



# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thu 2 Feb  
2023  
6.30 pm

Council Chamber  
Redditch Town Hall

**REDDITCH** BOROUGH COUNCIL

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## **GUIDANCE ON FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS**

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**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.**

**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 a Committee if they have 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 written statements to be read out on behalf of residents and the virtual participation of residents at meetings of Overview and Scrutiny 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 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.

### **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.**

# Overview and Scrutiny

Thursday, 2nd February, 2023

6.30 pm

Council Chamber Town Hall

## Agenda

### Membership:

Cllrs:	Bill Hartnett (Chair)	Michael Chalk
	Joanna Kane (Vice-Chair)	Brandon Clayton
	Salman Akbar	Sid Khan
	Imran Altaf	Timothy Pearman
	Tom Baker-Price	

### 1. Apologies and named substitutes

### 2. Declarations of interest and of Party Whip

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, and any Party Whip.

### 3. Minutes (Pages 7 - 18)

*Minutes for the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022 will be considered at this meeting.*

### 4. Public Speaking

To invite members of the public who have registered in advance of the meeting to speak to the Committee. Please note that the deadline to register to speak at this meeting is 12 noon on Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023.

### 5. Bulky Waste and Fly Tipping Task Group – Briefing and Presentation

*The documents for this item will follow in an Additional Papers pack.*

### 6. Update on the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel 2022-23 (Verbal Update)

### 7. Draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2022-23 (Pages 19 - 42)

### 8. Executive Committee Minutes and Scrutiny of the Executive Committee's Work Programme - Selecting Items for Scrutiny (Pages 43 - 86)

The latest edition of the Executive Work Programme and the minutes of the meetings of the Executive Committee held on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2022, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2022 and 13<sup>th</sup> December 2022 have been attached for Members' consideration to this agenda pack.

The next edition of the Executive Work Programme, which is due to be published on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2023, will be provided for Members' consideration in an additional papers pack for this meeting.

## **9. Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme (Pages 87 - 90)**

## **10. Task Groups, Short Sharp Reviews and Working Groups - Update Reports**

- a) Budget Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Kane
- b) Performance Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Kane

## **11. External Scrutiny Bodies - Update Reports (Pages 91 - 94)**

- a) West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Council representative, Councillor Chalk; and
- b) Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) – Council representative, Councillor Chalk.

## **12. Exclusion of the Public and Press**

**In the opinion of the Chief Executive, the meeting will not be, or is unlikely to be open to the Public at the time the following items of business are considered for the reasons stated. The Committee will be asked to pass the following resolution:**

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

- Paragraph 3 – Financial or Business Affairs.”**

## **13. Rubicon Leisure - Finance Overview (Exempt Report)**

*This report will follow in an Additional Papers pack.*



# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Thursday, 8th December,  
2022

## MINUTES

### Present:

Councillor Bill Hartnett (Chair), Councillor Joanna Kane (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Salman Akbar, Imran Altaf, Tom Baker-Price, Sid Khan and Timothy Pearman.

### Also Present:

Councillor Peter Fleming (Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services) – (on Microsoft Teams)

### Officers:

Guy Revans, Michael Birkinshaw, Michael Rowan (on Microsoft Teams), and Carl Walker

### Democratic Services Officers:

Jo Gresham and Mat Sliwinski

## 81. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chalk and Clayton.

## 82. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

Councillor Kane declared that she had previously expressed clear and publicised views on the proposals to be discussed under Minute Item No. 85 (Pre-Decision Scrutiny – Appropriation of Land off Ipsley Church Lane for Planning Purposes) and as such her participation in the discussion and vote on this matter could be construed as predetermination. Councillor Kane indicated that due to this she would not be taking part in the rest of the meeting.

Councillor Kane subsequently left the room and took no further part in the meeting.

Chair

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Thursday, 8th December, 2022

## 83. MINUTES

The minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2022 were submitted for Members' consideration.

### **RESOLVED that**

**the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Meeting held on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2022 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.**

## 84. PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Chair introduced the public speaking item and explained to the Committee that several public speakers had registered to speak either in person or had prepared statements to be read out before the Committee.

The Chair explained to Members that a written statement had been received from Ms. J. Lovell, made on behalf of herself and two other residents, Dr. E. Soady and Mr. I. Soady. Therefore, nine minutes would be allocated for this statement to be read out by the Democratic Services Officer present. Her statement was delivered as follows:

"I make this statement on behalf of myself, Mr and Dr. Soady and we represent the hundreds of people, including their children, who can't be here but will be detrimentally impacted should this appropriation go ahead to allow what is a BUILD DEVELOPMENT.

Talk to anyone on social media, on the street, in the park, in the meadow, they will all say "IT'S A DONE DEAL ". And yes, it is as far as the ruling incumbent councillors are concerned. That is evidenced in their committees in pursuit and it's no secret this is the site they want, and this is the site they shall have.

So, the officer seems to me to be saying that apart from the loss of open space no other argument is valid because they have planning permission. [ By the way that's OUTLINE planning permission.] So as a cemetery is a topology of open space there won't be any loss, end of.

Let us be absolutely clear on this. Let's talk about the reality.

This is for a BUILD DEVELOPMENT of a new from scratch forever expanding operational cemetery. Entrance gates running into a

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large carpark area. Lanes off to accommodate the hurst. Ancillary buildings to accommodate the digging/maintenance equipment and toilets. And once it's began other buildings associated with burials will no doubt be granted permission. The continuation of digging up of graves, with or without headstones, headstones up or down. No time to elaborate more but you will have the reality of a cemetery in your focus tonight.

Let's be absolutely clear of what this land is now here today. A UNIQUE part of Arrow Valley Park South, part of the park given over in trust by Redditch Newtown Development Corporation for pleasure. It is an established, well-loved, and used semi natural area close to our urban homes. This has been acknowledged by a council solicitor in a response to my complaint.

