing providers in Worcestershire work within a trauma informed, person centred approach clients with substance misuse, serious mental health conditions and/or a history of arson may find themselves waiting for a suitable placement due to stringent criteria.

Data Collection

Worcestershire official street count held each year has seen a decrease in rough sleepers since 2018 (please see table below).



Rough sleeper data is collated each week improving our local intelligence of the flow, return, stock of households and the reason behind their homelessness.

In terms of “Everyone In”, across the county over 150 people were assisted in response to the first lockdown.

Data we collect is reviewed to identify trends and possible gaps in service delivery including in accommodation options for complex needs clients via the Supportive Housing Needs Assessment being led by Worcestershire County Council.

Achievements to date

Prevention

In each Local Authority a Rough Sleepers meeting has been established and attended by statutory organisations, voluntary sector, and local charities. This meeting shares information and agrees actions to reduce rough sleeping.

The Rough Sleeper Initiative funding has enabled the creation of localised provisions of No First Night Out (NFNO) /No Second Night Out (NSNO) settings offering “Off the Street” accommodation at an earlier opportunity, resulting in households new to the street or at high risk of rough sleeping being accommodated with a structured support package and move on options. It has also funded assertive outreach focusing on street-based responses both directly from the Housing Authorities but also in partnership with a local homeless charity, Maggs Day Centre who provide the Maggs Outreach and Assessment Team (MOAT)s and the commissioned Navigator services.

There are targeted prevention services including officers who focus on early intervention and prevention through regular meetings with social, private sector landlords and other services who encounter people who are at risk of homelessness. Homeless Support/Prevention Officers are working with clients at risk of rough sleeping through a person centred, strengths-based approach to maintain their accommodation. There are also tenancy sustainment services and those focused on the private rented sector, such as “Help to stay” in Wyre Forest and BDHT 360

Support in Bromsgrove which is aimed at private sector landlords who are considering ending tenancies. This helps to reduce homelessness caused by the ending of tenancies by providing tenants support and signposting to be able to stay.

We are working with people with lived experience of homelessness to provide a more personalised, inclusive approach to the overall quality of the services provided and more information on this is included in the Homeless Review.

As part of the development of the Rough Sleeper Action Plans we have identified a specific, long term challenge with female rough sleepers, who have spells in unsuitable and short term accommodation, in some areas and there are no specific specialist services to meet this need.

Intervention

For people already rough sleeping there are services such as the Navigation Support Service who are working with our more complex rough sleepers from rough sleeping into accommodation/housing pathway plan. This is assisted by the MOATs floating support service working with rough sleepers who are disengaged with local services/housing options teams. For those rough sleepers who do engage with councils there are Homeless Support/Prevention officers working with former rough sleepers in accommodation or those vulnerable to rough sleeping onto an accommodation/housing pathway using a person centred, strength-based approach

To support rough sleepers during the colder months we have localised, countywide delivery of the Severe Winter Emergency Provision (SWEP). During Covid this moved from communal provision to self-contained rooms which led to greater levels of usage in some districts.

In parts of the County there are supported Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) accommodation used as a housing option for households who may require tenancy ready skills/support prior to accessing independent accommodation.

Worcester, Wychavon and more recently Wyre Forest have all been successful in Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP) bids to support people coming off the streets and receiving accommodation and tailored packages of support. In Wyre Forest this will provide a women only specialist service for women at risk of or who are rough sleeping who might also be at risk of exploitation, domestic violence, prostitution etc and who have had unsettled periods of accommodation for a number of years.

Recovery

The Rough Sleeper Initiative and Business Rates Retention Scheme funding has enabled Housing Authorities to implement Housing First (delivered in partnership with St Pauls Hostel) and Housing Led projects throughout Worcestershire. This has taken the most entrenched rough sleeper cohort, some of whom have been on the streets for more than ten years, to maintain social housing tenancies with intensive support.

In addition, there are a range of other accommodation schemes including Private Sector Leasing Schemes increasing options to access affordable, high standard

housing, rent deposit schemes to help access the private rented sector and shared housing provision with individual support packages.

To support former rough sleepers in the longer term some councils have commissioned a Peer Mentor service, using those with lived life experiences working in conjunction with support workers to support rough sleepers.

A Worcestershire Communities of Practice has been established, facilitated by Homeless Link, that is attended by local authority housing options, homeless charities and voluntary sector partners with the focus on sharing good practices.

Finally, personalisation budgets have been set up enabling councils to fund specialist support packages such as access to counselling services and meaningful activities to reduce/break the cycle of homelessness.

Families with children

Context

Worcestershire is an attractive place to live and work, inevitably leading to high rents and house prices, from increasing demand. This means some families are unable to afford a home. The recent pandemic and changes to the benefits system together with the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and the number of people in low paid work has seen a rise in the number of families at risk of homelessness.

We want to prevent homelessness by identifying the key risk factors/triggers in families lives that can lead to a family being at risk of homelessness at the earliest possible stage.

Data Collection

Across Worcestershire there are currently 5518 families on the Housing register.

The data behind family homelessness in Worcestershire suggests that the immediate 'triggers' for family homelessness approaches are primarily relationship breakdown with partner (non-violent breakdown) which accounted for 16% of homeless approaches in 2018 to 15.6% in 2021; 12.7% of approaches were due to Domestic Abuse in 2018 raising to 17% in 2021; and the end of private rented tenancy (assured shorthold tenancy) which was 10.2% in 2018 and down to 6.8% in 2021, due to the eviction embargo during the pandemic.

Achievements to date

Prevention

Throughout the county there are online customer portals to encourage self-referrals at an early stage to obtain housing advice and access the housing register. Housing Authorities have also raised awareness of where to go for help through publishing of materials to promote services and support available and ensuring websites are regularly updated with local and national advice enabling customers to help themselves where possible.

The Duty to Refer (through ALERT) and Commitment to Refer has increased the referrals from a wider range of agencies for customers who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

There are different multi – agency groups established including prevention panels to provide meaningful advice, support and assistance to particular cases.

The Housing Authorities work with landlords in the private and social housing sector in developing and supporting pre-eviction protocols to ensure eviction is always the last resort and they have assisted with rent arrears payments to ensure evictions can be prevented where possible. This includes providing pre tenancy and tenancy sustainment training to support customers.

Housing teams are co-locating with some outside agencies such as the DWP for a proactive approach.

Families have been assisted to reduce rent and mortgage arrears through various funding streams including the Homeless Prevention Grant "Vulnerable Renters" fund. Across the county we received £365,612 to assist households remain in their current home.

Intervention

At the intervention stage the services aim to assist households into permanent housing as quickly as possible, whilst providing housing support and tenancy sustainment work if required, with targeted delivery in a family's temporary accommodation or homes. This is supported by changing working practises to enable staff to work more agilely to enable greater access to services.

Homeless families are particularly hit by cost of living rises. Welfare assistance (including access to foodbanks and community kitchens) to meet basic household needs and financial inclusion measures such as budgeting advice, debt management, support and assistance with welfare claims are essential to help maintain temporary and permanent accommodation.

Recovery

We currently work in partnership with other agencies to provide additional support for families and the councils also directly provide floating and outreach services to provide support to families in their own localities. This has been enhanced throughout the Covid pandemic with housing teams having an increased presence in the community to provide comprehensive advice and support to areas where there is recognised deprivation and possible families at risk of evictions.

We recognise that there is an undersupply of accommodation, particularly for larger families and this may cause delays to households moving out of temporary and interim accommodation. Working closely with social and private sector landlords is critical to ensure households move through the rehousing pathway in an effective manner and enable those households to settle back into education and employment.

Survivors of Domestic Abuse

Context

Following the publication of the Domestic Abuse Act (2021) the district authorities implemented a raft of changes and enhancements to services towards creating a more robust and responsive service for those fleeing abusive relationships.

Data Collection

With the Domestic Abuse Act providing a more focussed service for survivors of Domestic Abuse there has been an increase in the recognition of Domestic Abuse in homeless presentations and this has been recorded in the data collected.

In Worcestershire in 2020-21, there were a total of 12,887 domestic abuse incidents (reported crimes and non-crimes) reported to the police. In addition to those who have reported domestic abuse, there is thought to be a large unmet domestic abuse need in Worcestershire. Prevalence data suggests that 43% of incidents go unreported to the police.

Across the County the number of homeless approaches due to Domestic Abuse accounted for 12.7% in 2018/19, 11.9% in 2019/20 and 17% in 2020/21 of all homeless approaches.

According to data collected via a Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) project, which ran from September 2020 to March 2022, of 162² homelessness approaches due to Domestic Abuse, 148 of those were owed a duty. 14 households were owed the prevention duty and 121 were owed a relief duty. As part of the DLUHC project, Worcester Community Trust were funded to develop and train a team of Domestic Abuse Community Champions, who would be volunteers based in community settings, trained to advise and signpost survivors. A total of 59 champions were trained and supported to make onward referrals for 195 service users, who were referred to services that would reduce the risk of re-entering an abusive relationship.

A new role of Research and Intelligence Officer has been developed in order to support the gathering, analysis and dissemination of data for this client group. This role will support more accurate data collection and will help to inform future resourcing of services.

Achievements to date

Prevention

The Domestic Abuse and Housing Co-ordinator role was introduced to start working on establishing services across the County in preparation for the act. The county local authorities have been working with the co-ordinator to improve services available through the homelessness housing process, develop a Domestic Abuse Pathway and provide training and regular meetings in order to upskill staff in understanding and recognising Domestic Abuse and the need for risk assessments and safety planning

² some district data missing

Wyre Forest District Council piloted a joint working with West Mercia Womens Aid in establishing a Domestic Abuse Panel. This is a meeting between a representative from Womens Aid and the Domestic Abuse Housing Officer to create links between housing and support services. It is an opportunity to make sure all involved are doing what is needed to offer support and to share best practice and learning between agencies. These Panels are now considered good practice and are likely to be rolled out across the county local authorities.

When considering preventing Domestic Abuse the stakeholder engagement workshop suggested that more could be done in respect of educating children and young people and young people on healthy relationships.

The engagement workshop also suggested that local authority websites need to be improved to ensure a consistent and up to date list of services and information can be easily accessed by those fleeing an abusive relationship.

Intervention

The Domestic Abuse Act (2021) requires that local authorities provide an offer of support to all victims of Domestic Abuse who are accessing 'Safe Accommodation' provision. In addition to the support service commissioned out to a local specialist domestic abuse service, the county local authorities have recruited specialist Domestic Abuse Housing Officers, to work with and support those fleeing Domestic Abuse. This officer oversees the housing process for victim/survivors creating a named contact who takes ownership of the case so that they don't have to keep re-telling their story and provides continuity in their journey. These officers will discuss the safest and most appropriate options, ensuring that any temporary accommodation is safe for them to occupy and will refer or signpost them for additional support.

Safe Accommodation, as referenced in the Domestic Abuse Act, covers any temporary accommodation that is made available by local authorities to those fleeing an abusive relationship. Local authorities have worked in partnership with the County Council and social landlords to make more accommodation available to this group that meets the definition of being 'safe' under legislation. Local authorities across the County have received grant funding to ensure these new units comply with these requirements..

A sanctuary scheme is a service designed to help keep survivors within their homes, if it is safe for them and they choose to do so. If the relationship has ended and the perpetrator is no longer residing at the permanent residence, then safety measures such as additional locks on doors and windows, security lights, and video doorbells are provided. More advanced measures may also be considered such as safe rooms built into the property. Work is being undertaken by the County Council to ensure that Sanctuary schemes are available and consistent in all areas..

Recovery

The Freedom Programme helps survivors of Domestic Abuse to make sense of and understand what has happened to them and is delivered by West Mercia Women's Aid across Worcestershire to assist in the recovery process.

The newly commissioned Domestic Abuse Support Service (DASS), delivered by West Mercia Womens Aid, will support survivors in a number of different housing settings including refuges and safe houses to ensure they have access to advice and support to aid recovery. This service is commissioned by Worcestershire County Council in partnership with other commissioners including the District Councils and Police and Crime Commissioner.

Many victims/survivors of Domestic Abuse have never had the opportunity or freedom to take up a hobby or take part in an activity they enjoy due to their controlled and isolated environment. By investing in the right support that includes meaningful activities victims/survivors can be given the opportunity to improve their confidence and self esteem and achieve a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives.

Tackling perpetrator behaviour is also key and the Drive Project aims to reduce the number of child and adult victims of domestic abuse by deterring perpetrator behaviour. Liaising closely with local police and support agencies, caseworkers deploy a two-pronged approach of disruption through the criminal justice system and/or support for unresolved personal issues to stop domestic abuse. The Drive Project pilot focuses on priority (high-risk or serial) perpetrators, as this group carries the greatest risk of serious harm and engage poorly with available services.

Young People

Across Worcestershire's Local Authorities in 2020/21 there were 629 young people aged between 16-24 on the housing registers down from 697 in 2018/19. For young people the data indicates that most common causes of homelessness in Worcestershire are family or friends being no longer willing to accommodate, the loss of private rented accommodation and relationship breakdown with partner (non-violent breakdown).

The recent pandemic and changes to the benefits system together with the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and the number of people in low paid work has seen a rise in the number of young people at risk of homelessness.

Prevention-

Across the county we have raised awareness of homelessness and where to go for advice to encourage self-referrals at an early stage through improving customer portals, publishing materials to promote services and support available, keeping websites updated with local and national advice enabling households to help themselves where possible and the use of the Duty To Refer via ALERT for wider agencies to refer potentially homeless or homeless customers to us.

Many of the councils have well-established multi-agency working or prevention panels to develop meaningful support provision as required including the Care Leavers Panels.

The Councils work with social landlords to ensure a pre – eviction protocol is followed and that eviction is always the last resort and where possible provide assistance with rent arrears or additional outreach support. Partnerships with private sector landlords help to ensure an understanding of housing to aid a preventative approach

Some of the authorities and the Care Leavers service provide pre-tenancy sustainment training and in some parts of the county training is offered within schools to raise awareness of homelessness causes and tackle relationship breakdown.

Intervention -

If, despite all prevention interventions, young people become homeless the teams will continue to provide tenancy sustainment training, support and work with other services to ensure the homelessness is fleeting. Changes to the way officers work and the use of technology like video conferencing means the services are more agile and able to provide greater access to people. Support will include help with independent living and financial inclusion measures such as budgeting advice, debt management support and assistance with welfare benefit applications.

As both a prevention and intervention service, mediation is available to reduce relationship breakdowns and restore connections with family and friends where these have broken down.

Across the county currently there are jointly funded³ Young Persons Pathway Worker to ensure young people have support into accommodation and provide a person centred approach.

In the longer term we will work with young people and partners to overcome financial barriers to accessing accommodation through support into working programmes. Accommodation can be provided by both social and private sector landlords and many councils provide rent deposit schemes/ referral to vicars' relief to help young people to move into affordable, suitable accommodation.

Across the county the Councils have worked with Registered Providers (RPs) to provide suitable supported accommodation such as specialist young persons accommodation including Foyer or similar schemes, Nightstop, Crash pad emergency rooms and floating support from projects like Basement. In some cases this is in partnership with the County Council who provide funding for the specialist support services.

Recovery

Many young people will continue to have support needs beyond their homelessness and so part of the longer term recovery will be the ongoing development and embedding of support services across the county, in conjunction with the County Council (with Personal Advisors for example) and Voluntary and Community Sector.

The use of the Duty or the Commitment to Refer offers agencies who identify issues with households to refer into housing services through a clear signposting route. This is supported by having an easy to access, agile workforce in the community that can provide comprehensive advice and support to areas where there is recognised deprivation and possible young people at risk of evictions.

Young people often have the lowest incomes and are very vulnerable to cost of living rises so maintaining access to welfare assistance (including access to foodbanks and community kitchens) to meet basic household needs and financial inclusion measures such as budgeting advice, debt management, support and assistance with welfare claims are essential to help maintain permanent accommodation.

³ Local Housing Authorities and Worcestershire Childrens First

Households in temporary accommodation and permanent housing

Temporary Accommodation

Local Authorities (LAs) in England & Wales have duties to provide temporary accommodation under the following circumstances:

- Interim Duty

Provision of accommodation whilst homelessness enquiries are ongoing when the LA has reason to believe the applicant may be homeless, eligible for assistance and in priority need.

- Main Duty

The main housing duty is a duty to provide temporary accommodation until such time as the duty is ended, either by an offer of settled accommodation or by providing advice and assistance that is sufficient to secure accommodation. The main duty is owed when the LA is satisfied that the applicant is eligible for assistance, homeless, in priority need and not intentionally homeless.

Temporary accommodation (TA) provided under either duty must be suitable in terms of location, standards and cost. The Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities states that while Bed & Breakfasts (B&Bs) may be used in an emergency, councils should avoid the use of B&Bs wherever possible and, in the case of families or pregnant women, should use B&Bs for a maximum of 6 weeks.

The availability of different types of TA across Worcestershire differs between districts. The councils have a range of types of accommodation available for their use; including B&B and self-contained, with some districts having formal arrangements with suppliers in place, some using TA on an ad-hoc basis, and some using a combination of the two arrangements.

The table below shows the number of TA units each Worcestershire LA has available to it, compared to the average number of households in TA at any one time (using the average number in TA at the end of each quarter in 2021/22).

Table three: TA units in Worcestershire

District	Average No. in TA at end of Qtr 21/22	Shared/ B&B	Self-contained	Gap/ Surplus
Bromsgrove	18	Ad hoc B&B	10 designated units	-8 units
Malvern Hills	8	Ad hoc B&B	4 designated units	-4 units
Redditch	49	Ad hoc B&B	25 designated units	-24 units
Worcester City	57	16 designated B&B rooms Plus ad hoc	26 designated units	-7 units

		8 rooms at LA owned shared TA		
Wychavon	17	Ad hoc B&B	16 designated units	-1 units
Wyre Forest	26	3 designated B&B rooms 11 rooms at LA owned shared TA	7 designated units	-5 units

The above table shows that the average TA gap differs significantly across the districts and reflects the difference in demand for TA across the county.

Whilst the majority of the districts only use B&B accommodation on an ad-hoc basis, Worcester City, Redditch Borough Council and Wyre Forest have contracts with B&B providers in place to ensure the availability of this type of accommodation in order to fulfil their statutory duties to homeless households. Although contract arrangements mean that these units can be provided at a lower rate than ad hoc use, this type of accommodation is still significantly more expensive than other types of TA, particularly where arrangements exist to cap the rent at Local Housing Allowance levels. In addition, as the Code of Guidance states, B&B is not suitable for families and should be avoided for other households wherever possible. Studies have shown that moving home many times in early life affects child behaviour and mental health. Specifically:

- Homeless children are more likely to be in poor health than non-homeless children
- Children who have been in temporary accommodation for more than a year are over three times more likely to demonstrate mental health problems such as anxiety and depression than non-homeless children
- Living in temporary accommodation puts children at greater risk of infection and accidents

The Worcestershire councils have therefore committed to reducing the use of B&B and replacing it with alternative accommodation which is less expensive and of better quality. As this forms part of their 'business as usual' work it doesn't feature as a specific countywide action.

Permanent housing

In terms of permanent housing all the councils work with developers and registered providers to deliver market and affordable housing across the county. This work is underpinned by the council's Local Plans which identify a wide range of tenures and types of housing including low cost home ownership and social / affordable rent properties.

Local Plan numbers are informed by a combination of the standard methodology requirement, Housing Market Assessments and Housing Needs Surveys to

determine the required mix of housing. The councils also work with registered providers to ensure best use is made of existing stock including tackling underoccupation and low demand schemes.

Work with private sector landlords and letting agents also enable councils to meet some housing needs in parts of the county although local housing allowance rates do make this challenging. The councils have been innovative in attracting landlords to provide accommodation through landlord forums, the use of rent bonds and deposits, social letting agencies and private sector leasing schemes and this will continue during the lifetime of the strategy.

Governance arrangements

Oversight and delivery

Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership (WSHP) is responsible for ensuring that the commitments within the Housing Strategy are realised and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is a sub-strategy. The partnership is a multi-agency and cross sector partnership, ensuring delivery of the strategy is supported across relevant organisations.

Sitting under this group will be the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Group, a public and voluntary sector partnership, who have a specific focus on strategy delivery. In addition, the Worcestershire Strategic Housing Officers Group (WSHOG) will be responsible for the operational delivery of the councils elements of the strategy.

The Local Homelessness Forums, made up of local partners will also support the oversight and delivery of the strategy.

Monitoring

WSHOG will report progress against local strategy implementation plans to Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Group who will undertake a review of progress on an annual basis up to and including 2025.

Each council will also be responsible for reporting back on its local action plan on a quarterly basis to its Local Homelessness Forum.

Funding the strategy

Homelessness services are funded through a variety of funding streams including the individual councils general fund budgets as well as additional funding received from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) called the Homelessness Prevention Fund (HPF)

Homeless Prevention Fund

Homelessness Prevention Fund is ringfenced and should be utilised to::

- Fully embed the Homelessness Reduction Act and contribute to ending rough sleeping by increasing activity to prevent single homelessness.
- Reduce the number of families in temporary accommodation by maximising family homelessness prevention.

- Reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families and eliminate family B&B placements beyond the statutory six-week limit.

In 2022/23 it also includes an element for new burdens due to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

The allocations in 2022/23 are as follows;

Housing Authority	Grant (£)
Bromsgrove District Council	163,348
Malvern Hills District Council	140,582
Redditch Borough Council	322,383
Worcester City Council	474,097
Wychavon District Council	362,524
Wyre Forest District Council	351,898

However, there is currently a consultation into how this funding is allocated across the country with some of the Worcestershire councils potentially losing out, which will put prevention services at risk.

Rough Sleeper Initiative 2022-25

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Worcestershire	£927,451	£1,079,229	£1,002,282

Domestic Abuse Act 2022/23

Housing Authority	Grant (£)
Bromsgrove District Council	32,859
Malvern Hills District Council	31,912
Redditch Borough Council	32,788
Worcester City Council	32,943
Wychavon District Council	32,015
Wyre Forest District Council	31,078

Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme 2021/22 - 2023/24

Local Authority	Grant			
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2023/24
Worcester	Capital - £440,000		Revenue £147,667	
Wychavon & Malvern (18 units)	£28,330	£49,420	£50,420	N/A
Wyre Forest	N/A	£29,023	£30,622	N/A

Action Plan

Through the course of developing the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy we have worked with service users, stakeholders and our housing advice teams to identify gaps in service delivery or provision.

As part of developing the strategy we undertook a review of provision across the county, reviewed statistics from a variety of data sets, interviewed stakeholders and service users (in relation to rough sleeping) and held a stakeholder day in June 2022. This information helped identify gaps and future actions for the strategy. There were a number of suggestions from the stakeholder day that are business as usual and as such don't feature in the action plan but will still be delivered including the revision of protocols already in place, delivering on the Rough Sleeper Initiative funding proposals and co-location of officers with partners such as the DWP.

The strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis and this will include the review of current actions and identification of any new actions required for years two and three.

To summarise the key actions for the strategy, identified from gap analysis, are:

- Increasing the range of accommodation available to a number of client groups and ensure distribution throughout the county including for survivors of domestic abuse through provision of "safe accommodation" and development of a countywide sanctuary scheme, increasing access to the private rented sector, meeting young people's needs for emergency accommodation beyond Bed and Breakfast etc
- Working with the Research and Intelligence Officer to improve data collection and quality
- Increase the level of homeless prevention through a variety of actions including:
 - Undertake joint working and training with Registered Providers, Mental Health teams, Criminal Justice, Substance Misuse etc
 - Raising awareness of homeless services to stakeholders and the public and the ability to refer cases in through the Duty to Refer or Commitment to Refer
 - Developing prevention panels across the county
- Work with those with lived experience to bring about service improvements where required

See the full action plan in Appendix Two

Appendix One – Legislation

Legal duties

The primary homelessness legislation – Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 – provides the statutory underpinning for action to prevent homelessness and provide assistance to people threatened with or actually homeless.

In 2002, the Government amended the homelessness legislation through the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002 to ensure a more strategic approach to tackling and preventing homelessness and to strengthen the assistance available to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness by extending the priority need categories.

In 2017 the Housing Act 1996 was amended by the Homeless Reduction Act 2017. This brought in additional duties to all households, namely the prevention and relief duties which apply regardless of priority need or intentionality.

In making decisions local authorities must take into consideration the Public Sector Equality Act 2018 and give consideration to individuals protected characteristics.

Local authorities also need to consider section 11 of the Children's Act 1989 and the duty to promote and safeguard the wellbeing of children when making decisions.

Homeless duties

Housing authorities have a legal duty to provide advice and assistance to anyone that is eligible and homeless or threatened with homelessness. If a housing authority has reason to believe that someone may be homeless or threatened with homelessness, they must investigate what duty they owe to them under the homelessness legislation.

A person will be eligible depending on their immigration status. This is a complex area of law, though generally, UK nationals with a right to reside, those with settled status, pre settled status and exercising their worker rights, or those with limited or indefinite leave to remain with recourse to public funds would be eligible.

To establish if the applicant is homeless or threatened with homelessness, the following needs to be established:

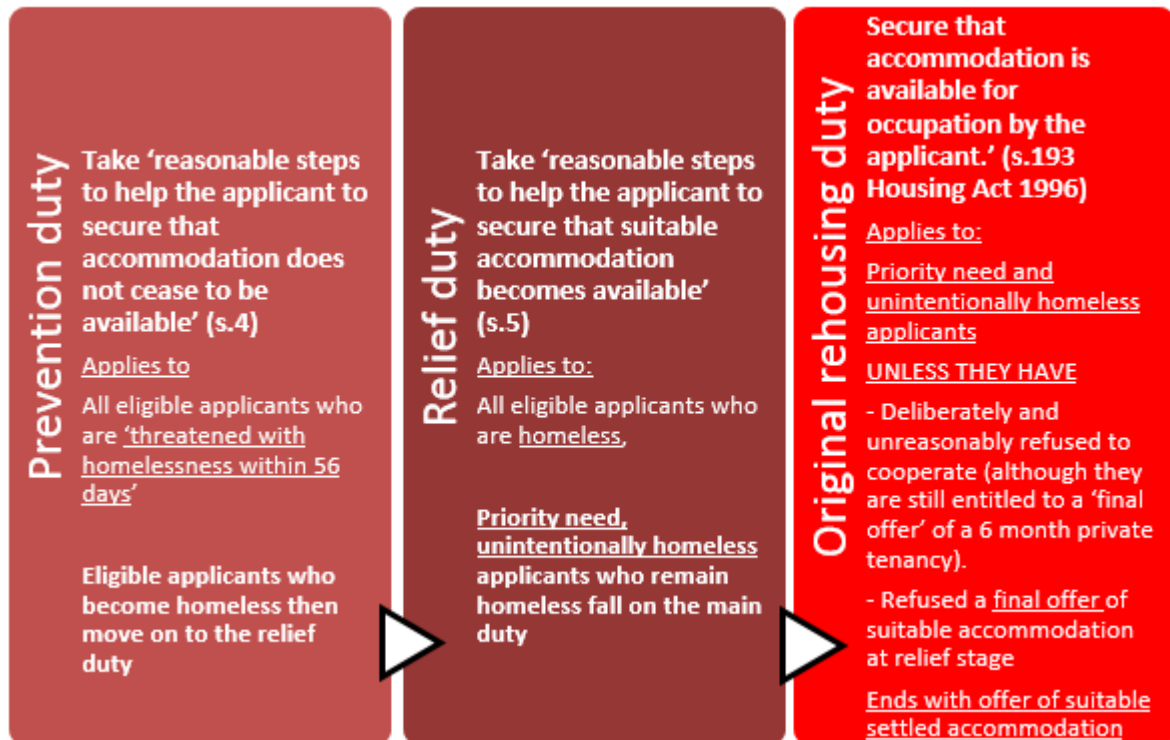
- Do they have the legal right to occupy accommodation that is available to them and their household for the next 56 days?
- Is the accommodation reasonable to occupy?

When assessing whether the accommodation is reasonable to occupy, the following should be considered:

- Is there a probability of violence? Violence has a broad definition here and includes emotional, financial, psychological abuse and controlling/coercive behaviour.
- Is there a probability of threats that are likely to be carried out?

- If the above are met the property is unsuitable, otherwise the local authority will need to consider all other matters in relation to the house to determine if suitable. The local authority will factor in the prevailing housing circumstances in the area when assessing whether a property is reasonable to occupy.

The duties are outlined below:-



If satisfied a household is homeless or threatened with homelessness, they have a duty to:-

- Assess their circumstances and how they became homeless
- What support they need to sustain accommodation
- What accommodation would best suit their needs
- Develop a personalised housing plan setting out reasonable actions for the authority and customer to undertake to address the housing situation

If a household is threatened with homelessness, they will be owed a prevention duty.

If a household is actually homeless they will be owed a relief duty.

These are collaborative duties and the authority should seek agreement from the client in regards to actions set.

These duties can end if:-

- A suitable offer of accommodation that is likely to last for 6 months is accepted
- A suitable offer of accommodation that is likely to last 6 months is refused, if the offer was a 6 month private tenancy or social tenancy the local authority would not need to consider if a main housing duty is owed

- If a prevention duty is owed, and someone becomes homeless, this will end the prevention duty and a relief duty will begin
- If a relief duty is owed and 56 days pass, this can end the relief duty and a main housing decision should be made
- If a household ceases to be eligible for assistance
- If someone deliberately refused to co-operate with their housing plan and the local authority has an approved policy on when duties should be ended in such instances. Worcestershire authorities are not currently ending duties due to deliberate refusals to co-operate with housing plans.

Main duty decisions

If the relief duty ends and the applicant has not been housed, and they have not refused a 6 month private or a social tenancy, the local authority will need to make a main housing duty decision.

A 'main homelessness duty' is owed where the authority is satisfied that the applicant is eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and falls within a specified 'priority need' group.

The 'priority need groups' include households with dependent children or a pregnant woman and people who are vulnerable in some way e.g. because of mental illness or physical disability. In 2021 this was expanded to include those fleeing from domestic abuse to have an automatic priority need for housing. In 2002 the priority need categories were extended to include applicants who are aged 16 or 17, care leavers aged 18-20, people who are vulnerable as a result of time spent in care, in HM Forces, in prison or custody, and those who are vulnerable as a result of having to flee their home because of non-domestic violence or the threat of violence. Guidance on factors local authorities should consider when looking at vulnerability can be found in the Code of Guidance for Local Authorities.

If someone does not fall within these categories or is not deemed vulnerable, they will not be owed a main duty due to not being in a priority need.

If someone is in a priority need the local authority will need to consider if they are intentionally homeless. A household is intentionally homeless if they have:-

- Deliberately done...
- ...an act or omission...
- ...in consequence of which...
- ...they cease to occupy accommodation...
- ...that was available and reasonable to occupy...
- And the act of omission was not done in good faith

All of these tests need to be satisfied for a household to be intentionally homeless. Acts or omissions should not be deliberate if the applicant was not capable of managing their affairs due to age, mental health or infirmity or due to a temporary

aberration of the mind, or if under duress or benefit delays beyond the applicants control.

If someone is intentionally homeless there will be a duty to provide accommodation for a reasonable period of time for the household to make their own arrangements.

Homelessness Households not owed the rehousing duty

Homeless people not owed the full rehousing duty are typically single people or childless couples who are not assessed as being in 'priority need' or those deemed to be intentionally homeless. These groups are only entitled to advice and assistance if homeless, not the "main housing duty". Some non-priority homeless people are offered access to Local Authority commissioned housing support services.

The local authority can utilise its discretion to assist certain households in exceptional circumstances.

Street Homelessness

DCLG defines street homelessness as: "People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or "bashes").

Appendix Two - Action Plan

Year One (Dec 2022 – November 2023)

High level action	Action	Client group	Responsible Organisation	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale
PREVENTION					
Reducing homeless approaches	Explore opportunities with Worcestershire County Council to develop a county wide Sanctuary Scheme to enable survivors of Domestic Abuse to remain safe in their own home	Domestic Abuse	WCC	RBC&BDC (Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator)	March 2023
	Work with the Research and Intelligence Officer to improve quality, understanding and utilisation of data including on adverse childhood experiences to assist with shaping homeless prevention services	All client groups	RBC&BDC	RBC & BDC	March 2023
	Targeted domestic abuse training and joint working with registered provider teams to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce risk of financial abuse for tenants Enhance understanding of tenancy law/policies to remove perpetrators 	Domestic Abuse	RBC&BDC	RBC&BDC (Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator)	March 2023
Partnership working	Ensure health collaboratives have a housing rep or housing issues fed into the collaboratives	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	March 2023
	Explore further opportunities to co-locate housing staff with other organisations e.g. DWP, Care leavers team	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	March 2023
	WSHOG to discuss with WCF the issues around the transition from young people to adult services (where learning or physical disability or mental health need) so that a coherent and consistent pathway is in place that avoids homelessness occurring	Young people	WCF	WSHOG	March 2023
	Develop protocol with criminal justice and develop action plan following on from the independent report	Prison leavers	All Councils	Reducing Re-offending Group	March 2025
Customer Involvement	Engage regularly with service users using a variety of methods including face to face interviews and surveys to	All client groups	All Councils	WSHOG	March 2025

	enhance learning from lived experience and consider whether actions from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy are making a difference to households				
Raising awareness – customers and other organisations	Explore opportunities to work with Here2Help to have a community directory of homeless related services.	All client groups	All Councils & WCC	WSHOG and Nicki Breakwell	March 2023
	Deliver communication plan to raise awareness and have a consistent message around homelessness across the county (see separate plan appendix three)	All client groups	All councils	Worcestershire Strategic Partnership Officer	March 2025
Early Intervention	Explore the opportunity to establish prevention panels for domestic abuse across the county	All client groups	BDC, MHDC, RBC, WC & WDC	N/A	March 2023
	Work with Ukrainian hosts and guests, asylum seekers and refugees in partnership with other organisations to reduce homelessness	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG / WSHP	March 2023
	Promote and encourage sign up to the Duty or Commitment to Refer especially from the Police (DA), Voluntary and Community Sector and registered providers.	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG to agree individual organisations	March 2023
	Work with the Early Help Partnership to ensure family homelessness is prevented at the earliest stage.	Families with children	All councils	Worcester City	March 2023
Commissioning	Work in partnership with the County Council, service providers, the Police and Crime Commissioner and other organisations to commission, deliver and review services to ensure they satisfy objectives	Domestic Abuse	All councils	WFDC	March 2023
Thematic review of rough sleepers (where actions not already)	Local Homeless Forums to consider the development of a set of principles for organisations providing services for the homeless.	Rough Sleepers	Adult Safeguarding Board and councils	WSHOG	March 2023
	Members of the local homeless forums to consider how the voluntary sector and other smaller organisations	Rough Sleepers	Adult Safeguardi	All councils	March 2023

picked up elsewhere in the action plan)	providing homeless services may be able to work collaboratively to deliver and access training		ng Board and councils		
	Consider outcomes of the supported housing joint strategic needs assessment and the Housing First UofW evaluation in identification of further types of accommodation for the rough sleeper client group	Rough Sleepers	Adult Safeguarding Board and councils	WSHOG	June 2023 tbc
	Monitoring of outcomes from the RSI2022-25 and the Rough Sleeper Action Plan to see how effective the interventions are into rough sleeping across the county	Rough Sleepers	Adult Safeguarding Board and councils	WSHOG	March 2025
	Consider local evidence of need which supports (including female rough sleepers) any specific actions.	Rough Sleepers	All councils	Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy oversight group	March 2023
Data and intelligence	Monitor and gather intelligence around debt and other impacts from the cost of living including with voluntary sector working with the homeless and rough sleepers	Rough Sleepers	All councils	Local homeless forums	March 2023
INTERVENTION					
High level action	Action	Client group	Responsibility	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale
Tenancy sustainment	Ensure officers link to harm reduction service where client not fully engaged with drug and alcohol services, through joint working and training	All client groups	Cranstoun	WSHOG	March 2023
	Develop and embed support services across the county – community based led approach – to meet needs	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	March 2023
	Ensure any available support provision is flexible to the clients needs as they progress along the pathway	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	March 2025
Training	Staff training in Psychological Informed Environment (PIE)	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG through WDC (training budget)	March 2023

	Awareness of the MCA and the CARM process within councils for those who have capacity but have complex needs to include circulating CARM resource pack to housing advice teams.	Complex needs / Mental Health	Adult Safeguarding Board	All councils	March 2023
RECOVERY					
High level action	Action	Client group	Responsibility	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale
Tenancy sustainment	Explore opportunities to link homeless households into meaningful activity and services to reduce social isolation and loneliness such as Plus (Onside Advocacy).	Rough Sleepers	All councils	Rough Sleeper Co-ordinators	March 2025
	Increase take-up of education, training and employment support available across the county	All client groups	All councils	Building Better Opportunities / WSHOG	March 2023
	Review the existing peer mentoring services and consider whether this should be widened out across Districts / Clients	Rough Sleepers	All councils	WDC, MHDC, BDC & RBC	March 2023
Early Intervention	Work with those in safe accommodation to ensure digital safety including around local settings, use of social media etc	Domestic Abuse	All councils	Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator / Domestic Abuse Housing Officers	March 2023
SUPPLY OF ACCOMMODATION					
	Explore opportunities for a greater range of supported and step-down accommodation available, before settled accommodation, for those that need an interim step, following the supported housing needs assessment	All clients	All councils	ASC / PH / WSHOG	March 202
	Explore the housing demand for rough sleepers to identify whether any further supported accommodation is required and where that should be located e.g. Housing First, Direct access Hostel	Rough Sleepers	All councils	Research and Intelligence Officer	March 2023
	Develop / retain 35 units of safe accommodation across the County for victims/survivors of domestic abuse	Domestic Abuse	All councils	WFDC	March 2023

Year Two (Dec 2023 – November 2024)

High level action	Action	Client group	Responsible Organisation	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale
PREVENTION					
Reducing homeless approaches	Explore the funding opportunities available to employ a countywide Young People's Co-ordinator (YPC)	Young People	All councils	WSHOG	March 2024
	Review issues within the private rented sector (PRS) following the rent reform legislation and end of the s21 notices to ensure homelessness from the PRS is reduced.	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	March 2024
Partnership working	Work with partners to explore opportunities for further outreach provision from their services e.g. GP drop ins, joint home visits, mental health outreach	All client groups	All councils	Health and Housing Partnership Officer	March 2024
	Work with partners to explore joint training and job shadowing to improve understanding of care act, homelessness and mental health assessments to support the prevention of homelessness	All client groups	All councils	Health and Housing Partnership Officer	March 2024
Customer Involvement	Explore opportunities to develop a youth homelessness snapshot survey with YPC	Young People	All councils	Young People Co-ordinator	March 2024
Raising awareness – customers and other organisations	Deliver communication plan to raise awareness and have a consistent message around homelessness across the county (see separate plan appendix three)	All client groups	All councils	Worcestershire Strategic Partnership Officer	March 2025
Early Intervention	Work with school/education settings to explore homelessness / healthy relationships targeting schools in areas where homelessness is more prevalent	Young People	All councils	Youn People Co-ordinator	March 2024
INTERVENTION					
High level action	Action	Client group	Responsible Organisation	Lead organisation	Timescale

			Organisation	(if county action)	
Reducing rough sleeping	Review outcomes from Rough Sleeper Initiative 2022-25 funding / Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme ⁴ to reduce rough sleeping	Rough Sleepers	All councils	Rough Sleeper Coordinators	March 2024
Tenancy sustainment	Ensure any available support provision is flexible to the clients needs as they progress along the pathway	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	March 2025
RECOVERY					
High level action	Action	Client group	Responsibility	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale
Raising awareness	Work with schools and education settings to ensure digital safety and healthy relationships is delivered	Young People	All councils	YPC	March 2024
Tenancy sustainment	Explore opportunities to link homeless households into meaningful activity and services to reduce social isolation and loneliness such as Plus (Onside Advocacy).	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	March 2025
SUPPLY OF ACCOMMODATION					
Increasing accommodation	Explore opportunities for a greater range of supported and step-down accommodation available, before settled accommodation, for those that need an interim step	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG / ASC	March 2024
	Explore opportunities presented by re-purposing older peoples accommodation surplus to requirements	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	March 2024
	Review the provision of accommodation and support for young people to ensure no young person will be placed in emergency bed and breakfast with shared facilities unless no other accommodation available (to avoid rough sleeping) including working with RPs on new build and accessing existing stock and other specialist housing providers	Young People	All councils	YPC	March 2024
	Support the recommissioning of YP accommodation and support services to ensure it meets need	Young People	All councils	YPC	March 2024

⁴ In Wychavon, Worcester and Wyre Forest only

Year Three (Dec 2024 – November 2025)

High level action	Action	Client group	Responsible Organisation	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale
PREVENTION					
Reducing homeless approaches	Explore opportunities for localised counselling services specifically for homeless households	Mental Health	All councils	Health and Housing Partnership Officer	March 2025
Partnership working	Explore Greater Manchester Combined Authority around co-ordinated bids across statutory and voluntary sector partners to address gaps	All client groups	All councils	Homelessness Link / WSHOG	March 2025
	Explore opportunities to engage PRS landlords through prevention panels to increase prevention in the PRS.	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	March 2025
Raising awareness – customers and other organisations	Deliver communication plan to raise awareness and have a consistent message around homelessness across the county (see separate plan appendix three)	All client groups	All councils	Worcestershire Strategic Partnership Officer	March 2025
INTERVENTION					
High level action	Action	Client group	Responsibility	Lead organisation (if county action)	Timescale
Tenancy sustainment	Explore opportunities with the MH Trust around a specialist MH funded post to work with homeless households	Mental health	All councils	Health and Housing Partnership Officer	
RECOVERY					
High level action	Action	Client group	Responsibility	Lead organisation	Timescale

				(if county action)	
Tenancy sustainment	Explore opportunities to link homeless households into meaningful activity and services to reduce social isolation and loneliness such as Plus (Onside Advocacy).	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	March 2025
SUPPLY OF ACCOMMODATION					
PRS accommodation	Engage with landlords from the private rented sector to enable access to accommodation across the districts post rent reform act	All client groups	All councils	WSHOG	March 2025

Appendix Three – Communication Plan

Homelessness is a complex issue. People find themselves without a home for many reasons. There has been a steady increase in the number of people seeking help and there are many factors contributing to this including public sector austerity, welfare reform, cost of living rises and an undersupply of suitable, affordable accommodation. We provide a number of services across the county to try to prevent homelessness from occurring and to provide assistance to those that become homeless. In 2020/21 the county had approaches from over 2214 households, that we owed a duty to. There are also a much smaller number of people who sleep rough every year and across the county there are tailored services to address these needs including No First and No Second Night Out accommodation, support via the HOPES commissioned service, Navigators and in-house support teams and bespoke accommodation schemes for move-on including Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP) funded projects. The Voluntary and Community Sector also support people facing homelessness with food, clothing and advice etc. However, not all those on the streets are Rough Sleeping, some will also be begging or street drinking for example and this message should be highlighted as well.

This communications plan has been developed by the District Councils to raise awareness around homelessness (an action in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2022) and to deliver on the recommendations of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Adults Thematic Rough Sleeping Review.

Objectives of the plan:

- To ensure that the public, organisations and people who are potentially homeless are aware of the help that is available
- To communicate how important it is for people to act early if they are having difficulties that may lead to homelessness
- To highlight the important work of the councils and their commissioned partners to raise awareness and reduce the misinformation circulated on social media
- Have some clear, jargon free key messages that highlight activity or actions for the councils, stakeholders and the public

Action	Outcome	Communication Channels	Target Audience	Responsible	Due date and frequency
To re-promote the Duty to Refer / Commitment to Refer message.	To increase the number of referrals to Homeless Teams through Duty to Refer from a wider range of agencies.	Existing joint meetings and publicity materials with public organisations.	Public organisations who may meet people who are potentially homeless.	District Councils	Dec-22

For organisations and agencies who have an interest in preventing homelessness to continue to meet on a regular basis to share information, develop best practices and current policy developments.	To have a cohesive and coordinated approach and response to homelessness.	Regular local homeless forums	Organisations and agencies who are involved in homelessness.	District Councils and voluntary/ statutory agencies	Quarterly or Bi-annually depending on local arrangements
To continue to review information on housing and homelessness on the district council websites to make sure it is up to date and accessible including through obtaining views on the information from People With Lived Experience (PWLE) To include case studies or videos to make messages more impactful.	For the public, organisations and people who are homeless or may become homeless to have easily accessible online information.	District Councils' Websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People who are homeless or may potentially become homeless General Public 	District Councils	Sep-22 and a six monthly review
To promote the services available to rough sleepers including Streetlink, Cold/Hot Weather Emergency Provision, new services plus the existing services both statutory and voluntary.	For the public to have an increased awareness of the services available for people who are homeless. All organisations to promote a jargon free, cohesive message.	Regular media campaigns to include local newspapers, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People who are homeless or may potentially become homeless General Public 	District Councils, WSHOG and Homeless organisations	Quarterly as a minimum

Channels to be used (subject to local arrangements)

- Local Homeless Forums
- Websites
- Social media (depending on local policies)
- Members and staff briefings
- Newsletters

Resources (subject to local arrangements)

- Website and media teams
- Relevant Housing Managers (Operational / Strategic)
- Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership Officer
- Worcestershire Strategic Housing Officers Group (for annual review)

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Executive 6th September 2022****Financial Recovery Plan**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Karen Ashley Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Peter Carpenter
Wards Affected	All Wards
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to set out the processes the Council has been following to rectify a deterioration in its financial position and processes due to the impact of the implementation of a new financial system in February 2021 during the C-19 pandemic period.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Executive are asked to Resolve that:

- 1) Progress made on the following 8 key tasks for financial recovery be noted:
 - Financial Strategies
 - Revenue and Capital Monitoring
 - Closure
 - Returns
 - Projects
 - Systems
 - Documentation and Training
 - Resources
- 2) The work still required to move back to a best practice operation and the associated timetable for completion of this work, as detailed in Appendix A, be noted.

3. KEY ISSUES**Financial Position**

- 3.1 The Council implemented a new financial system in February 2021. The existing financial system was at the end of its useful life and would not deliver process improvements required to move the Council forward. This implementation has not been smooth and has led to a deterioration of the Councils financial position. This has included:

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- Non completion of the 2020/21 Accounts.
 - Non delivery of monitoring information during the 2021/22 financial year.
 - Non delivery of Government financial returns.
 - Incomplete take-up of the new system by both Finance and Service Users.
 - Loss of key financial staff.
- 3.2 These issues build on comments from the External Auditors relating to 2019/20 accounts, which were only approved in the fall of 2021 and where issues on working papers were highlighted as a significant issue. External Audit have not been able to start the Audit of the 2020/21 Accounts due to these issues and this has been reported to Audit Committee in July 2022.
- 3.3 Internal Audit reflect in their Annual Internal Audit Report for 2021/22 reported to Audit Committee in July 2022 that the implementation of a new financial system is a significant risk for the Council and that Audits of Accounts Payable and Monitoring have No Assurance and that due to the problems in the implementation of the financial system that they were not able to undertake the Audit of the General Ledger.

Rectification Process

- 3.4 The Council has lost significant financial expertise with the exiting of staff leaving the department below a critical mass. External resource has been needed to rectify the solution in the short term. Part of this process has been to set out a rectification process which sets out the key issues to be resolved and a critical path for that resolution. This plan was bought to Corporate Management Team (CMT) at the start of March 2022.
- 3.5 The plan has a master timetable which sets out the key tasks to be completed. This master timetable is attached as Appendix A (as at the 22nd July). The timetable is subdivided into a number of sections. There are tasks to be completed in each of these sections:
- Financial Strategies
 - Revenue and Capital Monitoring
 - Closure
 - Returns
 - Projects
 - Systems
 - Documentation and Training
 - Resources
- 3.6 As with any plan, there is a critical path to delivery. With this plan, the critical path centres on the rectification of issues being encountered with the cash receipting system. With this resolved the Council will be able to close the 2020/21 accounts and cease the manual work rounds that are presently required. Items on the plan only turn to green when they have been rectified and there is proof that they are working.

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- 3.7 Progress on this plan has been reported to CMT on a two-weekly basis since March. With a reconfiguration of CMT from August, the Plan will now be reviewed monthly at the CMT meeting which addresses monitoring and compliance. Although there has not been formal reporting to Executive, reports on various aspects of the Recovery have gone to Executive and the Audit Committee. This report brings all aspects together.

Progress on the Plan

- 3.8 We will take the assessment on progress on the plan in critical order. The two most critical items are the rectification of staffing issues and resolution of the financial systems issues relating to Cash Receipting.