As committed members of Overview and Scrutiny you will have outsourced that the high value and use of this piece of parkland for enjoyment of recreational pursuits is proven and weighted heavily.

From as high as the national government policies, including Public Heath England, and National Planning Policy Framework. Even the Inspector of State declared the council could not allocate Arrow Valley Park as land for the development of plan because of its great importance for recreational needs. Down to Worcestershire Green Infrastructure Framework to your own policies.

You will be aware of the recent allocation of 85k from the national government levelling up parks fund. This is an allocation based on the evidence that Arrow Valley Park is in one of the deprived parts of England for RECREATIONAL SPACES WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE of homes. The idea is to keep and make more not to take away!

So please question why the officer is seemingly adamant that this build development is exactly the same thing as a park.

On financial argument, is it the publics fault bereavements was allowed to go ahead to spend 60k on a planning application before public and council consultations and now use as a reason to go ahead with appropriation regardless of argument because of it being cited as a waste of public funds if not granted.?

On their land hectarage argument, question the arguments and the maths given by the officer regarding taking this park land away because there is adjacent and wider park land.

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It's not just a question of hectares. It's a question of accessibility and quality, how it best serves the public.

Question the figure of area given for the maths against the figure on planning amended area. Why that takes in the surrounding public highways paths, woody areas which is included for planning but excluded from this appropriation with the same drawing.

Question the figures for the adjoining and whole park and used in the maths calculation.

For example, In the immediate vicinity there is the vast GKN works buildings and land, and private residences Mill cottage stables of no public access.

We share the park with the wildlife, and they are entitled to open grass land, scrub, and ponds which are off limits to humans and rightly so and cover much land in the immediate vicinity.

Immediately below is wild goose playing fields, predominantly in use football fields and BMX/skatepark waiting for expansion.

Also, hectareage of the whole park, for example, the 2 ½ mile stretch of river runs within the park and the lakes and we cannot, as yet walk on water.

These provable points along with others I have no time to list, but you will find, will seriously change the maths, and turn in the public's favour the need of this piece of park for recreation needs.

As committed members of o and s you will have accessed the public's representations summarised in this report for fairness.

You will have found a detailed submission from a highly qualified town planning consultant which has seemingly been dismissed as irrelevant.

There is no time to mention all but for the record tonight particularly pertinent point made by this qualified open space consultant.

That the fact of the open space needs assessment has been proven as woefully out of date and inadequate for 2022 and thus renders the Public Open Space quotes in this report as unsound. Make no mistake, this piece of park is wholly valuable in provision for Matchborough ward and indeed people come from in particular Winyates, Church Hill, Woodrow, Greenlands to make use as well as visitors alike due to its regional status.



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Other pertinent points made by the public, also appears missing including a record of a petition of over 400 legitimate signatures and some with comments. Also missing or dismissed much of my own, Dr and Mr Soady. What other points in public submissions have been dismissed or ignored as well?

This council, with its transient members of today, have a duty to make decisions now that will not prevent future generations from having the same opportunities.

The planning statement of Intent is relevant here. The intention of wider space allocation for each grave, of including natural burial area as well as the statutory inclusion of all faith domains and their rights of burial which includes separation allowances and open for everyone, anyone in and outside Redditch.

Also, relevant the geo report, the declaration of the parkland in this site contains bands and deposits of impenetrable siltstone. Also ground water issues in parts and environmental restraints.

These facts will seriously detrimentally skew the number of graves per hectare of land as declared by bereavements for future years' worth of graves, which after all, GRAVES are the point, it's already a wildlife haven...What then.? when this meadow is filled, the PRESEDENT IS SET for the taking of yet more parkland from the adjoining parkland.

This piece of our precious park will just become the gateway to the ever-consuming need for burial land as the population grows with its diversity of people's needs and rights to burial. A park already insufficient for today's needs, especially highlighted by Covid.

What choice will the future councillors have to justify the plus £1million this council will have spent on the gateway other than continue it?

There are alternative sites that are not parkland available now thereby not causing such major impacts on the people now and the future for their need of this park for pleasure.

And just to finish please

I believe this present council leadership will, to coin a phrase, "WILL HAVE TO BE GOING SOME" to argue in law that an operational cemetery outweighs an existing open grassland meadow, scrub, wood, and ponds in terms of wildlife, biodiversity, and climate change.

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And “BE GOING SOME EVEN MORE”, to argue in law, an operational cemetery is a place of enjoyment, fun among the graves, and therefore there will be no loss of this well-loved, valued, much needed, easily accessed, high quality, historic piece of park, heavily used for enjoyment for the benefit of our mental and physical wellbeing, in recreation as is OUR RIGHT!

Thank you.”

The Chair subsequently welcomed Mrs. E. McMahon to the meeting, who was invited to speak to the Committee.

Her speech was delivered as follows:

“Good evening

My name is Eileen McMahon

I would like to state my opposition to the Council’s proposed appropriation of the land at Ipsley Meadow for the purpose of a cemetery.

Ipsley Meadow as part of the Arrow Valley Park offers valuable open recreational space and to quote the Council’s website: “is protected as a green space where the management of the park is taken very seriously to ensure it is stewarded and improved for future generations.”

The Arrow Valley Park as a whole is a well loved, highly valued Community Asset, used daily throughout the seasons by the whole community and beyond.

We are all aware of the growing need for fresh air and open recreational spaces in order to support good mental health and wellbeing; places for sport, walking and other physical activities or just as an open space for social interaction. We need more spaces like Ipsley Meadow not less.

Furthermore, there needs to be good safe access for pedestrians to enter Ipsley Meadow from Ipsley Church Lane. I am very disheartened that the public footpath number 621 (C) which runs parallel to the lane has been blocked for many years, making pedestrians walk up the road with moving traffic on the steep and narrow lane. I am aware that the issue of the blocked footpath has been raised previously by Redditch Ramblers with the County Council. I am a member of the RAMBLERS’s Association.