Resources - Staffing issues

- 3.9 The Council, just prior to and during the systems implementation process from late 2020 through to March 2022, have lost all its Corporate Finance team and a few of its Management Accountancy team. This also coincided with the C-19 Pandemic where most Council staff were working from home. It went through a recruitment process which only resulted in 2 staff being appointed in the fall of 2021, one of whom left in April 2022. However, a recruitment process run in March and April 2022 has been much more successful and will have led, by August, to finance staffing being back at an appropriate level. There are still some key establishment positions being covered by temporary staff, which include the Chief Accountant and the HRA Accountant. These, and other vacancies, will be reassessed following the completion of the rectification process.

The Council has run 2 sets of Recruitments in November 2021 and April 2022. Most Establishment roles are now filled (Agency where relevant):

- Strategic Director – P Carpenter – 1 year contract in order for the Council to recruit properly (33 years local Government Experience) and to ensure continuity in delivering the finance recovery plan and developing the new finance team.
- Head of Finance and Customer Services – Michelle Howell – LG Experience with Wolverhampton.
- Financial Services Manager - LG Experience with Wolverhampton.
- Technical Accountant – LG Experience with Worcestershire CC.
- Control Accountant – Experience in Prison Service and Banking.
- Reconciliation Assistants – New to Local Government.
- Management Accountant – LG Experience with Coventry.
- Management Accountant – New to Local Government.
- Accounts Assistant – Internal appointment.
- Chief Accountant – Agency 6-month contract, 15 yrs LG experience.
- Still Vacant Head of Management Accounts, Reconciliation Assistant, Management Accountant – pending 23/4 budget.
- AP/AR – 1.5 new staff in AP and 2 AR staff, both internal from Cashiers and Reconciliation teams.
- Other Temp staff presently in position:

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- Management /Control Accountant – being handed over to new establishment staff by end of September
- Systems Accountant – to deal with Cash Receipting issues then will start to do handovers
- HRA Accountant – 3 days a week – specialist agency resource

Council now has range of staff and skills to deliver its financial remit.

- 3.10 Staffing issues have been discussed at Audit Committee, the latest being the July 2022 committee and in particular the Internal Audit reports. There was a significant conversation over these issues at the Audit Committee in April 2022. As this meeting our External Auditors also commented on the issues they were having in recruitment. It was also noted that this was a wider issue across most Worcestershire Councils.

Systems Issues

- 3.11 There had been issues with the implementation of the Tech1 system on 8th February 2021. A significant reason for these issues has been the fact that the Council has been the first adopter of Cash Receipting fully on Tech1. This is the most complicated part of the system and this along with opening balances are the two critical tasks that are holding up the production of the 2020/21 accounts.
- The Council has been in weekly conversations with Tech1 over cash receipting issues. The issues mean that if reconciliations are undertaken that significant numbers of transactions move into suspense and initiate a number of other transactions.
 - Because of this, reconciliations have not been completed as they cause more issues.
 - We are working with Tech1 on a solution to cash receipting and have meetings with them throughout the summer to resolve various aspects. A number of these meetings have been early in the morning or in the evening as the Council is talking to staff in Australia and New Zealand to rectify issues. Sessions were held on the 21st and 22nd July to move to resolve the final issues and this is now being tested to move this into the live system. This is a significant issue and without resolution the Council cannot move forward and close its 20/21 accounts, but it is a core part of the recovery plan.
 - There was not full logging/reconciliation of standing and transient data takeover balances moving from the existing financial systems to Tech1 on and around the 8th February 2021.
 - The Council are now having to “back- engineer” these control amounts from the copy of the original system that was made.
 - Without resolution the Council cannot move forward and close its 20/21 accounts, but it is a core part of the recovery plan.
 - Part of the resolution also links to staff and the fact that almost all the staff who implemented the Tech1 system at the Council have left. Therefore, the filling of

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vacancies and training starting in September as per the recovery plan are crucial in moving the Council forward.

- 3.12 **The systems issues have been highlighted at the Audit Committee in July 2022 and are key to the delivery of the overall rectification process.**

Financial Strategies

- 3.13 There was the requirement to ensure that the delivery of financial strategies was timetabled and delivered into both the business and the public environment. Significant movement has taken place in this area with
- The 2021/22 closure timetable for managers being circulated to Council senior and budget managers in March 2022 to ensure the “nuts and bolts” closure work could be undertaken in a timely manner. It is recognised that the 2020/21 accounts are not closed, but without this work being undertaken at the correct time even more difficulties would have been encountered.
 - Treasury Management Strategies, including Capital, MRP and Investment Strategies were presented to Audit Committee in April 2022 and approved by Council in June.
 - Risk Management has been identified in Audit Reports (and reported to Audit Committee in July 22 in the 21/22 Internal Audit Report) as being no assurance. An updated Risk Management Officer Board has been set up and two cycles of Risk Reports have been presented to CMT. The first Cycle of these Risk Reports have been presented to both Executive and Audit Committee in July 2022.

Revenue and Capital Monitoring

- 3.14 There was no revenue or capital monitoring for the majority of the 2021/22 financial year due to the staffing and systems issues. However:
- A Period 11 Monitoring 2021/22 was undertaken, and this was reported to Executive in June 2022.
 - A Period 1 Monitoring 2022/23 was reported to Executive in July 2022. Although there were no financial updates in this report it set out the process to be followed this year for monitoring (on system), the process being taken to rectify the Council’s budgetary position, and a number of financial indicators including collection rates for both Council Tax and Business Rates.
 - A Quarter 1 2022/23 combined Financial and Performance Monitoring will be presented to Executive on 6 September 2022.
 - The 2021/22 Outturn Report should have gone to Executive in July. This will not be possible until the issues with Cash Receipting have been resolved.

Closure

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- 3.15 As set out in the above sections, we are not yet able to move into the formal “technical” closure processes for the 2020/21 processes due to the issues linked to Cash Receipting. We are assuming that the 2020/21 closure process, as significant work has been done to date, will take up to 3 and a half months to complete. This timetable will start after 1 month of steady running of the Cash Receipting solution.
- 3.16 As part of the 2020/21 Closure process, the Council will liaise with its Internal and External Auditors on how it is manually correcting transactions prior to the “fix”. This is key to ensuring a full rectification and closure of the 2020/21 accounts.
- 3.17 As has been set out in 3.13 above, the guidance for 2021/22 closure has been circulated to budget managers. This is crucial to ensure issues with 2021/22 closure are minimised. “Technical” closure of the 2021/22 accounts will start as soon as the 2020/21 accounts have been closed and is expected to take 3 months.

Returns

- 3.18 The Council are required to report on a number of financial measures to the Government via a series of Returns. Due to the systems-based issues a number of these were not possible. Until the system-based issues are rectified Revenue and Capital Outturn Reports (CO/RO) cannot be completed and the Council are in communications with DLUHC on the issues causing the non-completion of these returns. However, the following returns have been made:
- Revenue Estimates 2021/22 and 2022/23 (RA).
 - PWLB Certainty Rate 2022/23 – sets out borrowing requirements.
 - HRA Pooled Capital Receipts 2021/22.
 - Council Tax Requirement (CTR1) 2022-23.
 - Quarterly return of Council Tax and NNDR (Q4 2021/22 and Q1 2022/23).
 - C-19 Grant Assurance Returns for 2021/22.
 - Housing Benefit Subsidy Return 2021/22.
 - DHP Government Contribution Final Claim for 2021-22.
 - Test and Trace Payments 2021/22.
 - NNDR3 Return for Business Rates.

Projects

- 3.19 Throughout this time period, the finance team continue to cover on a number of important projects.

Documentation and Training

- 3.20 It is clear from the limited rollout of new financial systems processes in both the finance team and the wider Council that a significant retraining process will need to be undertaken. This had been timetabled initially for April/May but this has now been revised to September/October as we need resolution of the financial systems issues to properly take this forward. As part of this process there will be:

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- Updated/simplified financial regulations
- Updated/simplified Step by Step guides

The aim of the training is to ensure all can use the system properly and more easily leading to higher levels of compliance.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 No Legal implications have been identified.

5. Strategic Purpose Implications**Relevant Strategic Purpose**

- 5.1 The Strategic purposes are included in the Council's corporate plan and guides the Council's approach to budget making ensuring we focus on the issues and what are most important for the borough and our communities. Our Financial monitoring and strategies are integrated within all of our Strategic Purposes.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 The green thread runs through the Council plan. Every report has potential financial implications and these in turn can have implications on climate change. These will be addressed and reviewed through individual reports when relevant by climate change officers will ensure the correct procedures have been followed to ensure any impacts on climate change are fully understood.

6. Other Implications**Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 None as a direct result of this report.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 Managers meet with finance officers to consider the current financial position and to ensure actions are in place to mitigate any overspends.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

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

5. APPENDENCES

Appendix A – High Level Plan

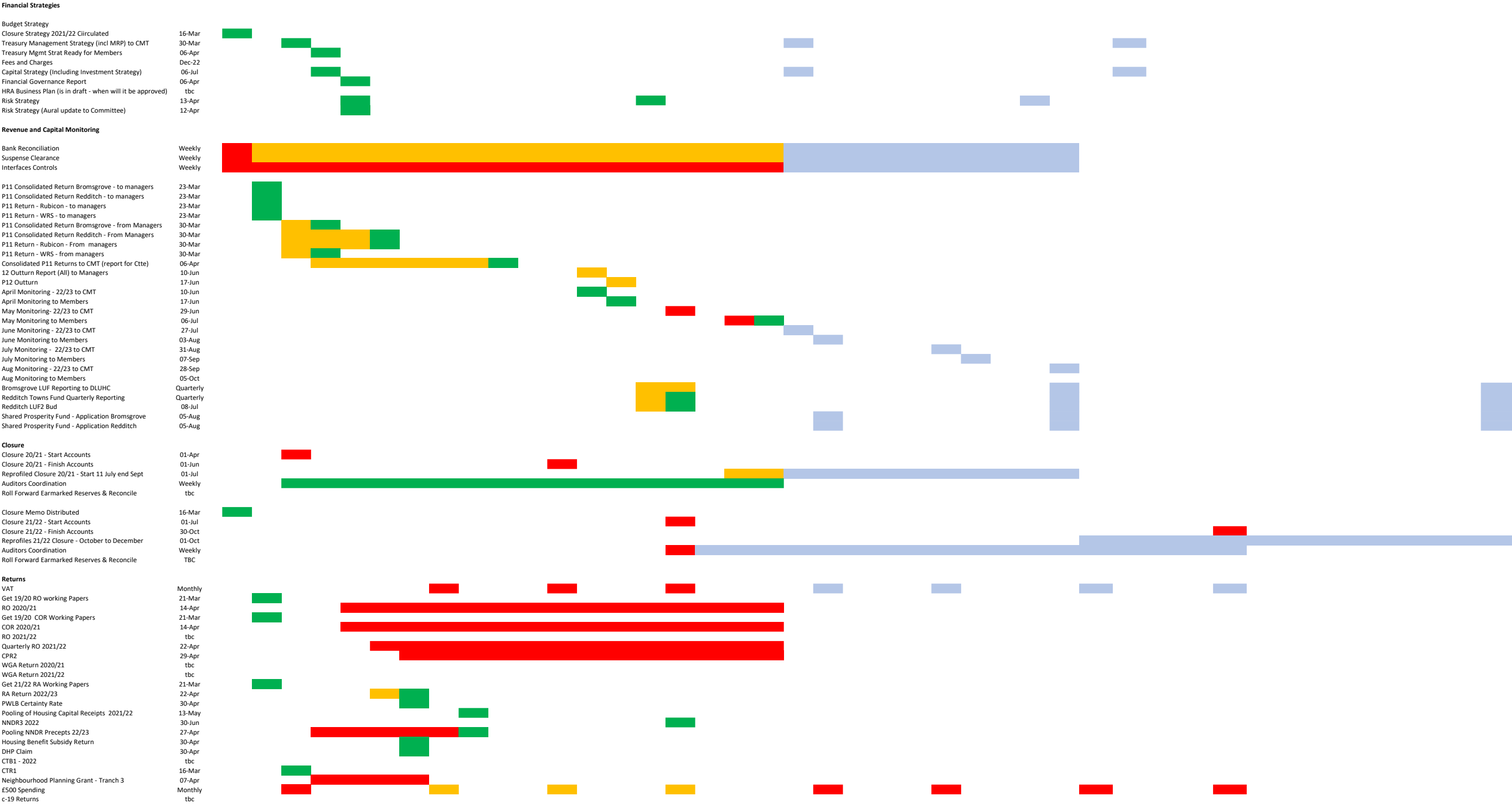
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AUTHOR OF REPORT

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Responsibility Listing



Responsibility Listing





REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Executive Committee
2022**6th September**Draft Council Tax Support Scheme**

Relevant Portfolio Holder		Councillor Karen Ashley
Portfolio Holder Consulted		Yes
Relevant Head of Service		Michelle Howell, Head of Finance and Customer Services
Report Author Peter Carpenter	Job Title: Interim S151 Officer Contact email: peter.carpenter@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel:	
Wards Affected		All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted		N/A
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)		Aspiration, work and financial independence
Non-Key Decision		
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.		

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Executive Committee is asked RECOMMEND to Council that Option B is put out for Consultation.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to request authorisation to undertake a consultation with the public and the major precepting authorities in respect of proposed changes to the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme which would take effect from 1st April 2023.
- 2.2 Each year, the Council is required to review its Council Tax Reduction Scheme in accordance with the requirements of schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and to either maintain the scheme or replace it.
- 2.3 Council Tax Reduction (CTR) was introduced from 1st April 2013, when it replaced the Central Government funded Council Tax Benefit. From the inception of CTR, the funding available to the Council from Government has reduced year on year.
- 2.4 The Council made significant changes to the CTR scheme, which took effect from 1st April 2021. The changes increased the maximum level of support and replaced the existing Council Tax Benefit based scheme with a banded income scheme intended to reduce the administrative

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burden placed on the Council by universal credit. As with the majority of authorities within England, the Borough Council needs to review the scheme for working age claimants to ensure it remains relevant and provides appropriate levels of support.

- 2.5 This report requests permission to consult on changes required to the scheme and makes recommendation to Members for the 2023/24 scheme.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The current CTR scheme was implemented in the 2021/22 financial year and for that year cost £6.119m. This cost is borne by the Council's Collection Fund. Costs are shared between the Council and the Major Precepting Authorities in the following proportions:
- Borough Council 13%
 - Worcestershire County Council 70%
 - West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner 12%
 - Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service 5%
- 3.2 Every local authority has their own CTR scheme to help residents on low incomes pay their Council Tax bill. The amount that can be claimed will depend on household income, savings, entitlement for certain benefits and who lives within the property. If someone is eligible for CTR, the amount of support they are entitled to is used to reduce their overall Council Tax bill.
- 3.3 The Council introduced 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. Details of the existing scheme are set out in 4.11 below.
- 3.4 As with the majority of authorities within England, the Council has changed its scheme each year for a number of reasons including:
- To adjust the level of support in line with the funding available from central Government;
 - To amend income bands and income tapers to adjust for the impact of inflation; and
 - To aid administration.
- 3.5 The existing scheme determines eligibility by placing claimants into income bands and a percentage reduction is then applied to their

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council tax based on the relevant income band. There is no proposal to adjust the method for calculating CTR, however, there is a need to review and increase the income bands to adjust for the effects of inflation.

- 3.6 The scheme currently does not apply income disregards for childcare costs; this can be seen as a disincentive for people to return to the workplace. The options for amendments all propose the disregarding of childcare costs.
- 3.7 The objective of the CTR scheme will continue to be to maintain additional support to those households on the very lowest incomes, especially given the present cost of living crisis. There is no intention to reduce the level of support available to other households and based on current modelling, were either of the three new scheme options be put in place at the current time, the costs would be:

Option A

- Uprating income and increasing the width of each income band:
- Adding childcare disregards to enhance incentives for claimants returning to work

The existing scheme reduces the claimant's council tax by 100%, 75%, 50% or 25% dependant on the income of the household. As income increases the claimant will step through the income bands, and support will be reduced. If income thresholds are not uprated in line with inflation, then the value of the reduction will be reduced, the scheme will cease to be relevant, and appropriate support would no longer be provided to the lowest income households.

Option A proposes that the existing income bands are increased in line with inflation – which is currently anticipated to be 12% and introduces a disregard for childcare costs which will incentivise and better support parents returning to the workplace.

Implementation of option A would result in a £141,000 increase in the costs of CTR based on the current claim caseload and council tax amounts. This amount would be allocated to precepting authorities as per the percentages in paragraph 3.1 with Redditch's allocation at 13%.

Option B

- Uprating income and increasing the width of each income band:
- Adding childcare disregards to enhance incentives for claimants returning to work

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- Increasing support to households in income bands 2 to 4 to 80%, 55% and 30%.

The existing scheme provides the maximum percentage support, of 100%, to the lowest income households at income band 1. The level of support then decreases to 75%, 50% and 25% at bands 2 to 4.

Increasing the support at bands 2 to 4 to 80%, 55% and 30% would provide additional support to low-income households.

Option B proposes the uprating and widening of income band and the introduction of the childcare costs disregard – as at option A - and increases to the support provided at income bands 2 to 4. The overall costs of the scheme would increase by £163,000. This amount would be allocated to precepting authorities as per the percentages in paragraph 3.1 with Redditch's allocation at 13%.

Option C

- Uprating income and increasing the width of each income band:
- Adding childcare disregards to enhance incentives for claimants returning to work
- Increasing support to households in income bands 2 to 4 to 85%, 60% and 35%.

Option C mirrors the changes detailed in B, but proposes that that support at bands 2 to 4 would be 85%, 60% and 35%. The overall costs of the scheme would increase by £184,154. This amount would be allocated to precepting authorities as per the percentages in paragraph 3.1 with Redditch's allocation at 13%.

More detail of all three schemes is set out section 4.14.

- 3.8 The Scheme operates for both pension credit age and working age applicants and in accordance with S13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 specifies the classes of person who are entitled to a reduction under the scheme and is effective from the 1st April 2023 for the period of one financial year.
- 3.9 Whilst the expected costs of the scheme for 2023/24 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 until the 2020/21 tax year when support increased due to the discretionary one off support provided due to the C-19 pandemic. The overall proposed costs level for 2023/24 is considerably lower in terms of the percentage of the tax-base than when Council Tax Reduction was introduced in 2013. The costs of the scheme, based on

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2022/23 council tax charges, will increase to an estimated £6.419m from £6.228m with the proposed options.

Tax Year	Maximum % reduction	Gross Council Tax £000s	Total CTR awarded £000s	CTR as % of gross CT
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	55,399	6,024	10.87
2021/22	100	57,292	6,118	10.67
2022/23	100	59,653	6,228	10.44

- 3.10 The present number of recipients of Council Tax Support at the Council at the end of 2021/22 was
Pension Age - 2389
Working Age - 3589

- 3.11 The Council has now reviewed the existing scheme and assessed three possible different options, as set out in 3.7 above, and will now consult on the approved option to be included in the 2023/24 scheme.

Consultation and Communication

- 3.10 As required by the legislation, the Council will consult with both major preceptors and also the public on the 2023/24 scheme.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Schedule 1A (3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, states: before making a scheme, the authority must: (a) consult any major precepting authority which has power to issue a precept to it, (b) publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit, and (c) consult

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such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme.

- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 The purpose of this report is to set out the process for the 2023/24 scheme to be implemented with effect from 1st April 2023.

Background/Service Implications

- 4.4 The 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.
- 4.5 Since that time, funding for the CTR 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.
- 4.6 The current CTR 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.
- 4.7 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.
- 4.8 When CTR 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

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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%.

- 4.9 Since that time, other slight changes have been made to bring the scheme into line with Housing Benefit and Universal Credit.

The Scheme Introduced on 1st April 2021

- 4.10 In view of the problems being experienced with the pre 2021 scheme, an alternative approach was taken from 2021/22. The approach has been to redesign the scheme to address all current issues in particular;

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

- 4.11 This new income banded / grid scheme for working age applicants with effect from 1st April 2021 was to implement a modern, future proofed scheme and reduce the administrative burden placed on the Council by the introduction of Universal Credit. This scheme had several new features:

- More support is given to those households on the lowest of incomes than in the previous scheme;
- Changes can only be made to the working age schemes as the current schemes for pensioners is prescribed by central Government; and
- The existing means - tested schemes have been replaced by a simple income grid model as shown below:

Discount Band	Discount	Single Person	Single person with one child	Single person with two or more children	Couple	Couple with one child	Couple with two or more children
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

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- 4.12 Consultation took place during 2020 and the new scheme took effect from 1st April 2021.

Proposed Approach to the 2022/23 Scheme

- 4.13 The Council has taken advice from ACS Consultancy who gives specialist advice in this area across a number of Councils. In current experience is that
- They know of no Councils who are reducing the level of their schemes.
 - Significant numbers of clients are increasing the scope of their schemes to give more benefits to those most in need due to the cost of living crisis.
 - Most are now using banded schemes similar to that moved to by the Council in April 2021.
- 4.14 As such the Council is proposing three possible scheme alternatives to Members, who will need to approve one of those alternatives. All three alternatives are based on the existing scheme with small alterations, residents. These three changes are

Option A

- Uprating income and increasing the width of each income band:
- Adding childcare disregards to enhance incentives for claimants returning to work

Band	Discount	Single Person	Single Person + 1 child	Single person with 2 or more children	Couple	Couple with 1 child	Couple with 2 or more children
Income Band 1	100%	£0 to £115	£0 to £180	£0 to £245	£0 to £165	£0 to £230	£0 to £295
Income Band 2	75%	£115.01 to £140	£180.01 to £215	£245.01 to £280	£165.01 to £190	£230.01 to £265.00	£295.01 to £330
Income Band 3	50%	£140.01 to £165	£215.01 to £250	£280.01 to £315	£190.01 to £215	£265.01 to £300	£330.01 to £365
Income Band 4	25%	£165.01 to £190	£250.01 to £285	£315.01 to £350	£215.01 to £240	£300.01 to £335	£365.01 to £400
Nil Award	0%	Over £190	Over £285	Over £350	Over £240	Over £335	Over £400

Option B

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- Uprating income and increasing the width of each income band:
- Adding childcare disregards to enhance incentives for claimants returning to work
- Increasing support to households in income bands 2 to 4 to 80%, 55% and 30%.

Band	Discount	Single Person	Single Person + 1 child	Single person with 2 or more children	Couple	Couple with 1 child	Couple with 2 or more children
Income Band 1	100%	£0 to £115	£0 to £180	£0 to £245	£0 to £165	£0 to £230	£0 to £295
Income Band 2	80%	£115.01 to £140	£180.01 to £215	£245.01 to £280	£165.01 to £190	£230.01 to £265.00	£295.01 to £330
Income Band 3	55%	£140.01 to £165	£215.01 to £250	£280.01 to £315	£190.01 to £215	£265.01 to £300	£330.01 to £365
Income Band 4	30%	£165.01 to £190	£250.01 to £285	£315.01 to £350	£215.01 to £240	£300.01 to £335	£365.01 to £400
Nil Award	0%	Over £190	Over £285	Over £350	Over £240	Over £335	Over £400

Option C

- Uprating income and increasing the width of each income band:
- Adding childcare disregards to enhance incentives for claimants returning to work
- Increasing support to households in income bands 2 to 4 to 85%, 60% and 35%.

Band	Discount	Single Person	Single Person + 1 child	Single person with 2 or more children	Couple	Couple with 1 child	Couple with 2 or more children
Income Band 1	100%	£0 to £115	£0 to £180	£0 to £245	£0 to £165	£0 to £230	£0 to £295
Income Band 2	85%	£115.01 to £140	£180.01 to £215	£245.01 to £280	£165.01 to £190	£230.01 to £265.00	£295.01 to £330
Income Band 3	60%	£140.01 to £165	£215.01 to £250	£280.01 to £315	£190.01 to £215	£265.01 to £300	£330.01 to £365
Income Band 4	35%	£165.01 to £190	£250.01 to £285	£315.01 to £350	£215.01 to £240	£300.01 to £335	£365.01 to £400
Nil Award	0%	Over £190	Over £285	Over £350	Over £240	Over £335	Over £400

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- 4.15 Members will need to choose one of these alternatives to take out to consultation. Following consultation, the updated scheme will be implemented from the 1st April 2023.

Other Options

- 4.16 The alternative to introducing a revised scheme for CTR is to maintain the existing scheme; this would result in the income bands ceasing to be relevant and the withdrawal of support from the lowest income households and 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.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS**Relevant Strategic Purpose**

- 5.1 The Council Tax Support Scheme provides targeted support to the Councils most vulnerable residents.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 The delivery of additional support to our most vulnerable residents via a reduction in their Council Tax will have a neutral effect on the climate.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 A stage one Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of this process.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 The changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme can be accommodated within existing teams and computer software.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 A full risk assessment will be undertaken of the options going out for consultation.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

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None

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder		
Lead Director / Head of Service		
Financial Services		
Legal Services		
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)		
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)		

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REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Executive
2022****6 September****Quarter 1 2022-23 – Financial and Performance Report**

Relevant Portfolio Holder		Councillor Ashley – Portfolio Holder for
Portfolio Holder Consulted		Yes
Relevant Head of Service		Michelle Howell Deborah Poole
Report Authors	Head of Finance and Customer Services michelle.howell@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Head of Business Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy d.poole@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk	
Wards Affected		All Wards
Ward Councillor(s) consulted		No
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)		All
Non-Key Decision		
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.		

1. RECOMMENDATIONS**The Executive Committee is asked to RESOLVE that:**

- 1) The current financial position in relation to Revenue and Capital Budgets for the period April to June 2022 be noted; and**
- 2) The Q1 Performance data for the Period April to June 2022 be noted.**

The Executive Committee is asked to RECOMMEND that:

- 3) The Operational Bank Account limit is raised to £2m; and**
- 4) The Asset Disposal Strategy is approved for implementation.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This report presents at Quarter 1 (April – June) 2022/23
 - the Council's forecast outturn revenue monitoring position for 2022/23 based on data to Quarter 1
 - An update on progress on the 2023/24 budget process – which was first reported to committee as part of the Period 1 Monitoring Report.

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- The organisations performance against the strategic priorities outlined in the Council Plan Addendum, including operational measures to demonstrate how the council is delivering its services to customers.

3. DETAILED PERFORMANCE**Financial Performance**

- 3.1 As part of the monitoring process a detailed review has been undertaken to ensure that issues are considered, and significant savings and cost pressures are addressed. This report sets out, based on the position at period 3/quarter 1, the projected revenue outturn position for the 2022/23 financial year and explains key variances against budget
- 3.2 The £10.520m original revenue budget included in the table below is the budget that was approved by Council in March 2022.

	2022/23 Full Year Budget	2022/23 Q1 Actuals	2022/23 Adjusted Forecast Outturn	Adjusted Forecast Outturn Variance (Under) / Over spend
Department				
Regulatory Client	391,190	83,398	333,594	(57,597)
Business Transformation & Organisational Development	1,794,085	202,436	1,711,170	(82,915)
Chief Executive	(1,934,525)	216,740	(1,935,698)	(1,173)
Community & Housing GF Services	1,578,076	141,605	1,423,223	(154,853)
Environmental Services	2,779,319	(318,262)	2,975,382	196,064
Financial & Customer Services	1,905,007	3,959,822	1,660,064	(244,943)
Legal, Democratic & Property Services	2,238,105	107,421	2,053,648	(184,457)
Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services	1,293,153	25,188	1,207,079	(86,073)
RBC Rubicon Client	1,070,604	381,393	1,070,604	0
Cross cutting savings and efficiency targets	(595,012)	0	0	595,012
Net Expenditure before Corporate Financing	10,520,000	4,418,348	10,499,064	(20,936)

3.3 Budget Variances

The following paragraphs explain the forecast variances for each area against the 2022/23 revenue budgets (a more detailed analysis of

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which can be found at Appendix A). It is important to note that, at this stage in the financial year there are a number of instances where annual expenditure or accruals may distort the profiling as reflected in the Q1 actual; this has been reflected in the forecast outturn for each service area.

Business Transformation & Organisational Development – £82k underspend

Within Business Transformation & Organisational Development, the forecast underspend is predominantly due to vacancies within Human Resources which is forecast at £76k underspend for the year. Following the installation of a new HR software package, recruitment is underway to recruit to vacant posts within the service. There is also a small forecast underspend against the ICT budget.

Chief Executive - £1k overspend

There is a small underspend forecast within the Chief Executive area.

Community and Housing General Fund Services - £155k underspend

Within Community and Housing General Fund Services there are two services in particular that have a significant forecast outturn variance against budget:

- Housing Options (£102k underspend) – This is mainly as a result of vacancies within the team.
- Community Safety/CCTV (£62k underspend) – This is mainly as a result of vacancies within the team.

Environmental Services - £196k overspend

Within Environmental Services there are two service areas with significant forecast overspends against budget:

- Engineering & Design (£135k overspend) – the forecast overspend is mainly as a result of expenditure on non adopted highways due to health and safety works.
- Tree Management (£74k overspend) – The forecast overspend in this service is as a result of insurance claims.

Finance & Customer Services - £245k underspend

Within Finance & Customer Services the forecast underspend is as a result of vacancies across the service. This will continue to be reviewed

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in light of pressures within the service, with further updates provided during 2022/23.

Legal, Democratic and Property Services - £184k underspend

Within Legal, Democratic and Property Services there are three service areas with significant forecast outturn variances against budget, Business Development (£42k underspend) and Facilities Management (£194k underspend) are both currently forecasting an underspend as a result of vacancies within the team. However, this is an area that will be kept under review throughout the financial year particularly with regards to resources for key regeneration projects. The underspend is offset in part by the forecast cost of Elections totalling £63k.

Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services - £86k underspend

There is a forecast underspend totalling £86k within this service which comprises of:

- An underspend totalling £51k within Development Services as a result of anticipated budget efficiencies. This will be kept under review throughout the financial year.
- An underspend totalling £32k within Parks, Open Spaces and Events mainly as a result of a vacancy, however this will be reviewed throughout the financial year.

Cross cutting savings and efficiency targets - £596k to be delivered

There is a forecast overspend due to organisational efficiency targets that have not been allocated to service areas and cross council savings and efficiency initiatives. It is important to note however that forecast underspends within other service areas, as detailed in this report, will help to achieve this target. This will be kept under review as we progress through the financial year.

Regulatory Client - £58k underspend

A £58k underspend on the Licencing Client is forecast due to increased General Licencing and Taxi licensing income.

- 3.4 Overall, the Council is currently forecasting a revenue underspend in the region of £21k for the 2022/23 financial year. This position will continue to be reviewed particularly given the impact of the increasing costs linked to inflation and further updates will be provided to Members throughout 2022/23.

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Cash Management

- 3.5 The Council's 2022/23 Treasury Investment Strategy and associated MRP policy, presented to Audit, Governance and Standards Committee on the 14th April 2022 and was approved by full Council on the 27th June 2022.
- 3.6 Part of those policies approved included the following limit on Operational Bank Accounts.
- 3.7 Operational bank accounts: The Authority may incur operational exposures, for example through current accounts, collection accounts and merchant acquiring services, to any UK bank with credit ratings no lower than BBB- and with assets greater than £25 billion. These are not classed as investments but are still subject to the risk of a bank bail-in, and balances will therefore be kept below £500,000 per bank. The Bank of England has stated that in the event of failure, banks with assets greater than £25 billion are more likely to be bailed-in than made insolvent, increasing the chance of the Authority maintaining operational continuity.
- 3.8 Although the Treasury Investment Strategy was reviewed earlier this year and some limits changed, it has become apparent that this limit has been continually breached since the inception of C-19. This is due to a number of factors including significant receipt of grant funding support for C-19 and the passing of this through to the Business Community.
- 3.9 The Council will Continue to keep this limit under review, but in the short term it is prudent to increase the limit to £2m for the remainder of this financial year, to be reviewed as part of the 2023/24 Treasury Investment Strategy.
- 3.10 As this is a Treasury Indicator, its breach, and associated change, must be reported through to full Council for approval.

Capital Monitoring

- 3.11 A capital programme of £10.8m was approved in the Budget for 2022/23 in March 2022.

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- 3.12 However, in addition to this funding the Council also have the following Grant Funded Schemes which are being delivered in 2022/23:
- Towns Fund – Executive in June approved business cases for
 - The Digital Manufacturing and Innovation Centre of £10.5m. £8m of this funding will come from the Towns Fund with the remainder being applied for from the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP.
 - Improvements to the Town Centre Public Realm of £3.4m. £3m of this funding will come from the Towns Fund.
 - The business Case for the Library site will be reviewed in September. There is £4.2m of Town Funding for this project if approved.
 - UK Shared Prosperity Fund - £294k of grant spend (although a significant amount will be revenue based).
- 3.13 The spend at quarter 1 is £3.1m of the overall 2022/23 capital budget totalling £10.8m as detailed in Appendix B.
- 3.14 Capital monitoring for 2021/22 was undertaken towards the end of the financial year (at period 11), and spending was only £1.3m which is substantially below the £9.9m programme. The main reason for this variance is no spending against the £4.3m Regeneration Fund although parts of it will be required for Council's obligations with Towns Fund delivery. Therefore circa £8m of spending will need to be assessed for reallocation into 2022/23. This will be addressed in the outturn reports to Executive.
- 3.15 Both Existing Capital Programmes (21/22 and 22/23) are set out in the Appendix B.

Earmarked Reserves

- 3.16 The position as reported to Council in February 2022 as per the 2022/23 – 2024/25 Medium Term Financial Plan is shown in Appendix C.

HRA Position

- 3.17 The HRA budget totalling £25.4m was approved in March 2022 and funded from Rents and tenants' contributions. The approved capital programme for 2022/23 totals £14.2m.

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- 3.18 As at Quarter 1 of 2022/23, it is currently forecast that the HRA will outturn with a surplus in the region of £105,000 which will be transferred to HRA Balances.
- 3.19 The main variances that have contributed to this surplus are:
- Repairs & Maintenance - Anticipated efficiency savings arising from improved work planning and timely delivery of works.
 - Supervision & Management - the variance is predominantly due to vacant posts pending the ongoing review of the Housing function and reduced professional and consultancy fees.
- 3.20 As at Quarter 1 of 2022/23, it is currently forecast that the HRA capital programme budget will outturn with a spend of £10.7m against a £14.8m budget. The £3.5m underspend is primarily as a result of delays in project start dates and changes in assumptions regarding Housing 1 for 1 purchases.

Asset Disposal Strategy

- 3.21 The Council holds substantial non HRA Land, Property and Equipment. The 2019/20 Statement of Accounts value these assets at £47m. The attached policy (Appendix D) sets out that for all assets there is a requirement that they remain compliant for use against present legislation. In addition, there is a requirement that Council buildings are raised to the top three Energy Efficient levels by 2026.
- 3.22 Overall, these requirements have cost implications. Over the next 2 years a series of Condition Surveys will need to be undertaken on all assets which will lead to:
- A revised Overall Property Holding Strategy.
- And for Individual Properties and Land their:
- Operational necessity.
 - Cost of ensuring the buildings remain to compliant to legislation.
 - Cost of ensuring buildings move to the top 3 Energy Effective ratings by 2026.
 - Rent levels (and net costs for each building).
 - Alternative service delivery options.

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This will lead to a list of buildings/Land that are:

- Surplus to requirements
- Not cost effective to be run (requiring alternative delivery options)

Groups of assets will be brought to Executive on a Quarterly basis for approval for disposal.

4. Update on Progress with the 2023/24 Budget

- 4.1 We reported the process that Officers are following to balance the 2022/23 (note the unallocated savings figure in the previous section) and future budgets. The main steps were:
- o Reviewing base budgets, historic places where over/underspend occur, and views of potential savings options.
 - o Linkage to the 2021/22 Outturn position.
 - o Engaging with our Treasury Consultants Arlingclose to review our Minimum Revenue Provision, use of debt and investment policies.
 - o Assessing with Heads of Service present levels of service and associated requirements in the new post C-19 environment to identify where different delivery models will lead to further savings
- 4.2 We have met with Arlingclose who have requested data to complete their review of MRP, debt and investment policies.
- 4.3 We initially met with Heads of Service in July and have jointly compiled a long list of possible savings and efficiency to close the budget deficit position. Two more meetings have taken place during August with Heads of Service to further refine these options.
- 4.4 In parallel to this, work is also taking place on possible pressures, of which inflation, pay and contracts, will be a key input.
- 4.5 More officer led work will take place in September leading to a set of budget proposals coming to Executive in October.
- 4.6 Officers have engaged with the Budget Working Group and a series of meetings have been set up to scrutinise the budget.

5. Performance Report

- 5.1 The performance report sets out to provide data and information that links all activity back to the Council's strategic priorities as set out in the

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Council Plan and Council Plan Addendum. Whilst the report focuses primarily on corporate, strategic measures there is a section that provides some operational measures data to provide a general overview of service delivery.

- 5.2 Whilst the Council has an approved Council Plan in place it was completed before the Covid-19 outbreak. Recently the Council reviewed this plan to ensure it remains fit for purpose. As a result of this review, the Council developed the Council Plan Addendum to take any change in focus brought about by the pandemic, into consideration. The addendum document will sit alongside the current Council Plan for the next twelve months. It is designed to provide an intermediary position ahead of a full review of the Council's long term priorities in 2023. Currently the Council's key strategic priorities are:

- Economic Development and Regeneration
- Housing Growth
- Work and Financial Independence
- Improved Health and Wellbeing
- Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour
- Green Thread
- Financial Stability
- Organisational Sustainability
- High Quality Services

- 5.3 The Q1 report is an introduction to the performance data used by the council, as such there is a large amount of data in this first report. It is recognised that effective performance management will enable the Council to use its limited resources in a more targeted manner, maximising the value of Council services and allowing the Council to be even more responsive to customers' needs. It is proposed that future reports will be more structured around particular strategic priorities in order to provide a more focused data set, consequently different priorities will be reported in each quarter.

- 5.4 Appendix E sets out the Strategic Priorities and Performance Measures in detail. For the 9 priorities there is data contained in the Appendix on:

- The Performance Measure being used.
- An update on how it is being used.
- Where relevant, contextual information.

The Strategic Performance Measures and their respective outputs are set out below. Full context is given in Appendix E:

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-
- Economic Development and Regeneration
 - Supporting businesses to start to Grow
 - Measure – Take up of Grants – ***Table in Appendix E shows by year***
 - Regenerating our Infrastructure
 - Measure - % of empty shops - ***tbc***
 - Measure – Level of funding secured - ***£15m***
 - Housing Growth
 - Measure – Number of new Homes – total and affordable (Annual) - ***185 and 65***
 - Measure – Number of new council houses (HRA) projected to be built during 2022/23 - ***19***
 - Measure – Number of homeless approached - ***Chart in Appendix A sets out by quarter and year***
 - Measure – number of threatened with homelessness preventions - ***tbc***
 - Measure – Number of homeless applicants housed - ***tbc***
 - Measure – Local housing affordability rate – ***7.57***
 - Work and Financial Independence
 - Measure – Number of Financial Independence Team client contacts - ***Chart in Appendix A sets out by month and year***
 - Measure – Number of clients assessing Starting Well Service - ***TBC***
 - Measure – Number of young people with positive outcomes because of Enhanced Youth Support Intervention - ***TBC***
 - Measure – Number of eligible children accessing nursery funding across the borough – ***59%***
 - Measure – Number of households provided with energy advice – ***New contract June 2022***
 - Measure – Number of energy rebate payments – ***26,440***
 - Improved Health and Wellbeing
 - Measure – Number of Community Builders in post - ***3***
 - Measure – Completion and implementation of the actions in the Leisure Strategy – ***Strategy to be approved Oct 2022***
 - Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour
 - Measure – Number of young people engaged through Detached/Outreach youth work - ***11.***
 - Measure – Levels of crime – ***chart sets out by type and year***
 - Measure – Number of crime risk surveys carried out - ***2***
 - Measure - Number of positive outcomes because of Safer Streets Woodrow project – ***data in Q2***
 - Green Thread

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- Measure – Have an agreed and funded plan and capital replacement programme for the Council's fleet subject to any budget constraints – ***EST reports to assist***
 - Measure – Have an agreed plan in place to deliver new requirements of national Resources and Waste Strategy and Environment Act – ***WRAP funding for cross County feasibility study***
 - Measure - Introduce vegetable derived diesel into the Council's vehicles to reduce carbon emissions subject to any budget constraints – ***Signed up to framework in order to purchase HVO***
 - Measure - Households supported by the Council's energy advice service – ***New contract June 2022***
 - Financial Stability
 - Measure - Financial Performance – actuals consistent with budget – ***via Finance Report***
 - Measure – Increased levels of General Fund Balances over the medium term – ***via Finance Report***
 - Towns Fund Project delivered within budget – ***via Finance Report***
 - Organisational Sustainability
 - Measure – Number of corporate measures accessible through the dashboard - ***39***
 - Measure - % of staff able to work in an agile way - ***New***
 - High Quality Services
 - Measure - % of Personal Development Reviews undertaken each year - ***tbc***
 - Measure - % of employees who undertake management training - ***tbc***
 - Measure – Customer satisfaction with service delivery, measured through the Community Survey – ***40.9%***

5.5 In addition, Appendix F sets out Operational Service Measures. As with Appendix E, more context is given in the Appendix, these include:

- Sickness Absence Rates – ***6.6 days***
- IT Satisfaction Rates – ***98%***
- Average Telephone queue time – ***14 minutes and 23 seconds***
- Average number of people waiting in Telephone queue – ***1***
- Percentage of Household Waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting – Table by Month and year – ***June 22 – 28.16%***
- NI 191 – Residual Waste per household (Kg) ***June 22 - 48.18kg***
- Fly Tips – ***June 22 – 137***
- Third Party Gas Audit Compliance (target 85%) - ***June 22 98.31%***

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- Average time to complete repairs to standard voids (target 20 calendar days) - **June 22 – 21.4**
- Council Tax Collection Rate – **June 22 - 1% below target**
- Business Rates Collection Rate – **June 22 – 2.8% below target**
- Benefits Change of Circumstances turnaround – **9 Days**
- Benefits New Claims Turnround – **20 days**
- Customer Services calls by type – **Charts set out by department**

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The financial implications are detailed in the body of the report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising as a result of this report.

8. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS**Relevant Strategic Purpose**

- 8.1 The Strategic purposes are included in the Council's corporate plan and guides the Council's approach to budget making ensuring we focus on the issues and what are most important for the borough and our communities. Our Financial monitoring and strategies are integrated within all of our Strategic Purposes

Climate Change Implications

- 8.2 The green thread runs through the Council plan. The Financial monitoring report has implications on climate change and these will be addressed and reviewed when relevant by climate change officers to ensure the correct procedures have been followed to ensure any impacts on climate change are fully understood.

9. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 9.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising as a result of this report.

Operational Implications

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- 9.2 Managers meet with finance officers to consider the current financial position and to ensure actions are in place to mitigate any overspends.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT

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

11. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix A – Revenue Monitoring
 Appendix B – Capital Monitoring
 Appendix C – Earmarked Reserves
 Appendix D – Asset Disposal Strategy
 Appendix E – Strategic Performance Measures
 Appendix F – Operational Performance Measures

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder		
Lead Director / Head of Service		
Financial Services		
Legal Services		
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)		
Climate Change Officer (if climate change implications apply)		

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REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

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APPENDIX A – 2022/23 Revenue Monitoring

Service area	2022/23 Working Budget	2022/23 Q1 Actuals	Adjusted Forecast Outturn	Adjusted Forecast Outturn Variance (Under) / Over spend
Environmental Health / Protection / Enforcement	(253)	(4,865)	(19,458)	(19,205)
Licenses (all)	(212,640)	(64,913)	(259,653)	(47,013)
Pest & Dog control	(2,000)	0	0	2,000
Regulatory Services client	606,083	153,176	612,705	6,622
Regulatory Client Total	391,190	83,398	333,594	(57,597)
Corporate	0	0	0	0
Equalities & Diversity	14,977	224	14,977	0
Human Resources	523,682	108,820	447,627	(76,055)
ICT	1,069,518	93,392	1,062,658	(6,860)
Policy	57,494	0	57,494	0
Training & Organisational Development	0	0	0	0
Transformation, Business process re-engineering & Lean Syst	70,560	0	70,560	0
CMT - Business Transformation & Organisational Development	57,855	0	57,855	0
Business Transformation & Organisational Development 1	1,794,085	202,436	1,711,170	(82,915)
Corporate	(2,600,420)	130,160	(2,600,420)	0
SMT	220,496	24,050	220,496	0
Central Post	81,022	31,410	103,332	22,309
P A & Directorate Support	136,373	30,232	132,863	(3,510)
Communications & Printing	170,190	(1,159)	150,217	(19,973)
Partnerships	57,814	(117,485)	57,814	0
Covid grants	0	119,532	0	0
Chief Executive Total	(1,934,525)	216,740	(1,935,698)	(1,173)
Climate Change / Energy Efficiency	7,300	675	7,300	0
CMT - Community	40,988	32,044	38,042	(2,945)
Community Safety	394,465	144,157	332,047	(62,417)
Community Transport	176,351	55,401	188,139	11,788
Facilities Management	(1)	623	(1)	0
Grants to voluntary bodies	198,115	57,858	198,115	0
Housing Options	639,517	159,037	537,000	(102,517)
Housing Strategy & Enabling	241,713	6,624	242,434	722
Lifeline	(88,371)	(301,398)	(87,854)	517
Starting Well	(32,000)	(13,417)	(32,000)	0
Community & Housing GF Services Total	1,578,076	141,605	1,423,223	(154,853)
Bereavement Services	(1,188,964)	(297,409)	(1,188,964)	0
Car Parks / Civil Parking Enforcement	29,009	(25,289)	29,009	0
Core Environmental Operations	252,338	(39,157)	252,338	0
Engineering & Design	333,744	36,397	468,885	135,141
Env Services Mgmt & Support	443,306	10,591	443,306	0
Place Teams	1,357,408	(108,069)	1,347,164	(10,243)
Stores & Depots	0	10,324	(0)	(0)
Tree Management inc TPO's	277,421	108,165	350,891	73,470
Waste Management	1,289,802	(31,987)	1,289,802	0
CMT - Environment	(14,745)	18,172	(17,049)	(2,303)
Environmental Services Total	2,779,319	(318,262)	2,975,382	196,064

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Service area	2022/23 Working Budget	2022/23 Q1 Actuals	Adjusted Forecast Outturn	Adjusted Forecast Outturn Variance (Under) / Over spend
Accounts & Financial Management	624,596	173,147	663,673	39,077
Benefits	677,541	73,872	635,108	(42,433)
Benefits Subsidy	(333,912)	3,519,230	(333,912)	0
Customer Services	485,368	39,849	339,707	(145,661)
Revenues	428,822	164,571	323,141	(105,681)
CMT - Finance	22,592	(10,847)	32,347	9,755
Financial & Customer Services Total	1,905,007	3,959,822	1,660,064	(244,943)
Business Development	188,264	32,071	146,264	(41,999)
Democratic Services & Member Support	403,209	59,067	392,196	(11,013)
Election & Electoral Services, Periodic Electoral review	258,938	54,079	321,324	62,386
Facilities Management	1,052,802	(409,752)	858,971	(193,831)
CMT - Legal	57,937	0	57,937	0
Legal Advice & Services	276,955	(9,436)	276,955	(0)
Legal, Democratic & Property Services Total	2,238,105	(273,972)	2,053,647	(184,457)
Development Services	157,509	(65,603)	106,731	(50,778)
Building Control	(2,766)	(38,762)	(2,766)	0
Development Control	135,340	(28,914)	135,340	0
Economic Development	102,024	(45,224)	102,024	0
Emergency Planning / Business Continuity	13,535	0	13,535	0
Non-Operational	0	0	0	0
Parks, Open Spaces and Events	418,237	46,235	385,909	(32,328)
Planning Policy	399,384	960	399,384	0
Town Centre Development	10,000	142,524	10,000	0
CMT - Planning, Regeneration and Leisure	59,890	13,974	56,922	(2,967)
Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services Total	1,293,153	25,188	1,207,079	(86,073)
Business Development	982,266	326,663	982,266	0
Cultural Services	0	23,223	0	0
Parks and Events	10,838	5,672	10,838	0
Sports Services	77,500	25,835	77,500	0
RBC Rubicon Client Total	1,070,604	381,393	1,070,604	0
Cross cutting savings and efficiency targets	(595,012)	0	0	595,012
Cross cutting savings and efficiency targets	(595,012)	0	0	595,012
Net Expenditure before Corporate Financing	10,520,000	4,418,348	10,499,064	(20,936)