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I urge you to please protect and improve access to Ipsley Meadow for all of the reasons outlined.

Thank you”

## **85. PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY - APPROPRIATION OF LAND OFF IPSLEY CHURCH LANE FOR PLANNING PURPOSES**

The Chair introduced this item and explained that it was not possible for Officers to provide the Committee with the copies of all 60 letters of objection on the grounds of the loss of recreational space due to time and resource constraints. The Bereavement Services Manager clarified that a sample of the objections would be read out in the course of the Officer presentation.

The Bereavement Services Manager presented a report on the appropriation of Land off Ipsley Church Lane and explained that this report was due to be considered by the Executive Committee on the 13<sup>th</sup> December 2022, which would decide whether to proceed with the appropriation of land off Ipsley Church Lane for planning purposes under section 122 (2A) of the Local Government Act 1972.

It was explained that the planning decision notice dated 26<sup>th</sup> April 2022 provided for a change of use and entrance subject to various conditions. This permission was to create a modern cemetery using the open space and biodiversity in such a way as to ensure the wider ecology would be enhanced.

The land in question was designated primary open space and remained so even with the change of use permission. Therefore, appropriation of the land for planning purposes was required and the authority had the power to do this under section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972. As the land was open space this power fell under sub-section 2a of section 122 of the Act due to its recreational use.

The Bereavement Services Manager clarified the steps that the Council had taken thus far to lawfully proceed with the process of appropriation proposal. The Council was required to advertise its intention to appropriate in a newspaper with circulation in the local area. The adverts were placed on 16<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of September – the third date was added as in the first week an incorrect email address had been included in the advert. This satisfied the minimum requirements for advertising the intention to appropriate.

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The Council also had to consider any objections to the proposed appropriation. To discharge this requirement there was a period of six weeks allocated for making representations, from 16<sup>th</sup> September to 28<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

It was highlighted that, following this process, should the Council decide to appropriate this land it was released from any trust for the enjoyment of the public imposed by section 164 of the Public Health Act 1875 or the Open Spaces Act 1906.

The Bereavement Services Manager explained that the report before the Committee detailed the planning designations of open space and primarily open space used within the change of use application.

The details of the objections received were summarised and it was noted that 69 people objected to the appropriation, of whom 68 objected by email and 1 person objected by letter. The objections were categorised into 14 categories, with categories 2-14 having been dealt with via the planning application of 13<sup>th</sup> October 2021. Thus, in granting the permission the planning authority had satisfied itself that these matters were compatible with the use of the site and were not matters for consideration in this appropriation process.

The loss of recreational space was the outstanding objection that had to be considered in the appropriation process. Under the 60 objections recorded in this category the objections related to the use of space for such activities/reasons as walking with family, dog walking and mental health.

The Bereavement Services Manager clarified that the site being considered for appropriation amounted to 4.60 hectares and was surrounded by a further 55 hectares of open space within 1 kilometre from the centre of the site. As a result of the circa 60 hectares available to the public in this area, the appropriation of this land equated to 8 per cent of the land, leaving 92 per cent of the land still available for recreational use.

Across the wider Arrow Valley Park there was approximately 364 hectares with a wide range of facilities compatible with its use as a leisure and recreation facility. In this respect the appropriation of this land equated to 1.3 per cent of the overall available land, leaving 98.7 per cent available.

The Bereavement Services Manager also explained the biodiversity and environmental implications of the proposed appropriation. Members were advised that if appropriation was to be approved for

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this land, the land would still be classed as open space under the legislation. As such it would be included in the Parks & Open Space Strategy and, consequently, the biodiversity and environmental recommendations stemming from that Strategy dating September 2022 would be followed. These recommendations were reiterated to the Committee as follows:

- Recommendation 1 required a better understanding of the biodiversity of the open spaces within the Borough.
- Recommendation 3 required a clear approach to Biodiversity net gain and provision of a measurable approach to the management of the land.
- Recommendation 5 required identification of further carbon capture and natural capital gains.

The Bereavement Services Manager stated that a commitment to enhance biodiversity on the site and the wider local area had been made via the planning process and there were conditions attached to the planning permission for the land off Ipsley Church Lane to the effect of enhancing biodiversity.

Following the presentation, Members made a number of observations and asked a number of questions of Officers, which were answered as follows:

- Officers stated that it was the intention for the public right of way to remain through the land off Ipsley Church Lane following the completion of the cemetery.
- Officers stated that the Council's parks team could investigate the issue of blocked public right of access around or adjacent to the site on land off Ipsley Church Lane. One of the Members updated the Committee stating that the public footpath in question had been blocked by a local resident and the matter had been reported to the relevant ward councillor.
- Some Members observed that change of use to a cemetery would result in some restrictions to public access and enjoyment of the current site such as restrictions to the opening hours. A definition of open space in section 336 (1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 was quoted by a Member as 'any land laid out as a public garden, or used for the purposes of public recreation, or land which is a disused burial ground' and it was noted that this definition implied that an in-use burial ground would thus not be classed as open space.
- Officers commented that completion of the cemetery and change of use of land to cemetery would not change the

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designation of the land as open space under the National Planning Policy Framework or the relevant planning legislation as cemeteries remained open space in legal planning terms. Some Members commented that they disagreed with this.

- It was added that for Abbey Cemetery there was available for public access with restrictions to vehicular access only. It was the intention to provide a similar level of public access to the Ipsley Church Lane
- Some Members complained of the high water table on the land off Ipsley Church Lane, which would make burial at the site difficult in the winter season.
- Some Members also expressed concern that the use of part of the site for cemetery would be incompatible, in that it was a site of mourning, with the use of the rest of the area as a park and recreation area for enjoyment. Other locations were mentioned as more suitable for expansion of cemetery facilities.
- Some Members also added that they wished to read all 60 objections pertaining to loss of recreational space in full by Members before a decision on the matter was made by the Executive.
- With regards to paragraph 7.1 of the report, Officers clarified that the appropriation of the land would not have any impact on the Council's strategic purposes as there was evidence that there were other places within 1km radius of the land that would satisfy the public's need for open park space for enjoyment.

In the course of discussion, and based on the concerns outlined above, Councillor Khan put forward the following recommendation:

*“That Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes that Members have not been able to read the 60 letters of objection meaning that the Committee has insufficient information to enable proper scrutiny of this very important decision. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee therefore requests that the Executive Committee defers making the decision on this matter until all the letters have been provided to Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration at the next available meeting.”*

The Committee subsequently discussed in detail this recommendation and Officers explained that consultation on the proposed appropriation was open to all residents as the intention to appropriate was advertised in a newspaper with circulation in the local area, the Redditch Standard, and it was open for anybody to respond.

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In stating the support for the proposed recommendation, some Members reiterated that it was important for Members to have the full content of the objections available before a decision could be made on the matter. It was also stated that there should be greater consideration given to alternative sites.

In stating their opposition to the proposed recommendation, some Members argued that the objections received had been sufficiently summarised in the report and by Officers at the meeting to allow Members to scrutinise the matter and it was stated that as there was a total of 60 objections to the appropriation on the grounds of loss of recreational space out of the Redditch Borough population of circa 86,000, the level of objection was not proportionate enough to justify delaying the Executive Committee in making a decision on this matter.

Some Members also argued that given the existing burial space in the borough was estimated to only provide enough burial space for another two years, it was imperative that new burial space was found. Lastly, it was argued that it was not feasible to expand the Abbey Cemetery as it was next to an ancient scheduled monument and during the planning process it was reported that Worcestershire Archives and Archaeology Service would object to any expansion of the Abbey Cemetery. Works to enable the expansion of the Abbey Cemetery without disturbing the ancient monument were thought to incur costs that would not deem the expansion of the site value for money.

The recommendation proposed by Councillor Khan was put to the vote and on being put to the vote this recommendation proposed was lost.

Councillor Baker-Price then proposed the following recommendation:

*“That it be recommended by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the Executive Committee resolve that the Land off Ipsley Church Lane as detailed in appendix 1 be appropriated under section 122 (2A) of the Local Government Act 1972 for planning purposes”.*

On being put to the vote this recommendation was carried.

**RECOMMENDED that**

# **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

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**the Executive Committee resolve that the Land off Ipsley Church Lane as detailed in appendix 1 be appropriated under section 122 (2A) of the Local Government Act 1972 for planning purposes.**

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm  
and closed at 7.42 pm



**Redditch Borough Council**  
**Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
**Annual Report 2022 – 2023**

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## CHAIR'S FOREWORD

I would like to extend my thanks to the Democratic Services Officers Jo Gresham, Jess Bayley-Hill and Mateusz Sliwinski, who have been very helpful and supportive to the Committee during the year.

It has been a very busy year for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with nine meetings having taken place at the Town Hall between May and the end of December, with a further three meetings scheduled during February and March.

I would like to thank all Members of the Committee for their contributions and participation, and in particular extend my thanks to Councillor Joanna Kane, who is the Vice-Chair of Overview and Scrutiny and the Chair of both the Performance Scrutiny and Budget Scrutiny Working Groups. I would also like to extend my thanks to Councillor Michael Chalk for his regular written reports and updates from the meetings he attends as the Council's representative on the Worcestershire County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny.

Although the Committee have not completed any Task and Finish Group reviews, the Committee have several which have been agreed, scoped and ready to be launched.

The Committee have both taken an overview of and scrutinised a wide range of topics including: - Town Investment Plan Business Case, Levelling Up Fund Bid 2, Future Use Of Town Hall And Customer Access, Leisure Strategy, Council Plan, Town Hall Hub, Asset Disposal Strategy, HR and Organisational Development / Workforce Strategy / People Strategy, Climate Change / Carbon Reduction Strategy, and support provided by the Council to residents of Redditch in respect of the rise in the cost of living.

During Committee meetings, Members have asked detailed questions of senior officers and portfolio holders including the Leader of the Council. This has supplemented information received in the reports, led to constructive debates, and enabled Members to come to informed decisions.

The Committee have regularly made comments and recommendations to the Executive Committee.

I am pleased to report that at several meetings during the year members of the public have requested and addressed the Committee, speaking on items on the agenda.



Councillor Bill Hartnett  
Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

## INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Redditch Borough Council during 2022 – 2023.

## THE ROLE OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The role of overview and scrutiny is an important one in the Council's governance structure, in providing challenge and driving improvement. It is often referred to as the "critical friend" of the Council and can review any issues of concern or of real interest to local residents.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a number of roles within the Council. These include:

- Holding the Executive Committee to account by thoroughly scrutinising their decisions to ensure that the Council continues to provide the best services possible for Redditch residents. As part of this role, the Committee has the power to 'call-in' decisions made by the Executive Committee and to request that the Executive Committee review the original decisions, taking into account the issues raised by the Committee.
- Acting as a 'critical friend' to the Executive Committee by reviewing Council policies and strategies, making recommendations where appropriate.
- Performance and financial monitoring, to ensure the Council's services are sustainable and delivered to the highest possible standard.
- Commissioning reviews of services/topics that impact on the Council or on the lives of Redditch residents.
- Pre-scrutiny of items prior to a decision being made by the Executive Committee.
- Setting up Task Groups to focus on specific subjects and recommend ways to improve existing practices within the Council and community as a whole. A flow chart on how to consider potential scrutiny reviews can be found at Appendix A and the Council's scoping form at Appendix B.