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APPENDIX B – Capital Programme 2021/22 and 2022/23

2021/22 monitoring (as at period 11)

Cap Proj	Description	Approved budget date	Original approved Budget	Duration (years)	Department	Budget 21/22 £	Reprofiled incl c/fud £	Budget increase incl revision	2021/22 Total £	Spent to Date	Slippage to be Agreed
C2000	Home Repair Assistance	21/22	40,000	4	Community & Housing GF Services	40,000			40,000	0	40,000
C2001	Disabled Facilities Grant	21/22	829,000	4	Community & Housing GF Services		1,156,847	829,000	1,985,847	765,249	1,220,598
C2301	HMO Grants	21/22	25,000	4	Community & Housing GF Services		29,515	25,000	54,515	0	54,515
C2302	Energy & Efficiency Install.	21/22	110,000	1	Community & Housing GF Services		50,065		50,065	17,952	32,113
C2351	New Digital Service	2020/21	86,450		Community & Housing GF Services	50,502	26,450		76,952	16,636	60,316
NEW	7kw electric vehicle charge point	21/22	160,000	1	Community & Housing GF Services			160,000	160,000	0	160,000
NEW	Greener Home	20/21	150,000	2	Community & Housing GF Services			255,000	255,000	-80,710	335,710
C1302	Improved Parking Scheme - Causpar Cottage - Fakenham				Environmental Services		20,000		20,000	0	20,000
C1302	Improved Parking Scheme (includes locality)				Environmental Services	400,000			400,000	-4,950	404,950
C1305	Locality Capital Project - Green Lane, Studley				Environmental Services		200,000		200,000	0	200,000
C2100	New Pulling Road Brake Tester	21/22	40,000	1	Environmental Services			40,000	40,000	0	40,000
C2100	Vehicle replacement	21/22	698,000	ongoing	Environmental Services	1,927,000	-1,611,500		315,500	275,240	40,262
C2316	Wheeler Bin purchase				Environmental Services	70,000	15,000		85,000	88,093	-3,093
C2328	Replacing 3 fuel pump and upgrading tank monitoring equipment				Environmental Services		25,000		25,000	0	25,000
C2330	Car Park Maintenance				Environmental Services	25,000			25,000	0	25,000
C2352	Fleet Management Computer System	2020/21	16,600	1	Environmental Services		16,600		16,600	0	16,600
C2353	Environmental Services Computer System	2020/21	38,200	1	Environmental Services		157,200		157,200	84,535	72,665
C2558	Locality Capital Project - Capital Landscaping Improvement				Environmental Services		1,825		1,825	8,230	-6,405
C1110	Public Building	2019/20	250,000	4	Finance & Customer Services	250,000			250,000	266,240	-16,240
C2245	GF Arborist	2020/21	40,000	3	Finance & Customer Services	40,000	10,000		50,000	83,272	-33,272
C2349	Regeneration Fund				Finance & Customer Services	2,000,000	2,354,670		4,354,670	0	4,354,670
C2322	Arrou Valley Country Park - Play, Open Space and Sports Improvement				Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services		6,000		6,000	-1,297	7,297
C2323	Torrey Field - Sports Contribution to support existing approved funding				Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services		9,000		9,000	19,503	-10,503
C2333	Improvements at Business Centre				Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services		73,614		73,614	88,957	-15,343
C2335	Improvement to Marton Stanley - Play Area for toddler and junior play				Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services		79,686		79,686	35,823	43,863
C2336	Improvement to Marton Stanley Open Space				Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services		25,633		25,633	0	25,633
C2337	Improvement to Sports Pitcher infrastructure in Marton Stanley Park				Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services		98,535		98,535	0	98,535
C2339	Improvement to original Pump Track at AVCP				Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services		60,606		60,606	0	60,606
C2341	Hedgehog Mitigation measures by restoration and hedge laying with associated fencing and gates at AVCP SHM and AVCP North				Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services		21,500		21,500	0	21,500
C2342	Grassland Mitigation measures - recreating and monitoring grassland habitat in MS and AVCP				Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services		146,590		146,590	0	146,590
C2346	Removal of Sycamore through Arrou Valley Park				Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services		437,000		437,000	0	437,000
C2347	Marton Stanley Play, Sport and Open Space Improvements (General)				Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services		298,403		298,403	204,091	94,312
C2348	Open space improvements - North Meadow				Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services		3,000		3,000	0	3,000
C2354	Cafe and Infrastructure Marton Stanley Park	2020/21	100,000	1	Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services		100,000		100,000	0	100,000
NEW	Paving bay at main access AVCP	2020/21	6,000	1	Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services			24,700	24,700	12,000	12,700
Total current Capital programme						4,892,502	3,811,239	1,343,700	9,957,441	1,878,882	8,078,559

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2022/23 monitoring (as at period 3)

Capital Project Name	Approved Budget	Q1 Actuals	Budget Remaining
AVCP - Open Space and Sports Improvement	356,000	21,021	334,979
Camera Replacement Project	44,000	0	44,000
Car Park Maintenance	30,000	29,192	808
Disabled Facilities Grant	718,000	(63,010)	781,010
Energy & Efficiency Installation	90,000	1,690	88,310
GF Asbestos Programme	40,000	11,005	28,995
HMO Grants	18,000	0	18,000
Home Repairs Assistance	88,000	0	88,000
Improved Parking Scheme	81,000	988	80,012
Improvement of Parking Arrow Valley South	17,000	0	17,000
Improvement of Morton Stanley Open Space	80,000	0	80,000
Improvement of Morton Stanley Play Area	26,000	0	26,000
Improvement to Pump Track at Arrow Valley	61,000	0	61,000
Improvement to Cricket Club	3,000	0	3,000
Improvement to Morton Stanley Sports Infrastructure	99,000	0	99,000
Improvement to Business Centres	74,000	(6,386)	80,386
Health and Fitness Facilities Investment	29,000	0	29,000
Locality Capital Projects	94,000	(3,644)	97,644
Morton Stanley Park Sport and Open Spaces Improvements	333,000	0	333,000
New Finance Enterprise System	218,000	99,076	118,924
North Moons Moat Open Space Improvement	3,000	0	3,000
POS/Play Improvements to Forge Mill and Visitor Centre	51,000	0	51,000
Public Building	426,308	56,830	369,478
Vehicle Replacement Programme	866,000	30,733	835,267
Regeneration Fund	5,225,000	2,851,606	2,373,394
Arrow Valley Weir Works	437,000	0	437,000
Small Area Improvements	40,000	0	40,000
Terry Field Outdoor Facilities Improvements	38,000	0	38,000
Lifeline Hardwire System upgrades	13,000	16,431	(3,431)
Wheelie Bin Purchase	124,000	21,077	102,923
New Digital Service	86,000	0	86,000
Fuel pump upgrade and tank monitoring equipment	25,000	0	25,000
Fleet Management Computer System	17,000	0	17,000
Environmental Services Computer System	38,000	0	38,000

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Café and Infrastructure Morton Stanley Park	100,000	0	100,000
Catch up Repairs	0	4,383	(4,383)
Stock Condition Survey	0	21,200	021,200
Green Lane Studley	200,000	2,070	197,930
Locality - Landscape Improvement	25,000	0	25,000
Salix Project	250,000	0	250,000
Bathroom Renewals	105,000	0	105,000
Fencing Renewals	90,000	0	90,000
Vehicle lift within workshop	25,000	0	25,000
Locality Project - Garage Condition survey	100,000	0	100,000

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Description	Balance b/fwd 1/4/2020	C/fwd 31/3/2021	Planned use for 2021/22 Budget	Estimated closing balance 2021/22	Proposed release of reserves from RPP exercise	Planned use for 2022/23 Budget	Comment
GF Earmarked Reserves	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Community Development	(66)	(74)	2	(72)	18	0	To support the costs associated with community projects
Community Safety	(302)	(232)	0	(232)	0	0	External grant funding to be released over a number of years on Community Safety Projects ongoing
Corporate Services	(150)	(159)	0	(159)	0	0	Funding to support potential costs of future service reviews.
Customer Services	0	(93)	0	(93)	0	0	Funding to support potential costs of future service reviews.
Economic Growth Development	(330)	(330)	200	(130)	0	0	To fund the Economic Development opportunities across the Borough
Electoral Services	(44)	(49)	0	(49)	25	0	To support the delivery of individual electoral registration and to set aside a reserve for potential refunds to government
Environmental Services	0	(29)	0	(29)	0	0	To support the costs of the Environmental Services Vehicles
Equipment Replacement	(48)	(26)	0	(26)	26	0	ICT equipment reserve
Financial Services	(132)	(1,285)	150	(1,135)	0	100	Brexit reserve along with a transformational growth reserve and also funds to support the new enterprise system. The balance of the general Covid reserve received in 20-21 also within this figure.
Corporate Financing	(1,997)	(2,833)	350	(2,483)	0	0	The reserve has been created to offset the loss on Business rates collection and appeals in 2019/20.
Housing Benefits Implementation	(269)	(269)	0	(269)	140	0	Specific welfare reform grant received
Housing Support	(746)	(978)	0	(978)	0	0	Government Specific Grant - annual funding
Land charges	(9)	(9)	0	(9)	9	0	To fund potential litigation in relation to Land Charges
Land Drainage	(129)	(129)	0	(129)	0	0	To support costs associated with health and safety issues within the environment
Parks and Open spaces	(8)	(58)	0	(58)	8	0	To fund a review of the local allotments.
Planning	(669)	(520)	0	(520)	0	0	Custom build grant to provide support to the council towards expenditure lawfully incurred in relation to the provision and maintenance of a self-build register. Along with grants for One Public estates, Business Improvemnets district grant and Town deals grant.
Property	0	(221)	0	(221)	0	0	To fund the costs of repairs and maintenance costs for future years due to closure of sites due to the pandemic
Sports Development	(68)	(51)	0	(51)	0	0	Ringfenced grants for a number of sports development activities to improve Health and Wellbeing in the Borough
Town Centre	(2)	(7)	0	(7)	0	0	To support improvements in the Town Centre High Street
Warmer Homes	(12)	(16)	0	(16)	12	0	To support the costs associated with community projects (repair)
Totals	(4,981)	(7,368)	702	(6,666)	238	100	
HRA Capital Reserve							
Capital Reserve-HRA	(15,259)	(15,259)	0	0	0		Reserve to enable the debt repayment on HRA, and future repairs and maintenance along with support for the Housing Growth Programme.
Totals	(15,259)	(15,259)	0	0	0	0	

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APPENDIX D – ASSET DISPOSAL STRATEGY

The Council has a duty to ensure that its fixed assets are continually reviewed to ensure they are fit for their strategic purpose, comply to legislative and regulatory requirements, and do not lose value. A comprehensive affordable repairs and maintenance programme is required to fulfil this.

In the latest Statement of Accounts (2019/20), there were £350m of Fixed Assets. These were stratified as:

- £297m of Council Dwellings
- £10m of Land
- £31m of Buildings
- £4m of Vehicles, Plant and Equipment
- £4m of Infrastructure Assets
- £1m of Community Assets
- £0.5m of Assets under Construction
- £2m of Assets declared as Surplus

This stratification and associated valuation levels is being reviewed and updated for the 2020/21 and 2021/22 Statement of Accounts.

Council dwellings will link to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and as such will be Governed by HRA disposal regulations such as Right to Buy. Infrastructure assets generally relate to Highways.

All other Classes have a requirement to be continually reviewed as set out in the report to Executive on the 12th July on Community Centres and Easemore Road. However, this should not be done in isolation.

New legislation will mean that by 2026 that all Council building assets (non HRA) will have to comply with Energy Efficiency legislation and be within the top three Energy Efficient levels. This has the potential of significant additional expenditure for the Council to ensure compliance as its stock, as with other Councils, is aging.

Therefore, the Council has commenced condition surveys on all its buildings to assess:

- The present state of those buildings and repairs required to remain compliant to present legislation.

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-
- Repairs and maintenance required to extend the life of those buildings.
 - Requirements to move those buildings to the top three Energy Efficiency levels by 2026.
 - Assessments of rent levels compared to market rents.

This will lead to the Council reviewing over the next 2 years its asset portfolio in terms of:

- The Overall Property Holding Strategy.

And Individual Properties and Land in terms of:

- Operational necessity.
- Cost of ensuring the buildings remain compliant to legislation.
- Cost of ensuring buildings move to the top 3 Energy Effective ratings by 2026.
- Rent levels (and net costs for each building).
- Alternative service delivery options.

This will lead to a list of buildings/Land that are

- Surplus to requirements
- Not cost effective to be run (requiring alternative delivery options)

These lists will be brought to Executive on a Quarterly (or do we say half yearly) basis for approval for disposal. Any disposal, as per the present MRP policy goes into an overall “pot” which can then be used to fund capital programme requirements, including possible acquisitions.

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Appendix E Strategic Priorities and Performance Measures**1 Economic Development and Regeneration**

During 2022/23 we will set up a catalyst for local economic growth and strengthen two critical elements of our infrastructure and Redditch Town Centre.

Supporting businesses to start and grow**Performance measures:**

- Take-up of grants

Start-up grants

Period	Number of Grants	Value of Grants
2020/21	8	£7,330.50
2021/22	9	£9,804.96

Grants to Established Businesses

Period	Number of Grants	Value of Grants
2020/21	12	£231,490.66
2021/22	12	£273,583.14
2022/23 Q1	2	£20,545.68

Regenerating our Infrastructure

The past two years have emphasised the economic and wellbeing importance of local (a sense of place) and connection (information networks). To support this we have secured Town Investment Plan (TIP) funding for Redditch Town Centre.

Performance measure

- % Of empty shops.

Update

In terms of the percentage of empty shops, changes in data capture are being made so that officers will soon be able to present information to compare the percentage of empty shops in Redditch town centre year on year. This will

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show how TIP funding and other initiatives impact on the vitality and viability of Redditch Town Centre.

Performance measure

- Level of funding secured

Update

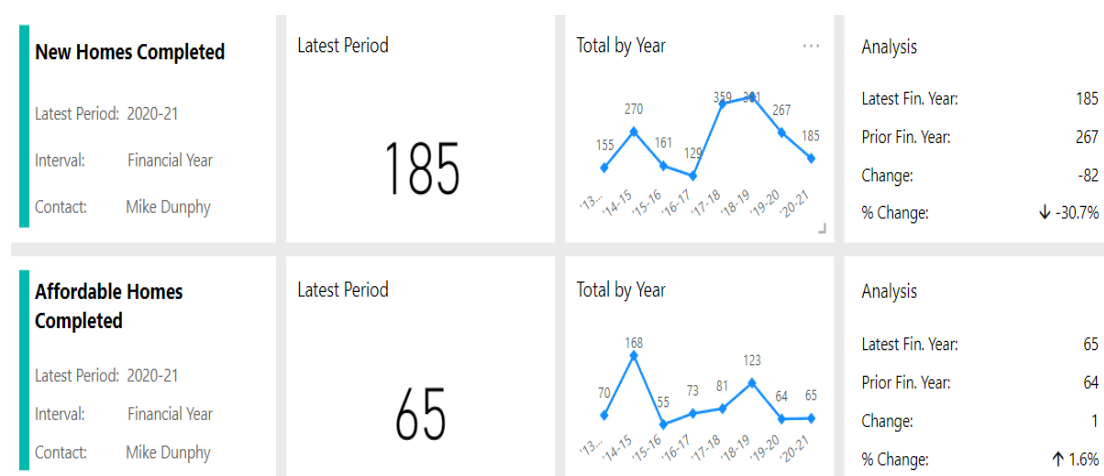
Approximately fifteen million pounds.

2. Housing Growth

During 2022/23 we will accelerate the pace of affordable housing development. We will deliver on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Housing Growth programme as a priority and, where possible, enable the building of market housing on our own land and the creation of additional income for the Council.

Performance measure

- Number of new homes - total and affordable (annual)



Update

Housing completions which contribute towards meeting the Borough's housing requirement come from several sources including newly built properties, change of use to a dwelling from another use such as an office, conversions (for example from a barn to a dwelling) or sub-division (for example from a house to flats). In addition, dwellings are also either private for the open market or affordable for rent through Registered Providers, which meet the needs of those on the Council's housing waiting list. This supporting measure records all new build dwellings by size (number of bedrooms) but makes no distinction between tenure.

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Performance measure

- Number of new council houses (HRA) projected to be built during 22/23.

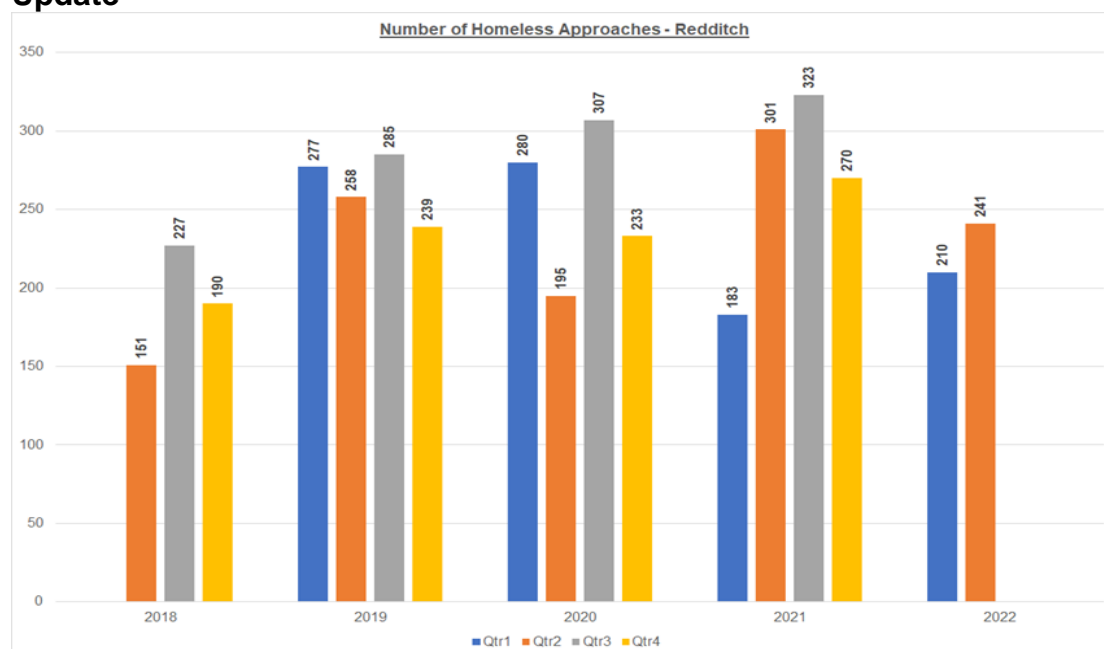
Update

There are nineteen units projected to be built.

Performance measure

- Number of homeless approaches.

Update



2018: The Homelessness Reduction Act came into force in October 2018. This would explain the sharp rise generally in 2019.

2019: From experience quarter 4 is traditionally the highest demand on homelessness services, after Christmas, however the trend is showing highest demand in quarter 3 and this could be due to the colder winter months setting in, Christmas, rough sleeping initiatives and increases in family / marital disputes and domestic abuse over this seasonal period. Quarter 4 was the last period before the pandemic really hit and the government began to implement the Coronavirus Act 2020, so you would expect to see some lag here into the next year, 2020

2020: Quarter 1 remained consistent with the same period in the previous year, presumably due to the lag in implementation of the Coronavirus Act. This is shown by a marked drop in approaches during quarter 2 as the government severely restricted mobility / movement in the housing market

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and mandated that notice periods for any possession action were six months rather than 2 for S21 notices in the PRS. In quarter 3 restrictions were lifted and we started letting properties again, there are also the economic and domestic abuse impacts to consider in the spike of quarter 3, before the country went into another lockdown and landlords were still struggling to take possession action unless in the most extreme cases of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) or rent arrears and then there was a significant backlog through the judicial system created.

2021: Quarter 1 is low because of all the legislation of 2020 still being in place, until quarter 2 when things started to ease, and we experienced a rise in households approaching who had been served 2-month S21 notices by their landlords for no fault and at fault evictions after the restrictions and eviction bans were lifted. There was also a rise in reported domestic abuse cases as victims hidden by the legislation started to come to the fore after being locked down with abusive partners for over a year. Quarter 3 saw the publication of the Domestic Abuse Act on October, which has caused a significant spike in approaches and demand on services, and this endured into quarter 4 despite having a staffing crisis to contend with.

2022: Resource shortages in the homelessness team explain relatively low numbers of approaches being recorded as the team supported those most in need i.e. homeless and in priority need. The resource issues are now improving.

Performance measure

- Number of threatened with homelessness preventions

Update

Not currently available until the new housing IT system is implemented.

Performance measure

Number of homeless applicants housed

Update

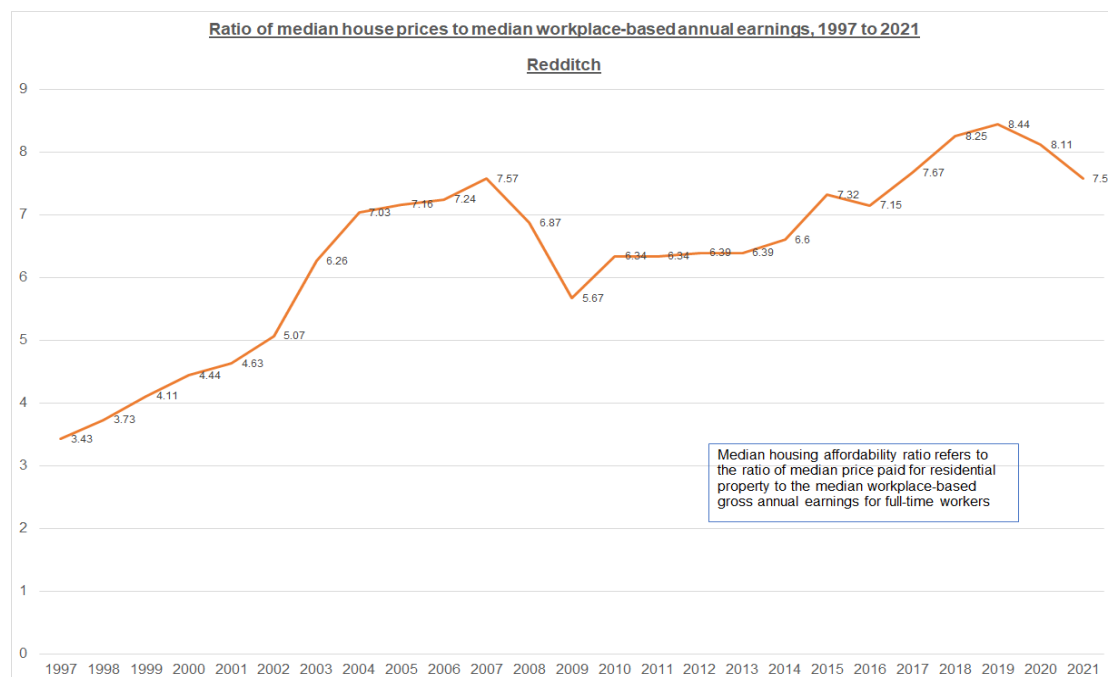
Not currently available until the new housing IT system is implemented.

Performance measure

Local housing affordability rate.

Update

Data extracted from Officer for National Statistics (ONS) – House Price Statistics for Small Areas, Annual Survey of Hours, and Earnings.

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The affordability ratio in England is currently 9.05.

There are a number of affordability ratios and the above relates to workplace based income so looking at the median earnings of those employed in Redditch. When looking at the data Redditch has a work based median at £31,693. The median income in Redditch rose significantly (£4,709) between 2020 to 2021. The median house price in Redditch is at £240,000. House prices over the last year have also risen well above the normal expected rate.

As the rate continues to rise this will push more households into needing affordable housing. We are working with developers to secure the maximum provision of affordable housing on developments and RP's to bring forward affordable housing. A Housing First policy with a local connection criteria is being presented to Council to ensure these discounted homes are provided for local applicants in the first instance.

3 Work and Financial Independence

In 2022/23, we will find ways to further support, engage, and empower our residents to maintain / achieve financial independence.

Our Financial Independence Team will continue to help residents to gain financial independence both through short and long-term solutions. This includes advising our residents on how to manage fuel and utility costs, maximise their income, manage their personal finances, and access other specialist agency support.