## MEMBERSHIP

The Committee appoints individual Members to oversee the work of Overview and Scrutiny. Membership of the Committee for 2022/23 is as follows:



Cllr Bill Hartnett (Chair)



Cllr Joanna Kane (Vice-Chair)



Cllr Salman Akbar



Cllr Imran Altaf



Cllr Michael Chalk



Cllr Brandon Clayton



Cllr Sid Khan



Cllr Timothy Pearman



Cllr Gareth Prosser  
May 2022 - October 2022



Cllr Tom Baker-Price  
October 2022 –present

## ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES DURING 2022-23

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee held a scrutiny training and work programme planning session in June 2022 at the start of the municipal year. This session was held online and provided an opportunity for both existing and new Members of the Committee to understand the importance of the scrutiny process at the Council and the function of the Committee. During the training session, areas of interest were identified by Members for potential Overview items that could be considered during the municipal year 2022/2023. These Overview items are subjects for discussion at a single meeting of the Committee and are of particular interest to residents within the Borough. In addition to this the following were identified by Members:

- Items for pre-scrutiny, identified from the Executive Committee's Work Programme.
- Subjects considered suitable for further scrutiny through a Task Group investigation.

### *Covid-19 And Remote Meetings*

In May 2021 the Government removed the temporary legislation that allowed local authorities to hold public meetings virtually. This meant that Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings were once again held in person after May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Meetings continue to be live streamed if there is significant local interest in the items being considered at Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings. Meetings of scrutiny Task Groups and Working Groups continue to be held remotely, since these meetings are private and not live streamed.

### *The Death of Queen Elizabeth II*

Following the death of Queen Elizabeth II, it was agreed by Members that, as a mark of respect, Committee meetings due to be held during the mourning period would be postponed. This resulted in the postponement of the following meetings:

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2022 (rearranged to 6<sup>th</sup> October 2022)
- Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel – 21<sup>st</sup> September 2022 (rearranged to 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2022)

This report provides a summary of the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the 2022-2023 municipal year. Further information on the agendas and minutes from these meetings can be found using the link below:

[Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meetings - 2022-2023](#)

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitors the impact of all of its recommendations that have been endorsed by the Executive Committee. A tracking report is presented to the Committee during the year stating progress made to date.

During consideration of the Executive Committee's Work Programme, Members agreed to pre-scrutinise the following items:

- Redditch Town Investment Plan Business Cases
- Levelling Up Fund 2 Bid
- Future Us
- Leisure Strategy
- Climate Change/Carbon Reduction Strategy and Action Plan
- Voluntary Bodies Scheme
- Appropriation of Land off Ipsley Church Lane for Planning Purposes
- HR and Organisational Development / People Strategy

In addition to pre-scrutiny of the Executive Committee Work Programme items, the following items were included in the Committee's Work Programme and were considered at meetings throughout the municipal year:

- Support Provided by the Council to residents in respect of the cost of living
- Overview and Scrutiny Training Event – June 2022

Portfolio Holders for the relevant reports are invited to each meeting of the Committee in order to answer questions and to provide further information to the Executive Committee on the areas that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee raise at their meetings.

### **Recommendations to the Executive Committee**

During the municipal year 2022 the majority of the recommendations contained within Executive Committee reports were endorsed by the Committee. There were two instances when the recommendations made by the Committee were rejected by the Executive Committee. In respect of the additional recommendation made during consideration of the Leisure Strategy the Executive Committee amended its proposed recommendation to reflect the changes suggested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

As stated earlier in this report all of the minutes and agendas for these meetings can be accessed via this link below.

[Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meetings - 2022-2023](#)

Further information about the issues discussed by the Committee during the year and Members' findings are detailed below.

## 9<sup>th</sup> June 2022

### Council Plan (Recovery and Restoration Plan)

During consideration of this report, it was noted that the current Council Plan was developed prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and therefore a review of the priorities contained within the Plan was undertaken in 2021 and an Addendum produced, designed to sit alongside the Plan. This Addendum would provide an intermediary position prior to the review of the Council Plan due to take place in 2024.

During consideration of this report Members highlighted the following areas of interest:

- The procurement of an energy advice service
- Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)
- The allocation of Safer Streets Funding
- Redeployable Cameras
- Green Thread
- Face-to face interaction with officers within the Council
- Rough Sleepers
- Recruitment and Retention of staff

### Council Tax Support Scheme - Update - Pre-Scrutiny

This report provided information on the review of the current Council Tax Support scheme and the proposed consultation process for the 2023/2024 scheme. It was clarified that the consultation was a legal requirement under Section 1A (3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and that this would be carried out later this year.

During consideration of this matter it was highlighted that along with the public that major precepting authorities must also be consulted with regarding review of the Council Tax Reduction scheme. As this was a very technical scheme, at this meeting Members were informed that the documentation would be vastly simplified in order for it to be more understandable to all residents and that the consultation would be carried out so that it could be accessed by as many residents as possible.



**23<sup>rd</sup> June 2022**

Redditch Town Investment Plan Business Cases - Pre-Scrutiny

This was a detailed presentation for Members and the following areas were highlighted:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- The bid would continue to be worked on until submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities on 29th June 2022.

At this meeting, Members raised their concerns that there was little detail in the late reports; and highlighted that it was important to be able to see more detail when looking at significant amounts of funding.

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 required deadline, in order to ensure that all available monies would be able to be drawn down. Members were in agreement that this was an exciting and aspirational opportunity for Redditch Town Centre.

Levelling Up Fund 2 Bid - Pre-Scrutiny

Included in this presentation of this report was further information on the Levelling Up Fund.

At this meeting Members were informed that the second round of Levelling Up funding focussed on the following three key themes:

- Transport
- Regeneration and Town Centre
- Culture and Heritage

Members were informed 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.

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.

**7<sup>th</sup> July 2022**

#### Asset Rationalisation for Easemore Road - Pre-Decision-Scrutiny

This matter was considered by Members, and it was 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 maintenance of Easemore Road. 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 of the tenants.

During consideration of this item, Members discussed the importance of the community centre to local residents, and it was noted by some Members that a better solution might potentially be to sell part of the site and use that income to improve the existing building. However, it was thought by some Members that it would not be wise to postpone this due to significant repairs and problems with the building.

#### Future Use of the Town Hall and Customer Access - Pre-Decision-Scrutiny

This report was in respect of the future use of the Town Hall and closure of the cashier service. It was explained that the effects of the pandemic had led to fewer users accessing the Town Hall in person to make payments.

At this meeting it was explained that there would be a dedicated manned customer service desk opened and telephone and internet access; and that this would allow colleagues to assist the public to access alternative forms of payment while the transition was being undertaken.

It was highlighted that if the cashiers' area were to be sublet to public sector tenants, that revenue would be generated for the Council.

There were some queries as a result of this report including data collection, redundancies, parking for any new tenants in the Town Hall and the improvement of IT literacy for those residents who needed extra support.

At this meeting Members were pleased that there would be no redundancies. However, there were concerns raised with regard to the need for the continuation of some face to face interactions with residents.

#### 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. At this meeting, Officers reported that during the event a series of items were raised by Members to add to the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme.

Members requested that a report regarding the Cost of Living Crisis be presented to the Committee later in the municipal year. This report was considered at a meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022.

### **21<sup>st</sup> July 2022**

#### Pre-Decision Scrutiny - UK Shared Prosperity Fund

The Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services presented a report on the subject of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The Committee was advised that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund formed part of the national Levelling Up scheme. It was explained to Members that the investment plan was a high level, strategic document and that 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

During consideration of this report there were discussions regarding the surety of receiving the full funding of £2.5m, the length of time in which the UK Shared Prosperity Fund would be available, the challenges faced by the Council in terms of ensuring the sustainability of projects that received funding after the end of the three-year period; and the consequences arising should the Council fail to demonstrate that the targets for expenditure of the funding were being met.

### **5<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

### Nomination of the Community Centre at Easemore Road - Asset of Community Value - Pre-Scrutiny

The Nomination of the Community Centre at Easemore Road - Asset of Community Value was presented at this meeting for consideration by the Committee. It was confirmed to the Committee that included within the Localism Act 2011 was a 'Community Right to Bid' enabling communities the right to identify a building they believed to be of importance to their community.

An independent evaluation had highlighted that a Condition Survey carried out in November 2021 had identified costs of repairs and maintenance of £340,407 and that Community House had been valued between £1.2m and £1.5m which was deemed a sum well beyond RCNT's means.

Members were interested in the consultation process that had been undertaken with the tenants and it was explained that there had been contact made with the tenants prior to the previous report presented to the Executive Committee on 12th July 2022.

## **6<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

### Redditch Tip Library Development - Business Case

This report included the business case and summary documents due to be submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on 15th October 2022.

The high level objectives of the Redditch Library Redevelopment were to improve connectivity between the Kingfisher Centre and the Conservation Area. The report also included plans in respect of the demolition of the current library building.

At this meeting some Members expressed considerable concern regarding the plans for the project which resulted in a robust debate amongst Members regarding risk, archives from the current library, the timeline of projects, the lease on the library building and the procurement of contractors.

### Town Hall Hub

During consideration of the Town Hall Hub report Officers reported that the cost of the refurbishment project would be £5.2m and would be funded by capital receipts and the sale of Council assets which had been valued by Savills as between £3.45m and £5.65m.

Some Members felt that establishing a Community Hub within the Town Centre was a great opportunity to create a vibrant workplace alongside wider financial and social benefits. However, at this meeting, concerns were raised by some Members regarding the costs of the demolition of the current library combined with the costs of the Town Hall Hub and whether this was good value for money for residents.

## **20<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

### Leisure Strategy - Pre-Decision Scrutiny

The Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services together with the Cultural Services and Parks Manager and, the Development Services Manager provided a detailed presentation on the Leisure and Culture Strategy.

The strategy comprised of several different parts, including the main Leisure and Cultural Strategy and two other strategies which underpinned this document, including the Arts and Culture Strategy and the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy. Two further leisure strategies were due to be presented for the consideration of the Executive Committee in 2023 on the subjects of built facilities strategy and playing pitches strategy. The Leisure and Culture Strategy covered a wide range of topics including arts, heritage, physical activity and sport, events, parks, open space facilities, venues, sites and services.

### Asset Disposal Strategy - Pre-Scrutiny

At this meeting, the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services presented a report on the proposed implementation of an Asset Disposal Strategy and explained that the Council held a comprehensive asset register which provided a valuation of those assets in monetary and service delivery terms.

It was reported to Members that the Council had a duty to ensure that its fixed assets were reviewed on a continual basis to ensure that they remained fit for their strategic purpose, complied with legislative and regulatory requirements, and did not lose value.

### Climate Change/Carbon Reduction Strategy and Action Plan- Pre-Scrutiny

The Vice-Chair welcomed the Net Zero Projects Manager from the Midlands Net Zero Hub to the meeting who provided a detailed presentation regarding the Redditch Borough Council's Carbon Reduction Strategy and Action Plan.

The Carbon Reduction Strategy and Action Plan covered exclusively the carbon dioxide emissions of the Council and would need to be reviewed annually and progress against targets monitored twice a year.

Members were informed during consideration of this item that a Climate Change Officer would be appointed and that there would be a further resource requirement as the Strategy was implemented.

#### Voluntary Bodies Scheme Pre-Decision Scrutiny

This report was considered by the Committee at its meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

At this meeting options for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Grants Scheme for the next three years, after the current scheme expired in March 2023, were outlined for Members' consideration. It was reported that VCS groups respondents had expressed a preference for option 2 to be adopted by the Council.

There was detailed discussion regarding the concessionary rents during consideration of this item and the impact of this on smaller, locally based community and voluntary groups in Redditch. However, Officers reminded the Committee that there was currently no concessionary rents scheme offered by the Council.