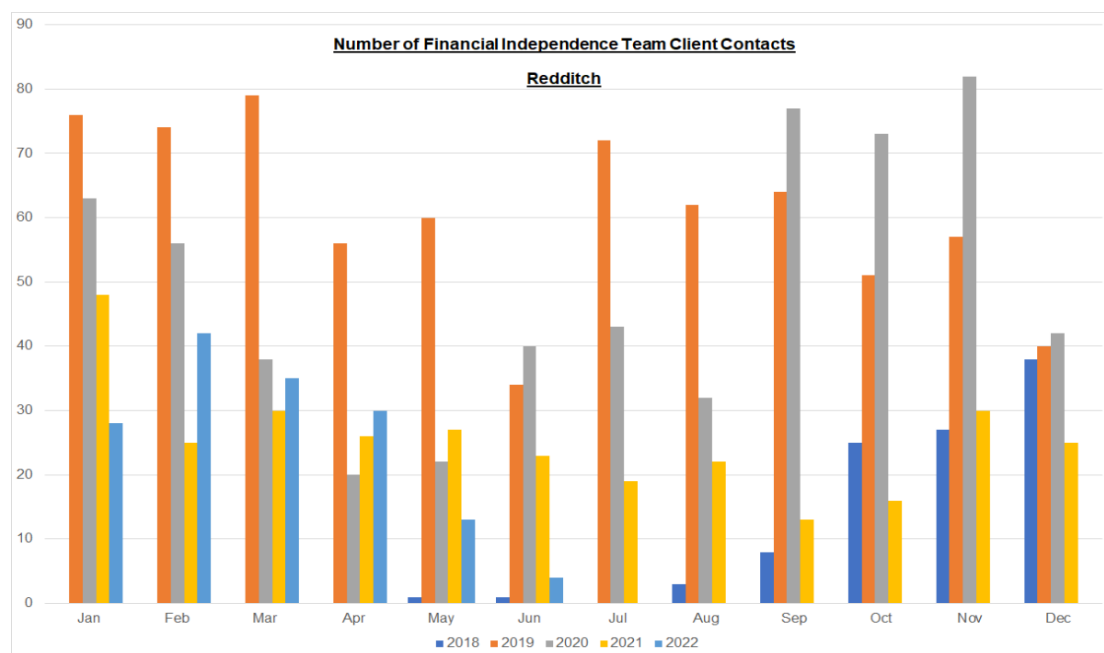
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We will provide quality services that help to empower residents through good financial advice, the effective coordination and signposting of services, and partnership working.

Performance measure

- Number of Financial Independence Team client contacts.



Performance measure

- No. of clients accessing Starting Well service

Update

It is recommended that this measure is removed as it does not add value to this priority and data is not collected to the level to identify work or financial support.

Performance measure

- Number of young people with positive outcomes because of Enhanced Youth Support intervention

Update

It is recommended that this measure is removed as it does not add value to this priority as the data is not collected to the level required.

Performance measure

- Number of eligible children accessing nursery funding across the borough.

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Data is reported termly, although only summer term data is available at present. The take up of nursery places supports parents in being able to work.



The County average was 65% and the national average for 2021 was 62%. The impact of COVID is still likely to be a cause; as well as there not being enough suitable childcare providers. Work has been undertaken within the Starting Well Partnership with nursery providers and Worcesters Childrens First (WCF) to look at this.

We used to receive a DWP list and would proactively contact all families with eligible children to encourage take up of the funding and support in signposting to suitable childcare providers – over the past year we have not received this list as there was a change made within the DfE and an issue around information sharing/data protection and WCF were unable to share the lists with us – during this time our Community Team held some Back to Work events in collaboration with our Job Centre colleagues; we have promoted the funding on social media and all events/health clinics. In the last few weeks, we have received the lists so once again we will be able to proactively contact families who are eligible. It has to be noted some nurseries across the County have closed in the past 6 months due to staffing numbers and not being able to recruit – this may impact once again on the number of appropriate childcare places available.

Performance measure

- Number of households provided with energy advice – see below

Performance measure

- Number of energy rebate payments.

Update

Between 26th April and 18th July 2022, a total of 26,440 payments of £150.00 have been processed

**Executive
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4 Improved Health and Wellbeing

In 2022/23 we will work with communities to help them identify and develop their strengths. We will look at ways to encourage physical movement into part of people's normal routines. We will also look to catalyse an integrated approach to care.

Success measures:

- Number of Community Builders in post. There are 3 currently in post:
 - Abbeydale (started end of Jan 2022)
 - Woodrow (started end of Apr 2022)
 - Focussing on BAME (started mid-Jul 2022)

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is an approach built on tried and tested methods from sustainable community development practice. It is not a set formula that can be prescribed in a one size fits all manner. The aim of ABCD approaches is to create the conditions that will enable both place and people to flourish, reduce inequalities, improve quality of life that supports communities to thrive and to reduce or delay the need for long term care and support

ABCD does this through an approach which consists of:

- Community Builders - paid workers ideally hosted by neighbourhood organisations.
- Community Connectors - individuals living locally who may organise and support local activities.
- 'Small Sparks' grants - funds for groups and individuals to support hyper local activity.

Community Builders are on fixed term contracts with the hope that these will be extended, and the longer-term aim is other areas will be covered if funding becomes available for additional Community Builders.

Performance measure

- Completion and implementation of the actions in the Leisure Strategy

Update

The Leisure Strategy will be going to Council in October 2022.

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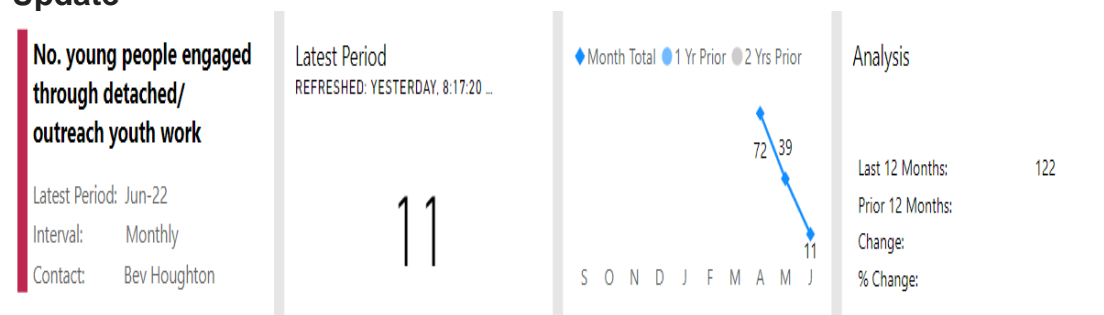
6 September

5 Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour

Working with Community Safety partners we will implement crime prevention projects and promote community safety services to reduce the hazards and threats that result from the crime, violence, and anti-social behaviour. We will also promote and support victim services that are in place to help and encourage recovery from the effects of crime.

Performance measure

- Number of young people engaged through Detached/Outreach youth work. This is a new measure from April 2022.

Update

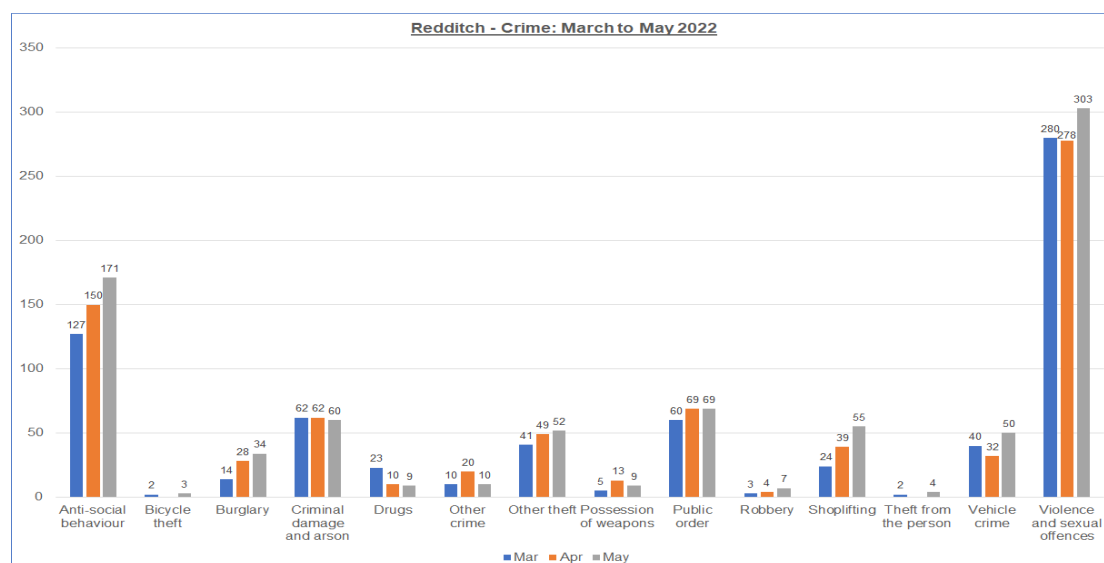
Woodrow saw most youth patrols in the early part of the quarter following significant community concerns and Elected Member enquiries about Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in the area. Multi-agency interventions are ongoing alongside increased policing activity at the location.

Performance measure

- Levels of crime.

Update

Data extracted from 'data.police.uk' below

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Total Recorded Crime is increasing when compared to the previous 12-month period (which includes periods of Covid-19 restrictions up to July 2021). Recorded crime dropped during lockdown periods as people were restricted to their homes and public places were closed. Many offence types are now returning to pre-Covid reporting levels and North Worcestershire has seen increases in reports of vehicle crime, public order and violent offences as reflected in the district data this quarter. Please note: Crime data is reliant on public reporting of offences – it is widely recognised that some offence groups are known to be significantly under reported and some community groups are known to particularly under report for a variety of reasons.

Contrary to reports of crimes, reports of ASB incidents increased during the Covid-19 lockdown periods. This was due to extremely high volumes of reported Covid-19 breaches. The end of lockdown measures and subsequent reduction in reported breaches saw ASB reports reduce considerably. Since a peak in May 2020, there has been a gradual reduction in ASB reports to below pre-Covid levels. However, since Feb 2022 there has been a slight upward trend across all North Worcestershire districts as reflected in this quarter's data. Nuisance ASB is the most common incident type accounting for 88% of all ASB reports. Nuisance ASB is defined as – when a person causes trouble, annoyance or suffering to a community.

Performance measure

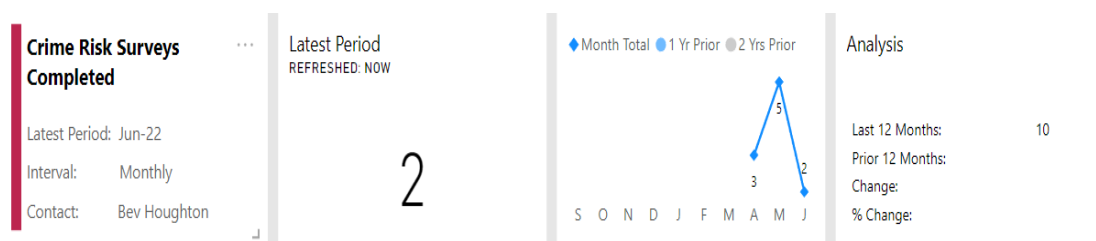
- Number of crime risk surveys carried out.

Update

This is a new measure from April 2022.

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ASB reports from residents and Elected Members in Woodrow and Brockhill led to multi-agency intervention and crime risk assessments being conducted at each location.

Performance measure

- Number of positive outcomes because of Safer Streets Woodrow project.

Update

Project still to be finalised. Data is expected next quarter.

6 Green Thread

There will be a renewed focus on innovation as we play our part in the response to climate change and biodiversity challenges. Working with partners across the region, including the LEPs and the Waste Partnership, we will explore the possibilities of bringing modern technologies to bear on our fleet but also how modern technology can help us deliver greener and more efficient systems internally. We also need to maintain work around waste minimisation and maximising recycling, particularly around recycling quality and the implications of the new Environment Bill.

Performance measure

- Have an agreed and funded plan and capital replacement programme for the Council's fleet subject to any budget constraints.

Update

We now have Environment Savings Trust (EST) reports giving information to assist with the future of the fleet.

Presentations regarding the EST reports and findings have been made to the Climate Change panel.

Money is allocated in the capital programme for consultant support regarding greening the fleet and the development of a revised capital programme.

Officers are currently working to procure a suitable consultant and are also arranging a visit to Nottingham City Council who are leaders in this field to learn from their experience.

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Performance measure

- Have an agreed plan in place to deliver new requirements of national Resources and Waste Strategy and Environment Act.

Update

Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) funding gained via the waste partnership to fund a study to look at options for waste collection and disposal across Worcestershire.

Findings from the consultants presented to a joint meeting of the Worcestershire Leaders Board and Waste Partnership Board. Final report awaited, and still awaiting the results of the Government's waste consultation, that will advise what exactly the Council will be required to do.

Moving forward we are using the waste board as a task and finish group to examine the options to create a report and recommendations that can be agreed by Worcestershire Councils.

Performance measure

- Introduce vegetable derived diesel into the councils' vehicles to reduce carbon emissions subject to any budget constraints.

Update

Signed up to the framework and just awaiting final documentation so that Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) can be purchased.

Performance measure

- Households supported by the Council's energy advice service

Update

A new contract commenced June 2022 so data is currently unavailable.

7 Financial Stability

The Councils resources will continue to be constrained. To address this, we will continue to work to ensure our people, assets and financial resources are focused on the priorities and activities that most effectively deliver wellbeing and progress for our local population.

Success measures:

- Financial performance – actuals consistent with budget.

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-
- Increased levels of General Fund Balances over medium term.
 - Towns Fund Project delivered within budget.

The financial information is provided in a separate report.

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8 Organisational Sustainability

The Council will work to maximise the use of digital infrastructures, including cloud technologies, to enhance its support for customers. We will encourage residents and businesses to access high speed fibre and wireless technologies to deliver growth in the local economy. Ensuring the Council's infrastructure can securely process the increased demand placed on it by the expanding use of Internet of Things devices will be key to its digital success. Any new delivery models, utilising technology, must deliver improved customer service at a lower cost.

Performance measure

- Number of corporate measures accessible through the dashboard.

Update

The organisation is moving from the current legacy dashboard to a new Power BI dashboard. Power BI is an interactive data visualisation software product with a primary focus on business intelligence. Currently there are 39 strategic measures available via the dashboards.

Performance measure

- % Of staff able to work in an agile way.

Update

This is a new measure and will be reported from January 2023.

9 High Quality Services

The Council's people are key to its long-term success. We need to recruit, retain, and motivate the right employees, with the right knowledge, skills, and attitude to deliver excellent services and customer care.

Performance measure

- % of employees who undertake management training.

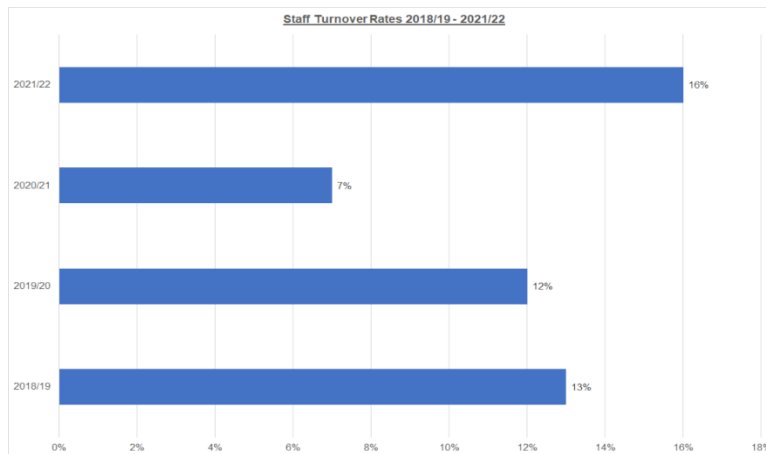
Update

The management training was launched for the first time in Summer 2022. It is an annual measure, and the first data will be reported Winter 2022/23

- Staff turnover rates in relation to national rates.

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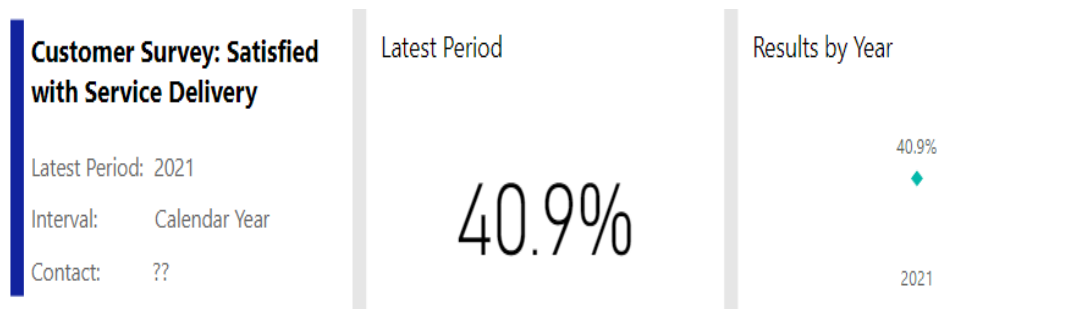
Staff turnover for 21/22 was 16%. This compares with the national average of 15% for 2021.

Performance measure

- Customer satisfaction with service delivery, measured through the Community Survey.

Update

This is a new data set and as such, there is no historical data to provide context until after the next survey in October 2022. However, national customer satisfaction with LA's according to the Local Government Chronicle is currently at 40%.

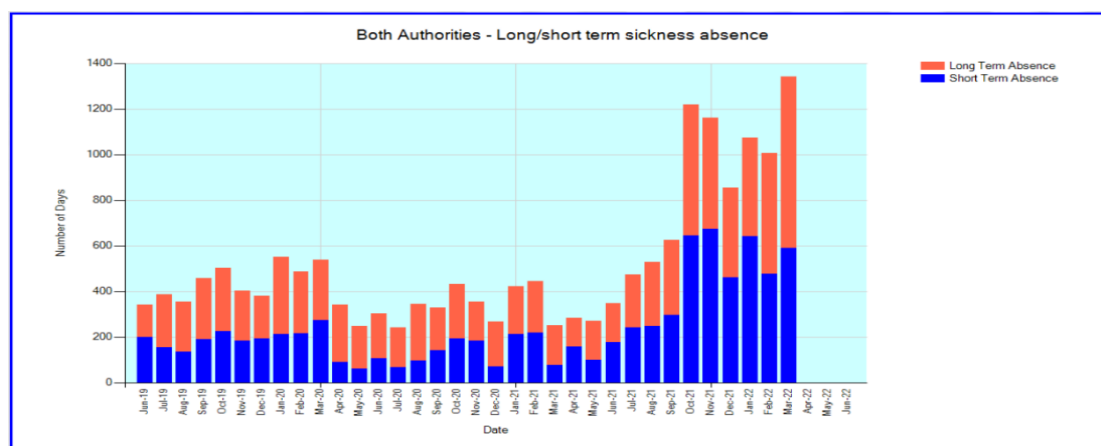


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Appendix F Operational Measures**Business Transformation, Organisational Development & Digital
Services**

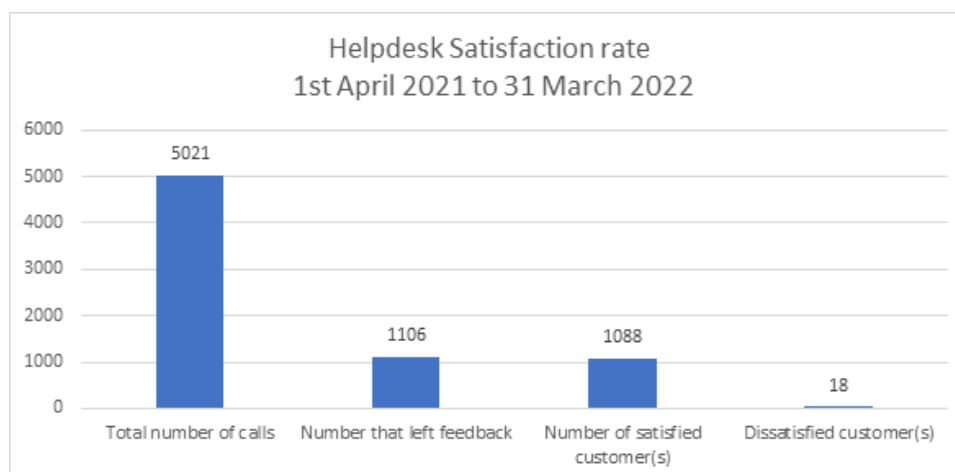
Sickness absence (to end 2021/2022):



The data provided now includes Covid related absences. We have seen an increase in sickness compared to 19/20 which was the last data set pre covid with 6.6 days lost per FTE. For this reason, it is difficult to compare to previous years, but we can clearly see a rise in days lost. By way of a comparator the national number of days lost to sickness absence in 2021 according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) was 4.6 days.

Information Technology

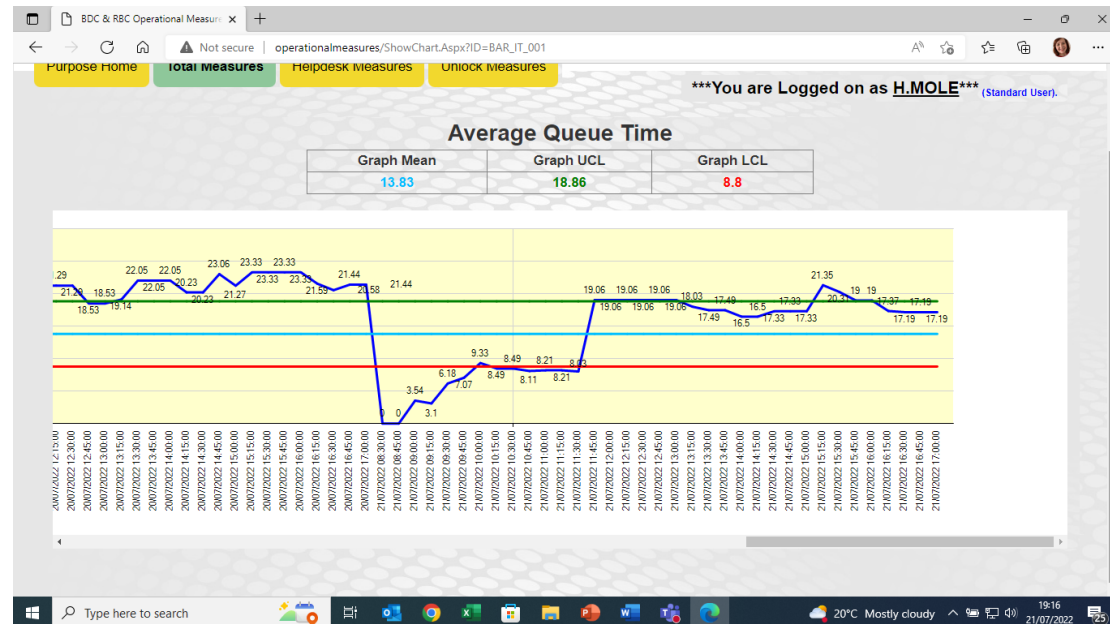
During the budget year 2021/2022, 5021 calls were made to the helpdesk, 1106 chose to leave feedback, of these 1088 were satisfied. Shown in graph below: -



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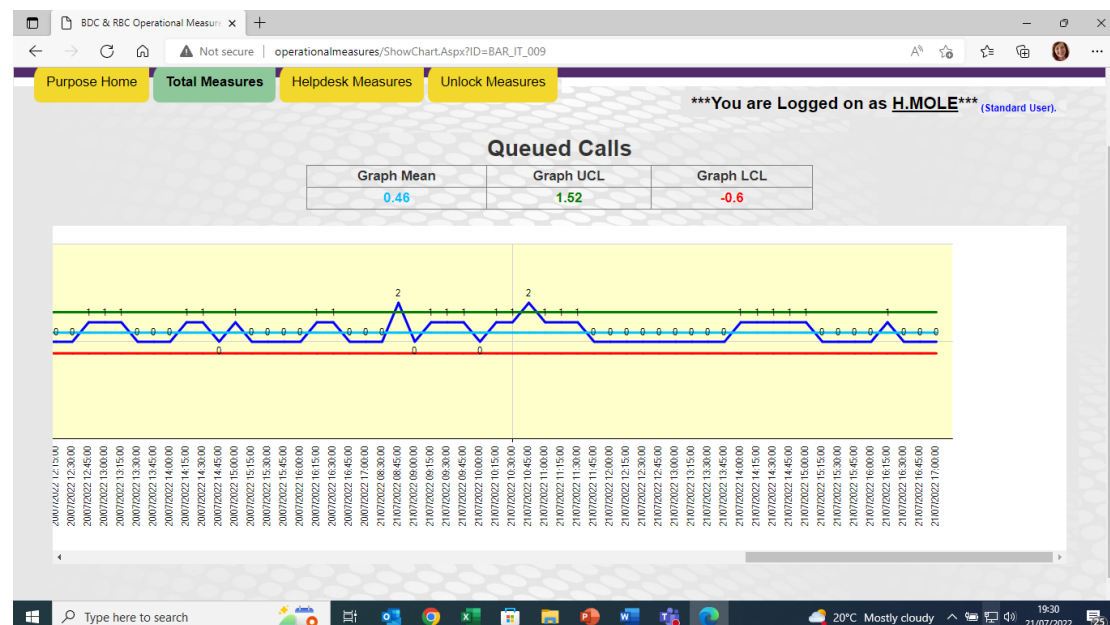
6 September

The average queue time including calls that have been abandoned and answered is shown below



Mean average for queue time is 14 minutes 23 seconds. This measure spans a rolling two-week period.