### **1<sup>st</sup> December 2022**

#### Cost of Living

This matter was considered via a report and presentation which the Committee received at its meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022. The report detailed all of the initiatives that the Council was providing to residents in relation to the cost of living situation. Specifically, Members considered what financial support was being made available by the Council for residents impacted by the cost of living crisis and how the support provided by the Council was communicated to eligible residents.

At the meeting, Members had the opportunity to provide feedback and suggest improvements, and a recommendation was made to the Executive Committee regarding seeking external grant funding to enable a borough-wide campaign to subsidise the insulation of poorly insulated dwellings in the private sector.

### HR and Organisational Development / People Strategy / Workforce Strategy - Pre-Decision Scrutiny

This report was pre-scrutinised at the meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023 where it reported that the key aim of the Council's Workforce Strategy 2022-2026 was to have a workforce that was fit for the future and able to deliver the Council Plan and Strategic priorities whilst promoting the wellbeing of the workforce.

Three key themes of the Strategy were outlined as follows:

- Workforce Planning and Talent Management
- Engagement
- Health, Safety and Wellbeing.

The Committee was informed that action plans would be devised and implemented during the course of this Workforce Strategy to ensure that the aims of the new strategy were being implemented in practice.

As part of the discussion the following areas were raised remote working, hot desking policy and key performance indicators (KPIs) that were being developed in relation to the strategy and associated action plans.

### Revisiting Items Identified at the Overview And Scrutiny Training Event held on 6th June 2022

Consideration of this item was a follow up to the previously considered item on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2022. At this meeting Members were asked to decide which of the outstanding items they wished to add to the work programme for the rest of the municipal year.

Members were asked to prioritise the task and finish review they wished to undertake in the first instance, as there was limited Officer resource and time left in the municipal year to undertake a substantive task and finish group review. It was agreed that a Task and Finish Group review of bulky waste collections should be prioritised by the Committee in the first instance and that it was possible to tie this topic together with the issue of fly tipping. Time and resource permitting, the Committee could then investigate launching the other task groups which were previously agreed by the Committee – Health Inequalities within the BME Committee Task Group and the Road Safety and Speeding Task Group.

### Council Motion - Bulky Waste Collection

At this meeting Members were reminded of the original motion in relation to bulky waste proposed at the full Council meeting on 14th November 2022 as follows:

*“Council is concerned about the cost-of-living crisis having a new impact on fly tipping, with the cost of bulky waste collection becoming a disincentive for many residents. Council asks the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to set up a Task and Finish review, to consider the costs, consequences and benefits of a pre-booked, free household bulky waste collection service for those Redditch residents who are low paid, elderly, disabled or in receipt of benefits, which will enable Members to consider options and determine what action, if any, to take.”*

The Council had a duty to provide bulky waste collections for domestic properties, although it was entitled to charge for the collection of some waste dependent on criteria.

It was agreed by Members and Officers that linking the issues of fly tipping and bulky waste collections in one task group review was a sensible proposal. And therefore, a scoping document for the task group would be submitted for approval by the Committee at a meeting later in the municipal year in advance of the launch of the Task Group.

#### Road Safety Task Group

As a result of the previous item in this report it was agreed that the Fly Tipping and Bulky Waste Collection Task Group be launched in the first instance, and the decision on the launch and membership of the Road Safety and Speeding Task Group be deferred to a future meeting of the Committee.

## **8th December 2022**

### Pre-Decision Scrutiny - Appropriation Of Land Off Ipsley Church Lane For Planning Purposes

At this meeting, the Bereavement Services Manager presented a report on the appropriation of Land off Ipsley Church and explained that the report before the Committee detailed the planning designations of open space and primarily open space used within the change of use application.

The Bereavement Services Manager clarified the steps that the Council had taken so far in order to lawfully proceed with the process of appropriation proposal and that the Council also had to consider any objections to the proposed appropriation.

The details of the objections received were summarised and were categorised into 14 categories, with categories 2-14 having been dealt with via the planning application of 13th October 2021. The loss of recreational space was the outstanding



objection that had to be considered in the appropriation process and 60 objections were recorded in this category. However, the Committee were informed that if appropriation was to be approved for this land, it would still be classed as open space under the legislation

During consideration of this item biodiversity and environmental implications of the proposed appropriation were discussed and that a commitment to enhance biodiversity on the site and the wider local area had been made via the planning process; and that there were conditions attached to the planning permission for the land off Ipsley Church Lane to the effect of enhancing biodiversity.

It was also raised at this meeting that since all of the objections had not been made available to Members, they were unable to scrutinise the report sufficiently. However, it was argued that the objections received had been sufficiently summarised in the report and by Officers during the course of the meeting to enable Members to scrutinise the matter.

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**Crime And Disorder Scrutiny Panel – 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2022**

Local authorities were required to have a Committee designated with responsibility to review the work of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and that this Committee must meet at least once a year to discuss the work of the partnership. In Redditch this role was undertaken by the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel, which was a permanent Sub-Committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Panel holds the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (NWCSP) to account for its work in Redditch.

At the meeting of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2022, Members received an update on the work of the Partnership in the Borough in the preceding 12 months. This included an update on new funding to tackle fly-tipping on private land that had been implemented since the last meeting of the panel. In addition to this, information was provided in respect of tools and powers used to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour and the work undertaken by the Community Safety Team in order to carry out one of the responsibilities of the NWCSP, which was to reduce the fear of crime and raise awareness.

There was also a discussion regarding local initiatives, particularly with young people including the Empowering Young People Project, Volunteer it Yourself (VIY), Launch of the W.I.S.E Youth Centre, Community Safety Enhanced Youth Support Workers, The Respect Programme, and the Virtual Decisions Knife Crime Project.

The Community Safety Partnership Manager presents the updates, and the information was always well received by Members, who were grateful for such detailed updates from Officers.

## **TASK GROUPS AND SHORT SHARP REVIEWS**

Task Groups were established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in order to conduct an in-depth review of any service, policy or issue that affected the Borough. During this municipal year there were 2 Task Groups proposed and agreed by Members of the Committee. There was also 1 task group proposed in the 2021/22 municipal year but this had not been launched yet.