Covering the same period, the graph below, shows number of calls in queue. Mean average is one person waiting.



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Environmental and Housing Property Services**Environmental Services - RBC Domestic Waste Collection****Performance measure**

- Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting

Update

	2021/22	2022/23
April	36.65	35.27
May	31.20	28.45
June	25.82	28.16
July	26.57	
August	34.13	
September	34.69	
October	32.52	
November	27.38	
December	25.61	
January	34.91	
February	30.52	
March	39.82	

This is a National Indicator measuring the percentage of household waste arisings which have been sent by the Authority for reuse, recycling, and composting, and is used in the national league tables ranking Local Authority performance. In 2020/21 and Redditch was ranked 315th (primarily due to the lack of a widespread garden waste service in Redditch).

The tonnages fluctuate during the year for a number of reasons linked to habits of residents, and the seasons, and can be skewed by increases in the quantity of residual waste collected, which appears to be the case this year please see Kgs per household below.

Last year's data, follows a similar pattern, although August & September also reflect full easing of Covid restrictions so may have been influenced by increased socialising during the summer holiday

Performance measure

- NI 191 Residual Waste per household (kg) – RBC

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Update

	2021/22	2022/23
April	44.77	36.84
May	41.84	46.37
June	55.21	48.18
July	51.00	
August	40.09	
September	40.96	
October	38.78	
November	46.10	
December	51.99	
January	41.79	
February	39.64	
March	39.26	

Kgs collected per household statistics show that the tonnage of residual waste collected in the first quarter increased, which will have distorted the percentage recycling figures. It is believed that this is due to garden waste included in the residual waste bins in Redditch. Garden waste has a high moisture content, so during the Spring this typically increases the tonnages being collected. Whilst this does have some benefit on recycling rates where customers have paid for the garden waste collection service, Redditch currently has a low number of customers in the current service due to a lack of capacity and uncertainty over government plans regarding the future of Garden Waste Collections in the UK.

We are waiting on a consultation response to support future service planning. We are currently carrying out a waste composition analysis to identify in greater detail what is being disposed of in the residual waste stream, and this information will also support future service planning and communication campaigns to help boost recycling and reduce residual waste.

Performance measure

- RBC Fly Tipping

RBC Fly-tips 2021	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
2021	66	90	138	125	87	130	118	133	153	108	104	90

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2022	103	102	138	130	128	137						
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Update

Most fly-tips in Redditch are small and consist of domestic related materials. Monthly reports for ESMT show all the fly-tips and their geographical location i.e., Winyates, Batchley etc. This enables us to focus on a particular area/s that may require pro-active enforcement and monitoring.

Housing Property Services

Housing Property Services Operational KPIs are shown below. Housing Property Manager is working with the teams to get a wider range of KPIs from both a Strategic and Operational angle. Some of this is driven by compliance others by the actions required because of the Social Housing White Paper. In the interim however please see below:

Performance measure

- Third Party Gas Audit Compliance – Frequency Monthly – Target 85%

Update

The Performance Indicator is a measure of the compliance with Regulations and codes of practice for the work undertaken by the in-house Gas Team. An Independent external company undertakes a random sample of Audits across several properties to assess the standard of workmanship and compliance and reports their findings monthly. The percentage reflects the performance in relation to compliance with a high score representing high compliance. (As context performance in October 2020 was at 70%).

April 2022	98.61%
May 2022	90.91%
June 2022	98.31%

Performance measure

- Average time taken to complete repairs to standard voids – Frequency Monthly – Target 20 Calendar days

Update

The performance indicator is a measure of the number of calendar days taken on average to complete works to standard voids (those not requiring two or more elements to be replaced e.g., kitchen and bathroom).

The target was set as a stretch target as during the previous year we had achieved below 20 days in 6 months of the 12 and was an improvement on the 21.9 day average of last year. The variable we have also are the numbers we receive and of course the condition and therefore volume of work required.

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April 2022	23.6
May 2022	20.5
June 2022	21.4

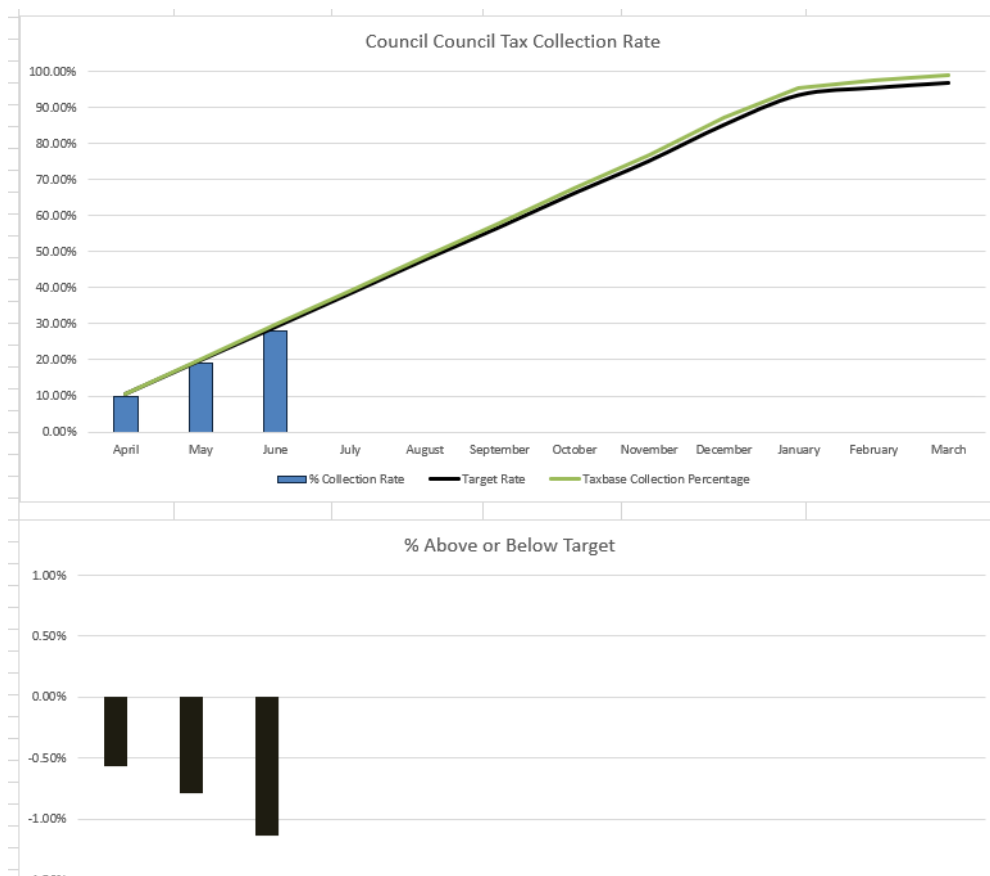
The actions we are taking are that we are now prioritising voids that can be quickly turned around, we are working closely with Housing Management to identify properties that we may be able to access sooner to carry out works, we are currently changing the company that provides us with utility management i.e. debt on meters, that then delay us in commissioning heating and electrical systems, where there are contractors involved, typically with electrical and cleaning prior to letting, we are working more closely with them to reduce any delays.

Finance & Customer Services (inc Revenues & Benefits)**Performance measure**

- Council Tax Collection Rate

Update

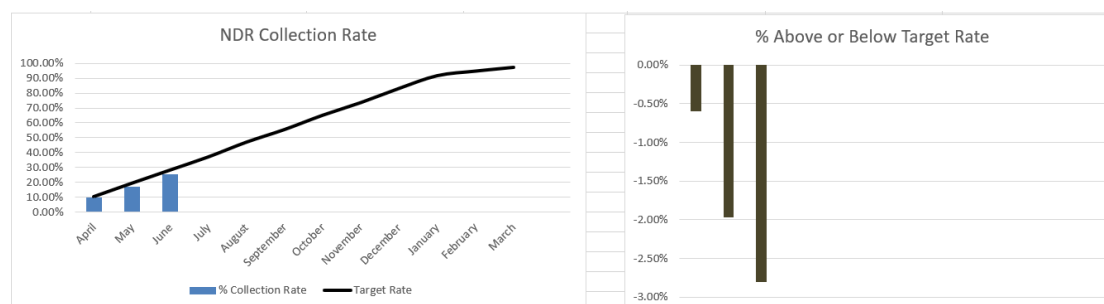
The Council is responsible for the collection of Council Tax income on behalf of itself and precepting authorities such as the County Council, The Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia, and the Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority. Any reductions to the target collection rates result in additional charges to the precepting authorities in the following financial year. Collection rates are a reflection of the economy and with the current “cost of living crisis” it is expected that collection rates might fall.

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- NDR Collection Rate

Update

The Council is responsible for the collection of Business rates on behalf of itself and the Government. Like the Council Tax, any reductions to the target collection rates result in additional charges to the collecting authorities in the following financial year. Collection rates are a reflection of the economy and with the current “cost of living crisis” it is expected that collection rates might fall. Presently as of June we are slightly below these target rates already. It should be noted that for the past 2 years during the C-19 pandemic there were significant reliefs for businesses. 2022/23 is the first year without those reliefs.

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- Revenues Processing

Update

There are always significant quantities of items being processed by the Revenues team including both on Council Tax and Business Rates queries. This activity has been increased in the initial 3 months of 2022/23 by the administration of the Energy Rebate Payments. In terms of Benefits processing, new claims are being turned round in 20 days and changes of circumstances are being actioned within 9 days.

Month	Completed Items	Completed < 7 Days	Completed < 14 Days	Completed < 21 days	Completed < 28 Days	Completed > 28 days	Outstanding Documents
Apr	2618	637	363	423	732	463	1641
May	4919	1194	659	615	859	1592	2029
Jun	7880	1751	985	841	1208	3095	2089
Jul	9721	2070	1207	986	1431	4026	

Performance measure

- Online Customer Interactions

Online Customer transactions and Revenues calls (the next two tables) are being significantly affected by the administration of the Energy Rebate scheme which affects almost 28,000 households in the borough.

Month	On-Line Service Requests	Auto Processed	Referenced	Rejected
Apr	1340	385	384	571
May	6811	5734	460	617
Jun	4242	3413	328	501

Customer Services**Performance measure**

- Revenues Calls

Update

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Performance measure

- Number of Web Payments

Update

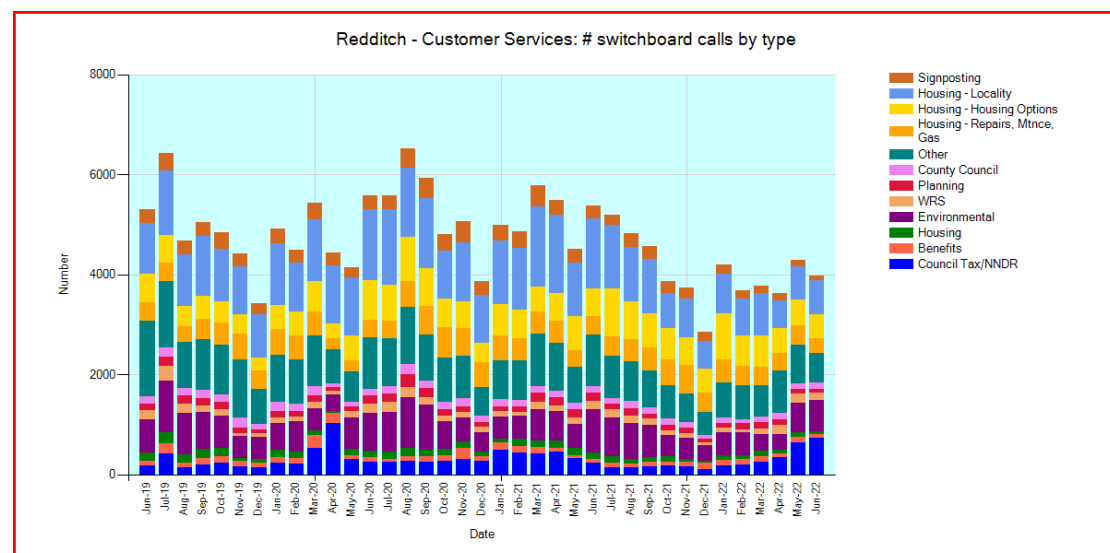
<u>Number of Web Payments</u>		
Date	RBC	BDC
Jan-22	3637	2019
Feb-22	2582	2175
Mar-22	2795	1450
Apr-22	3445	1339
May-22	3693	1754
Jun-22	3337	1189

Performance measure

- Customer Service calls

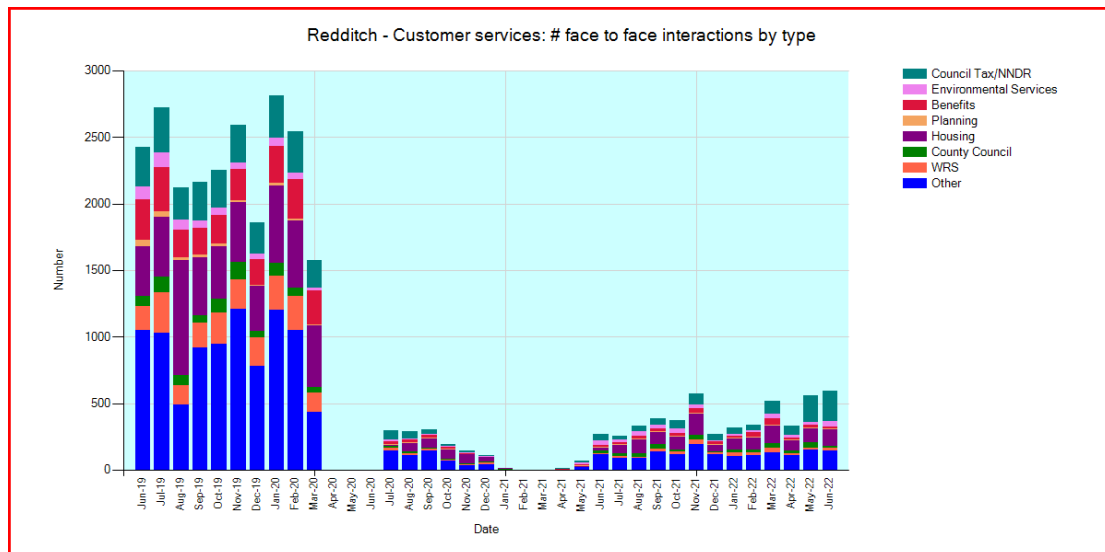
Update

There have been slightly fewer Customer Services calls the first quarter of 22/23 compared to the previous 2 years, although those numbers might be slanted due to the Country being under C-19 restrictions. This can be seen better in terms of the face to face interactions which reflect the periods when the Cash Office was closed and the fact that C19 has led to customers interacting with us in other ways.



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Planning, Regeneration & Leisure Services

The Leisure Strategy has been received and shared with CMT (Corporate Management Team), it will be reported to Committee in October and there will be a prominent level of stakeholder engagement and discussions with CMT.

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 23rd June, 2022

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Bill Hartnett (Chair), and Councillors Salman Akbar, Joe Baker (substituting for Councillor Joanna Kane), Michael Chalk, Brandon Clayton, Sid Khan and Timothy Pearman

Also Present:

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

Officers:

Ruth Bamford, Peter Carpenter, Kevin Dicks, Clare Flanagan, Sue Hanley and Ostap Paparega

Democratic Services Officers:

Jo Gresham

14. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Joanna Kane with Councillor Baker as named substitute. Councillor Gareth Prosser also submitted his apologies for this meeting.

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no Declarations of Interest nor of any Party Whip.

Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 23rd June, 2022

16. PUBLIC SPEAKING

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

His speech was delivered as follows:

‘I was hoping to come along tonight to explain my opposition to the demolition of the Town Centre Library, however, I see from the report that this has again been delayed but I would still hope that even at this late-stage reconsideration can be given to this destruction of a well-used public facility. I look forward to the promised public meeting to take account of the community’s views rather than the fait accompli we are currently presented with.

On the Digital Manufacturing and Innovation Centre, I broadly welcome the investment in new technology. I hope that the Innovation Centre will benefit local people to encourage them to enhance their skills and provide well paid local jobs for Redditch people.

On the Public Realm project, I looked back at the original TIP and failed to identify the specifics of the plan. I note from the current report the increasing number of empty properties. I would be interested to know whether any thought had been given to acquisition of the properties with a view to separating the larger retail units into smaller units, while protecting the historical facades making them more affordable to local small traders or cooperatives and offering more variety and encouraging visitors. Plus, dare I say, to bring back the outdoor market that was taken away.

The space above the units could be transformed into Social Rented accommodation which would help the ever growing Housing list and be an instant rise in people using the High Street. I would suggest that £4.2million would be better spent on these enhancements rather than demolishing our Library.

On the Towns Fund, generally, I have a number of questions:

What will be in the format of the consultation in terms of exhibitions, road shows and public fora?

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The Towns Fund website shows that the last meeting of the board was in November 2021. Has the board met since and when will the minutes of all meetings be published?

What evaluation has been made of utilising local skills, labour and suppliers on the construction projects?

Levelling Up 2

This is the first local report that I have seen on this fund. I see that the deadline for the bid is July 6th which is, again, very short notice for wider public engagement.

I note that the bid will be centred on Winyates and Matchborough. I have the following questions:

The last report that I can find, dated 26th March 2019, suggested that the proposals for the redevelopment would be put out to identify a suitable development partner. What was the outcome of that exercise, and is there still a commitment to two centres?

What are the proposals for future consultation, not just with the tenants and businesses within the centres but with the wider community?

Could this plan be developed to include a bold social / council rented housing program rather than grabbing pieces of existing space for minimal provision.

Once again thank you for your time.

Finally, I see that Redditch has been allocated £2.5 million from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. What is proposed to spend this funding on. The prospectus sets out the creation of Local partnership groups. What form will this group take in Redditch and again can we widen the membership of this group to involve more community representatives?

The Chair then welcomed Ms. R. Sidaway as a public speaker to the meeting, who was invited to speak to the Committee.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 23rd June, 2022

Her speech was delivered as follows:

‘Good Evening Councillors and Officers

We, the Bonham family & Jon Bonham Memorial Friends, are concerned about the possible impact that the demolition of the library building would have on the John Bonham Memorial.

The bronze Memorial was installed on 31st May 2018 which would have been John’s 70th birthday. It was funded in part by worldwide fans’ donations with the Bonham family & ‘friends’ making up the shortfall. It was gifted to the people of Redditch under the care of Redditch Borough Council.

It has now been brought to our attention that consideration is being given to moving the Memorial as part of the creation of a new plaza area, once the library has been demolished. No attempt by RBC/Town Team to inform or discuss this with ourselves has been made. Therefore, we wish to place on formal record our strongest objection to this idea on 2 key counts:

1. Orientation of the Memorial

During the design & development phases, the sculptor undertook a number of visits to the Mercian Square site to assess the natural light falling on and around the location at different times of the day. He also calculated how this would change throughout the year. This is important to how people view the detail of the sculpture

2. Liability

We wish to stress that it is not possible to move the Memorial without a high risk of damage to the structure:

- A structural engineer, working with RBC Engineering Officer, was consulted to provide a suitable specification for the installation of the structure taking into consideration (a) the tree roots and ground beneath it, and (b) to make it ‘theft-proof’ and thereby difficult to remove

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- The structure was cast in 3 vertical sections and then expertly “fused” together by highly skilled technicians at the foundry. Any attempt to move the structure would likely cause it to break-up.

The Memorial is made of Bronze, weighs over 1000kg, and cost around £100,000 to design, manufacture and install. It cannot be moved.

Thank you.’

17. REDDITCH TOWN INVESTMENT PLAN BUSINESS CASES - PRE-SCRUTINY (REPORT TO FOLLOW)

The Head of Planning Regeneration and Leisure Services presented the report in respect of the Redditch Town Investment Plan Business Cases. Prior to the presentation of the report, Officers apologised for the late circulation of the reports contained within the Additional Papers pack.

During consideration of this item the following was highlighted for Members attention:

- Redditch Borough Council had submitted a bid to the Government in January 2021 and were awarded in excess of £15 million to spend on particular regeneration projects in the town centre. The three projects that had been approved were the Redditch Digital Manufacturing and Innovation Centre, Redditch Town Centre Public Realm and the Redevelopment of Redditch Library Site. Members were reminded that the deadline for the submission bid for the Redevelopment of Redditch Library had been extended and therefore consideration of this project was not appropriate at this meeting. Members were informed that there would be an opportunity to scrutinise this bid in a separate report to the Executive Committee in September 2022.
- The business cases included in the report provided more detailed information regarding the agreed projects and would inform the summary statements to the Government which were due to be submitted by 29th June 2022.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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- Information included in the appendices to the report was not complete, however the bid would continue to be worked on until submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities on 29th June 2022. It was acknowledged by Officers that this was not ideal, however it was clarified that the deadlines were set by Central Government and were extremely tight and challenging. It was confirmed that the risks of the projects had been examined by relevant Officers within the Council who were satisfied with the proposals due for submission. It was also clarified that the risks and project timelines would be carefully monitored by North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWEDR) along with the S151 Officer at the Council.
- In respect of the Redditch Digital Manufacturing and Innovation Centre, Officers informed the Committee that the business cases had identified that the project would need further funding of £2m due to contingency costs and consideration of the future cost of inflation. It was noted that there would be discussions undertaken with external funding sources including the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) in order to potentially provide additional support in any shortfall in costs.

During a robust debate, the Committee once again highlighted the lack of detail contained within the report and appendices and the difficulty in scrutinising a report which only provided limited detail. Members stated that it was positive that the Borough had received £15.5m to undertake these projects. However as this was such a significant amount of funding it would have been preferable to see a thorough breakdown of the allocation of funds in order to have a better understanding of the proposals. Officers understood Members' frustration regarding the limited information contained within the report however it was reiterated that updates needed to be continually made until the formal submission date of the bid on 29th June 2022.

Further detailed discussion followed regarding the positive impact the funding would have on the Town Centre and that it was important to get the business cases in by the deadline in order to ensure that all available monies would be able to be drawn down.

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Members were in agreement that this was an exciting and aspirational opportunity for Redditch Town Centre.

On being put the vote it was

RECOMMENDED that

the two business cases attached as Appendices 1 and 2 be endorsed and used to present summary information for submission to the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities on the 29 June 2022.

18. LEVELLING UP FUND 2 BID - PRE-SCRUTINY (REPORT TO FOLLOW)

The Head of Planning, Leisure and Regeneration presented the Levelling Up Fund 2 Bid report and highlighted the following for Members' consideration:

- The Levelling Up Fund was a national scheme and that Local Authorities were invited to undertake a competitive process to bid for up to £20 million funding under the second phase of the scheme. It was stated by Officers that the Council would need to demonstrate as part of its bid that match funding of 10 per cent was available if any bid was successful. Clarification was requested from Members regarding the potential amount of match funding that would be necessary. Officers explained that the amount of additional funding would be dependent on the amount of any funding awarded by the Government e.g., if the full allocation of £20m was awarded the match funding from alternative sources would need to be £2m. The Committee queried whether the allocation of £2m would be possible given the challenging budget of the Council. It was explained that it was a requirement of the Bid and that all potential revenue streams would be explored in identifying additional funding. Furthermore, the Interim Section 151 Officer reported that any additional funding would be a Capital Investment and would be spread over 40 years. The report set out that this funding was for the commercial and infrastructure works. The Housing works would require separate investment. Members

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were informed that the deadline for submission of the bid to the Government was 6th July 2022.

- The second round of Levelling Up funding focussed on the following three key themes:
 - Transport
 - Regeneration and Town Centre
 - Culture and Heritage

Of these three themes officers had identified that the Regeneration and Town Centre theme provided the greatest chance of successfully bidding for funding and that Matchborough and Winyates District Centres would be the focus of the proposal due to the significant amount of preparatory work that had already been undertaken. Much like the regeneration of Church Hill District Centre previously, it was hoped that the regeneration of Matchborough and Winyates District Centres would provide transformation and would result in a positive impact on the local centres and their communities.

Members commented that this was an exciting prospect for the Borough and thanked all of the Officers involved in the preparation of the bid for the second phase of Levelling Up funding.

On being put to the vote Members agreed that the following recommendations be endorsed.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the Executive Committee endorse this report and give delegated authority to the Executive Director for Resources (S151 Officer) and the Head of NWEDR (Senior Responsible Owner) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships to submit a Levelling Up Fund bid, as detailed in the report.**

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- 2) the Executive Committee recommend to Council a match funding contribution of 10% of the total bid value up to £2 million.
- 3) should the submitted LUF Bid be successful, that Executive Committee recommend to Council the allocation of 10% of the total bid value in the Capital Programme.

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

The minutes from the Executive Committee meeting held on Tuesday 14th June 2022 were submitted for Members' consideration.

During consideration of the Executive Committee's Work Programme, it was noted that many of the items included had been picked up for pre-scrutiny by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Chair noted this and informed Members that this might result in longer meetings in the future.

RESOLVED that

the contents of the Executive Committee Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 14th June 2022 and the Executive Committee's Work Programme be noted.

20. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

During consideration of the Committee's Work Programme, Councillor Khan suggested that a future Task Group be established in respect of health inequalities within Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities within Redditch. The Senior Democratic Services Officer present undertook to contact Councillor Khan to provide a Topic Proposal Scoping document.

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RESOLVED that

The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 7.58 pm



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 7th July, 2022

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Bill Hartnett (Chair), Councillor Joanna Kane (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Salman Akbar, Imran Altaf, Michael Chalk, Brandon Clayton, Sid Khan, Timothy Pearman and Gareth Prosser

Observers: Councillor Joe Baker

Officers:

Peter Carpenter (on Microsoft Teams), Kevin Dicks, Claire Felton (on Microsoft Teams) and Chris Wells (on Microsoft Teams)

Democratic Services Officers:

Jess Bayley-Hill and Gavin Day

21. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

No apologies for absence were received.

Apologies were received from Councillor Altaf who was running 10 minutes late.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no Declarations of Interest nor of any Party Whip.

23. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th June 2022 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

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Chair

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the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9th June 2022, be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

24. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no public speakers registered on this occasion.

25. ASSET RATIONALISATION FOR EASEMORE ROAD - PRE-DECISION-SCRUTINY (REPORT TO FOLLOW)

The Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services presented the report in respect of declaration of land surplus to requirement at Community House, Easemore Road.

Officers reported that following a recent detailed condition survey and report, it was envisioned that over the following 5 years a minimum sum of £340,000 needed to be spent on planned preventative maintenance. Members were informed that the tenants, mainly from Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations, would be displaced and that alternative properties had been located for all the tenants.

Officers also informed members that Where Next, which occupied the site adjacent to the property, had been encroaching substantially on the site. Where Next were aware of this and understood the need to vacate this encroached area. To assist with this, Officers had agreed to work to improve accessibility to their entire site from their main entrance on Wellesbourne Close.

Following the presentation of the report Members queried the following areas.

- The financial details, which Members suggested could have been improved in the report and members asked for further information about the financial data.
 - Officers confirmed that income for the Community centre was £17,000 in total, which was well below the market rate. In some cases, this was because tenants had originally taken up a lease as a meanwhile use, or temporary arrangement, that had subsequently been extended over the years.
 - The sum of £350,000 would be for repair work and was not intended for modernising or improving the building.
 - Officers confirmed that the capital receipt from the sale of the land would be far greater than the income for the building.

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- The current tenants and if they had been found alternative accommodation. Officers replied that all tenants were VCS organisations and had all been found alternatives. The tenants included Talking Newspapers, Blue Whale Community Transport, Gemini Dance Studio and Home-start.
- The reasons why the building had been allowed to deteriorate to such a level with no intervention sooner. Officers replied that they had only recently undertaken a survey to assess the building. There was a planned assessment of the whole of the council's portfolio of buildings to identify which buildings to retain and which to dispose of. This would be to ensure there was a manageable portfolio for maintenance purposes.
- Reference was made to the climate change implications listed in the report and the energy performance certificate rating. Members enquired if that would be an A rating or a lower rating. Officers clarified that they would attempt to obtain the highest rating, however, until proposals had been made for the site it was unknown what would be possible and practical in terms of the energy rating.
- How many other properties had received a low level of income for their size. Officers informed members that they were reviewing other assets in the financial year to find other such properties.
- That there was very poor accessibility for disabled users to the community centre, especially access to the upper floors which was only possible via a staircase.
- The importance of the community centre to the local community.
- Members commented that commercially sensitive information, regarding the anticipated capital receipt for sale of the site, should have been included in the report as an exempt appendix, rather than be omitted from the report altogether.
- Some Members expressed the view that a better solution would be to sell part of the site and use that income to improve the existing building.

During consideration of this item, Councillor Michael Chalk moved the recommendation as printed in the report and he also proposed the following additional recommendation:

"The Executive Committee consider the financial and social implications of using the land for social housing"

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These recommendations were proposed by Councillor Chalk and seconded by Councillor Brandon Clayton.

In making this proposal, Members were asked to note that it would be helpful to explore the potential for the land to be used for social housing as part of the Council's Housing Growth Programme. There was general agreement amongst Members that there was a need in the Borough for more social housing, including more Council houses to meet the needs of Redditch residents.

However, Members were advised that the site did not fall under the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), and the funding arising from sale of the land could not be vired from the general fund to the HRA. In addition, Officers working in the Housing Department had been consulted about the potential for this land to be used and had advised that this was not considered suitable for social housing. Officers had therefore concluded that the land would be more suitable for commercial development.

Members subsequently commented that it would be ideal if the council performed a survey of all the authority's property assets and brought this forward as a whole rather than piecemeal. Members commented that it was difficult to make an informed decision when taking items one at a time. Instead, Members suggested that they needed to know where the properties and the communities they served were located.

In this context, Councillor Hartnett made the following proposal:

"that the Executive Committee defer making a decision on the disposal of the land at Community House, Easemore Road, until a full review of Council assets had been completed."

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Hartnett and seconded by Councillor Altaf.

Officers informed members that it was important to understand that stock condition surveys could be financially costly. The Community Centre received a very low rent and the £350,000 maintenance costs would just be for emergency repairs and not investment in improvement works. Officers also reminded members that the tenants themselves were reporting that the building was not fit for purpose. Sale of the property would result in a capital receipt for the Council.

Some Members raised concerns that it would not be wise to postpone whilst reviewing all other assets due to problems with the

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building. However, other Members raised concerns that it would be inappropriate to make a decision on the disposal of the building at this time until further information regarding the review of the Council's assets was available.

On being put to the vote, the recommendation proposed by Councillor Hartnett and seconded by Councillor Altaf was carried.

Following the vote, Councillor Chalk raised the potential for a minority report and a majority report to be put forward by the Committee in respect of this matter. Officers advised that, as the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had not prepared a report but was, rather, making recommendations, this would not be possible on this occasion. However, it was agreed that a detailed minute should be drafted, to include reference to the proposals that were not taken forward.

RECOMMENDED that

the Executive Committee defer making a decision on the disposal of the land at Community House, Easemore Road, until a full review of Council assets had been completed.

26. FUTURE USE OF THE TOWN HALL AND CUSTOMER ACCESS - PRE-DECISION-SCRUTINY (REPORT TO FOLLOW)

The Interim Section 151 Officer presented the report in respect of the future use of the town hall and closure of the cashier service.

Members were informed that in person payments had fallen by 90% since the pandemic and with the introduction of Allpay for the majority of services. A test period of two weeks in March was conducted which resulted in only 202 visitors.

Officers highlighted the different ways to pay mentioned in the report, and highlighted there were 44 possible alternative pay locations for the public to access, including the post office less than 100m away.

Members were informed that there would be a dedicated manned customer service desk opened and the telephone and internet access would be retained. This would allow colleagues to assist the public to access alternative forms of payment after the 3 Month period had elapsed.

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Members were informed of the proposal to sublet the cashier area to public sector tenants, which would generate approximately £150,000 in revenue for the council.

Following the presentation of the report, Members queried the following areas.

- Why the two weeks were chosen in March which was a rent-free month and thus would be expected to generate lower numbers. Officers replied that although that was the case there were also a large number of late payments, so it was felt to still be a suitable time period to get an indication of how busy the cashier desk was.
- Whether there were any redundancies planned. Officers clarified that there would be no redundancies. Everybody who worked on the cash desk would be given employment in other roles within the town hall. The jobs initially intended to be filled were on the customer service desk and manning the telephones, which the cashiers did as part of their current role.
- The report mentioned a potential income of £150,000, and Members questioned how many square meters this represented. Officers replied that the proposed areas would be the current cash office area and part of the first floor which amounted to approximately 2000sq meters in total.
- Whether the prospective tenants were from the public or private sector. Officers clarified that all prospective tenants were public sector organisations. The council would be looking to combine District, County and Health services in one building.
- What the car parking provision would be for tenants. Officers clarified that tenants would be able to use the car park on Trescott Road. The car park on the town hall site would be retained for its current usage.
- How the council intended to improve IT literacy for those who currently used the service. Officers outlined the council's intent to use the following 3 months to educate the general public on payment via other methods, such as by phone, on site computer terminals and their own devices using WiFi or pay points such as the post office.
- The timing of the report. Officers explained that the discussions had progressed very quickly with prospective tenants, however, before Officers brought the proposal to Committee they had to ensure the cashier service would not be needed, This had only just been decided.

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The following comments and statements were also made in relation to the report:

- Members commented that even with access to digital technologies increasing there was still a need for face-to-face interactions. Officers clarified that there would still be a face-to-face provision via the customer service desk.
- Officers further commented that Redditch Borough Council was the last authority in the Midlands to still offer a cashier service to process payments.
- Members commented that they were happy that there would be no intention to lose any staff as employees were leaving the council and there was a need to retain the workforce. Officers commented that there were general recruitment challenges which were being reviewed, the council would be looking at the whole package of benefits for employees, including agile working.
- Members commented that the Council needed to learn from the one stop shop closures and ensure that the process was given enough time.
- Some Members expressed the view that two weeks was not enough time to come to a recommendation and queried why there were not several months of data for April, May and June, so that a decision could be made on the basis of more up to date information

The Chair explained to Members that this was a resolved matter so after recommendation the matter would go to Executive Committee to be decided and not full Council.

The recommendations contained within the report were proposed and seconded and it was

RECOMMENDED that the Executive Committee

- 1) Approve the Closure of the Cashiers Service on the 30th September 2022;**
- 2) Note the alternatives for Customers to make payments and the training and guidance that would take place up to the closure date.**
- 3) Approve the proposals to sublet parts of the Town Hall**
- 4) Delegate authority to the Head of Legal Democratic and Property Services and the Section 151 Officer following**

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consultation with the Leader to negotiate terms and enter into the lease arrangements necessary to enable 2.3.

27. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TRAINING EVENT JUNE 2022

Officers informed the Committee that the Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) Work Programme Planning Event was well attended and all Non-Executive Members were invited.

Officers reported that during the event a series of items were raised by Members to add to the O&S work programme, Officers then drew Members' attention to the suggestions, as detailed on page 17 of the main agenda pack.

The Chair highlighted to Members the current staffing challenges within the Democratic Services Team and proposed some of the suggestions be reviewed by the Performance Scrutiny Working Group.

Members expressed concern that any items not selected would be forgotten until the exercise was undertaken again, Therefore, Members agreed that the remainder of the items could be reconsidered later in the municipal year, so that Members could determine whether there were further items Members wished to add to the O&S Work Programme.

In relation to the items identified during the training, Members requested that a report be produced consolidating information on what benefits were available to help the general public with the current cost-of-living crisis. Members also commented that the report would be beneficial to assist the Council in sharpening their services and response. It was acknowledged that there were a range of organisations helping to address the cost of living crisis and that this was a wide topic to review. However, Members agreed that an update could be provided as an overview, at a meeting of the Committee, on the existing services provided by the Council to help customers manage the impact of the cost of living crisis. The Committee requested that the communications team also attended the same meeting of the Committee to highlight how they were distributing information about these services to eligible residents.

Finally, Members noted that before the Covid-19 pandemic there was a task group formed to review parking enforcement. As this subject had also been identified during the training, Members asked for the findings of this work group to be circulated for the consideration of the Committee.

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RESOLVED that

- a) housing repairs, landscaping and void housing be reviewed by the Performance Scrutiny Working Group;
- b) the services provided by the Council to assist residents with the cost of living crisis be considered at a forthcoming meeting of the Committee as an overview item;
- c) The items identified during the training to be reconsidered at a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- d) the report on Parking Enforcement be circulated for the consideration of Members of the Committee for information.

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

The Chair highlighted the extra Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) meeting on 21st July 2022 to consider and pre-scrutinise the draft of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund report.

The Chair commented that the Executive Committee had arranged an extra Committee date for 27th September 2022 to consider the Redditch Town Investment Plan Business Case for the library, and proposed an extra meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22nd September 2022 to pre-scrutinise the report.

RESOLVED that

an extra Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting be booked to take place on 22nd September 2022.

29. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair noted that a report concerning the new cemetery had been due to be considered by the O&S Committee on 25th August 2022. However, this date was not suitable for Officers and a new date was yet to be decided.

RESOLVED that

The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be noted.

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

Councillor Kane, in her role as Chair of the Budget Scrutiny and Performance Working Groups informed Members that the Budget Scrutiny Working Group would meet on 4th August 2022.

RESOLVED that

the updates be noted.

31. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

Councillor Chalk informed Members that there were no written reports due to there being no meetings since the last Committee meeting. However, the West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Worcestershire Heath Overview and Scrutiny Committee were due to meet in July 2022.

It was confirmed that Councillor Chalk would continue to provide written updates to the Committee.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 8.28 pm



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 21st July, 2022

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Bill Hartnett (Chair), Councillor Joanna Kane (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Salman Akbar, Imran Altaf, Michael Chalk, Brandon Clayton, Luke Court and Sid Khan

Also Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships)

Officers:

Ruth Bamford and Kevin Dicks

Principal Democratic Services Officer:

J Bayley-Hill

32. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Tim Pearman and Gareth Prosser and it was confirmed that Councillor Luke Court was attending as Councillor Pearman's substitute.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

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

34. PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Chair confirmed that there were no registered public speakers on this occasion.

35. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY - UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (TO FOLLOW)

The Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services presented a report on the subject of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

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Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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The Committee was advised that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund formed part of the national Levelling Up scheme. Redditch had been allocated £2.5 million under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. In order to access this funding, the Council, as the accountable body, needed to submit an investment plan to the Government detailing how the funding would be spent at the local level.

The investment plan was a high level, strategic document. At this stage, specific projects would not be referred to in the plan. Instead, the Council needed to demonstrate how the proposed use of the funding in the Borough matched key interventions that had been identified by the Government. The funding also had to be allocated in accordance with three investment priorities for the Government; Community and Place, Supporting Local Business and People and Skills. Projects had not yet been agreed for funding although some partner organisations had submitted ideas for projects that could be funded locally.

Officers were proposing that in Redditch the funding should be allocated on a ratio of 40 per cent devoted to Community and Place, 30 per cent allocated to Supporting Local Business and 30 per cent allocated to People and Skills. The Government's interventions had been assessed by Officers who had identified those considered to be most relevant to the Borough. The Council could choose from up to 41 interventions proposed by the Government, although some of the project in the Borough would potentially be cross cutting and relevant to a number of interventions. Recently the Government had advised the Council that the proportion of focus allocated to each of the three investment priorities as well as the links to the key interventions could be changed at a later date after the investment plan had been submitted.

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

- The extent to which Redditch was guaranteed to receive the £2.5 million funding that had been allocated to the Borough. Members were informed that Redditch would receive that full allocation of funding.
- The consequences arising from submission of an investment plan by a Council that was not endorsed by the Government. The Committee was advised that the Council would update the plan and continue to resubmit the document, subject to necessary changes, until the Government approved the content.

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- The length of time in which the UK Shared Prosperity Fund would be available. Officers advised that funding would be available over a three-year period, starting in 2022/23.
- The division of funding between capital and revenue expenditure.
- The challenges for the Council in terms of ensuring the sustainability of projects that received funding after the end of the three-year period. Members were informed that this issue had been raised with the Government and local authorities had been advised that this would be addressed in the spending review.
- The consequences arising should the Council fail to demonstrate that the targets for expenditure of the funding were being met. Officers explained that submissions would need to be made to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and, as long as appropriate data was provided, the Council would be able to demonstrate that targets were being met. There would also be a need for an ongoing audit of the use of the funding.
- The use of colour in the report and the fact that this could not be viewed by Members in printed copies of the agenda pack as these were always printed in black and white.
- The 30 per cent increase in wages reported for the Borough in 2020/2021, which had been recorded as an anomaly, and the reasons for this increase. Members were informed that a significant number of residents worked in the food and beverage industry, for which there had been high demand for services during the pandemic. The suggestion was also made that the furlough scheme may have impacted on these figures.
- The reasons why the project submissions that had already been made by partner organisations had not yet been assessed. The Committee was informed that there was a need to assess submissions in relation to criteria and that one purpose of the report was to set the criteria for this. Officers also explained that there had been some consideration given to the project submissions and that this had helped to inform the proposals detailed in the report.
- The extent to which the report, without endorsing specific projects, appeared to be proactive. Officers were urged to review the wording of the document to ensure that it was positive and proactive.
- The potential for businesses and new enterprises to bid for funding under the scheme to support exports abroad. Members were advised that the Government had not stipulated a preference in terms of businesses operating in domestic markets only or abroad. Instead, the focus was

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more on encouraging economic development and skills growth.

- The timeframes by which the Council would be notified about whether the investment plan had been accepted by the Government. Officers clarified that they were anticipating that the Council would be informed about the Government's decision by autumn 2022.
- The extent to which it would be appropriate for the Council to indicate that the scheme locally would work to meet more interventions. The Committee was advised that Officers had identified those interventions considered most appropriate for the Borough and the number selected helped to demonstrate that there was some focus in the proposed approach.
- The role of the Town's Board in respect of decisions on use of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Officers advised that the Town's Board would be consulted, although the Council was the accountable body.
- The extent to which the Council could ensure that projects would be submitted and approved that would result in good quality outcomes for the Borough.
- The requirement for the funding to be spent in the three-year period of the scheme, including 2022/23 and the fact that this would be quite challenging to achieve, given the relatively tight timescales. Members commented that, under these circumstances, the Council needed to try to ensure that the Government approved the authority's first draft of the investment plan in order to avoid causing any delays.
- The potential for some of the funding to be spent on pre-existing projects, such as town centre public realm improvement works.
- The need for the Council to achieve value for money (VfM) in expenditure of the funding.
- The action that would be taken to mitigate against the risks arising from the increasing costs of resources due to inflation. Officers explained that the nature and scale of the projects would be taken into account when they were assessed and it was likely that a number of smaller projects would be approved which might be easier to deliver in the timescales available.
- The potential for Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations to work with the Council on projects supported by this funding. The Committee was informed that VCS organisations had been informed about the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the opportunities available under this scheme.
- The extent to which there would be opportunities for projects to be jointly delivered by Councils and organisations in

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bordering local authority areas. Officers advised that there would be opportunities for the Council to work with other UK Shared Prosperity Fund bidders. The aim in all decisions made about use of the funding would be to achieve the best outcomes for Redditch.

- The value arising from creating a positive impression of Redditch in the Investment Plan.
- The reasons for gaps in some parts of the document. Officers clarified that this was a working document and further changes would be made prior to submission to the Government.
- The need for extra investment to be attracted to the Borough from the private sector, alongside funding from the Government, which would benefit the local economy.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the Investment Plan is approved for submission to the UK Government;**
- 2) **authority to finalise the Investment plan be delegated to the Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Regeneration and Strategic Partnerships and in light of advice from the Local Partnership Board;**
- 3) **authority to develop projects to deliver the outcomes contained in the investment plan be delegated to the Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Regeneration and Strategic Partnerships and in light of advice from the Local Partnership Board; and**
- 4) **the Medium Term Financial Strategy is amended to include the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Allocation when next reviewed.**

36. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the content of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme and in doing so noted that the content had been updated to include the additional items agreed at the previous meeting, including additional meeting dates.

RESOLVED that

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

37. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

The Committee considered updates in respect of recent meetings of the following external scrutiny bodies:

- a) West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Council Representative, Councillor Michael Chalk

Councillor Chalk presented a written update on the focus of the latest meeting of the WMCA's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which took place on 11th July 2022. Members were informed that the meeting had been live streamed and this could be viewed on the WMCA's website.

Members noted that during the meeting there had been discussions about the skills budget for the WMCA. Questions were raised about the potential for some of this funding to be shared with non-constituent authorities such as Redditch Borough Council. The Committee was advised that the Leader, who served on the WMCA Board, had a positive working relationship with the Mayor of the West Midlands Combined Authority region, who was keen to provide support to non-constituent members. However, the skills budgets for combined authorities was intended for constituent member authorities only. In two-tier authority areas such as Worcestershire, skills funding was allocated to the county Council. Redditch Borough Council could potentially access some skills funding from the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and this had occurred in the past.

Reference was made to the level of qualifications that were supported using the skills funding provided through the WMCA. Members were informed that this was intended for Level 3 qualifications, although there had been discussions about the potential to provide funding available to also support level 2 qualifications. There were recognised providers that delivered training for level 3 qualifications, although the number of providers had recently reduced following a review.

The Committee discussed the educational attainment levels in the Borough and concerns were raised about the number of people who were not in education, employment or training (NEETs). In this context, there was general agreement that

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more action needed to be taken to access additional funding to support measures to improve the local skills base. Members commented that work in respect of the manufacturing and innovation centre, as part of the work on town centre regeneration, would potentially help to address this situation.

b) Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) – Council Representative, Councillor Michael Chalk

Councillor Chalk confirmed that the latest meeting of the Worcestershire HOSC had taken place on 8th July 2022. During the meeting, representatives of Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust (WAHT) had been interviewed about the integrated care system.

Members discussed the update provided and in doing so questioned whether WAHT had provided any information at recent meetings of HOSC regarding the Trust's finances. The Committee was informed that this had not been discussed during recent meetings. However, Members were asked to note that in 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government had written off NHS debts, including WAHT's £20 million debts, although the current financial position of the Trust remained to be clarified.

Reference was made to public transport links to Worcestershire Royal Hospital and concerns were raised about the impact that a reduction in services provided by Diamond Buses locally might have on Redditch residents attending appointments at the hospital. Members commented that people experiencing an emergency could dial 999 for an ambulance but residents attending other appointments or returning from the hospital could not travel in this manner. It was noted that the lowest car ownership levels in the county were in Redditch, so these changes to services would have a disproportionate impact on Redditch residents. The suggestion was made that this issue should be raised for the consideration of HOSC, although Members were informed that the subject might be more appropriate for the consideration of Worcestershire County Council's Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Consideration was also given to the extent to which HOSC had recently debated drug and alcohol recovery programmes and the availability of such programmes in the Borough. Members were advised that there were three rehabilitation

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clinics in the county, one of which was situated in the Borough, and consideration was being given to extending coverage to other parts of the county.

Finally, ambulance waiting times in Worcestershire were briefly discussed. Members were advised that representatives of various NHS partner organisations had attended a recent meeting of HOSC to discuss ambulance waiting times. At the meeting HOSC members had had some concerns and would continue to monitor the situation.

RESOLVED that

the updates in respect of the latest meetings of the WMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Worcestershire HOSC be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 7.41 pm