### **Road Safety**

The Committee agreed to establish this Task Group at its meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2022, whereby the draft scoping document for the Task Group was also considered.

On 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022, the Committee agreed to prioritise the undertaking of the Bulky Waste and Fly Tipping Task and Finish review in the 2022-23 municipal year. It was suggested that the Road Safety and Speeding Task Group would be launched following the completion of this review.

### **Health Inequalities within the BME Communities in Redditch**

The Committee agreed to launch this Task Group at its meeting of 5<sup>th</sup> September 2022, whereby the scope and objectives of the investigation were also agreed.

On 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022, the Committee agreed to prioritise the undertaking of Bulky Waste and Fly Tipping Task and Finish review in the 2022-23 municipal year. It was agreed that the Health Inequalities within the BME Communities in Redditch Task Group would be launched following the completion of this review.

### **Bulky Waste and Fly Tipping**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to prioritise undertaking a Task and Finish review of this matter during the remainder of the 2022/23 municipal year. This decision was made following on from a Full Council resolution of 14<sup>th</sup> November 2022, whereby the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was asked to set up a Task and Finish review to consider the costs, consequences and benefits of a pre-booked, free household bulky waste collection service for those Redditch residents who were low paid, elderly, disabled or in receipt of benefits.

It was agreed that before embarking on the Task Group review, a presentation on bulky waste collections and fly tipping would be considered by the Committee at its meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023. This would enable Members to better understand the Council's current position on these issues. It was envisaged that meetings of this

task group would commence, once the membership and scope of the Task and Finish review was agreed by the Committee.

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## **WORKING GROUPS**

The Council has two permanent scrutiny working groups, the Budget Scrutiny Working Group, and the Performance Scrutiny Working Group.

### **Budget Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Joanna Kane**

The Budget Scrutiny Working Group held 7 meetings on Microsoft Teams in 2022-2023 recognising the importance of regular scrutiny of the Council's Budget.

During the year the Budget Scrutiny Working Group considered the following matters:

- Financial and Performance Monitoring
- Medium Term Financial Plan – Tranche 1
- Fees and Charges
- Financial Outturn
- Housing Revenue Account
- Council Tax Base
- Finance Recovery report

### **Performance Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Joanna Kane**

The Performance Scrutiny Working Group met several times throughout the municipal year 2022-2023 and with more regularity than the during the previous year.

- Landscaping and Tree Maintenance
- The new Corporate Dashboard
- Energy Advice Services
- Skills in Redditch
- Housing (including Voids)

It was hoped that the regularity of these meetings would continue into the next municipal year, providing Members with a more in-depth knowledge of performance across the Council.

## EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES

### West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Council representative, Councillor Michael Chalk

The Committee had received regular updates from Councillor Chalk, the Council's representative on the West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

During the year Councillor Chalk provided written updates about the work of the Committee and highlighted the following points:

- Skills Budget
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

### Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) – Council Representative, Councillor Michael Chalk.

The Committee had received regular updates from Councillor Chalk about the work of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC). Some of the issues highlighted during the year included:

- Integrated Cares Systems
- Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust including patient flow and bed shortages

The written updates from Councillor Chalk provided useful information of the scrutiny work being undertaken by other authorities across the local area and the Committee were grateful of the time taken by Councillor Chalk in providing these updates.

## CONCLUSION

A significant amount of pre-scrutiny work has been carried out by the Committee throughout the year and as you can see from the report there were fewer Overview items considered by the Committee. The Committee, however, have carried out some constructive scrutiny throughout this municipal year and have considered issues that really mattered to the residents of Redditch.

**The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee express his thanks to all Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, recognising in particular the valuable contribution made by Members through Task Group investigations and on the Budget and Performance Scrutiny Working Groups.**

For any background information on the work of Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Redditch, please visit <https://www.redditchbc.gov.uk/council/the-council.aspx>

Democratic Services, Redditch Borough Council, Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square, Redditch, B98 8AH  
Tel: 01527 64252 Ext 3031 email: [mateusz.sliwinski@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk](mailto:mateusz.sliwinski@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk)

(This form should be completed by sponsoring Member(s), Officers and / or members of the public when proposing an item for Scrutiny).

**Note:** The matters detailed below have not yet received any detailed consideration. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee reserves the right to reject suggestions for scrutiny that fall outside the Borough Council's remit.

Proposer's name and designation		Date of referral	
Proposed topic title			
Link to local priorities including the strategic purposes			
Background to the issue			
Key Objectives  Please keep to SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely)			
How long do you think is needed to complete this exercise? (Where possible please estimate the number of weeks, months and meetings required)			

Please return this form to: Jo Gresham, Democratic Services Officer, Redditch Borough Council, Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square, Redditch, B98 8AH

Email: [joanne.gresham@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk](mailto:joanne.gresham@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk)



# EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE LEADER'S WORK PROGRAMME

**1 February 2023 to 31 May 2023**  
(published as at 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2023)



This Work Programme gives details of items on which key decisions are likely to be taken by the Borough Council's Executive Committee, or full Council, in the coming four months. "Key Decisions" are ones which are likely to:

- (i) result in the Council incurring expenditure, foregoing income or the making of savings in excess of £50,000 or which are otherwise significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
- (ii) be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in the area comprising two or more wards in the Borough;
- (iii) involve any proposal to cease to provide a Council service (other than a temporary cessation of service of not more than 6 months).

If you wish to make representations on the proposed decision you are encouraged to get in touch with the relevant report author as soon as possible before the proposed date of the decision. Contact details are provided. Alternatively, you may write to the Head of Legal, Democratic Services and Property Services, The Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square, Redditch, B98 8AH or e-mail: [democratic@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk](mailto:democratic@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk)

The Executive Committee's meetings are normally held at 6.30pm on Tuesday evenings at the Town Hall. They are open to the public, except when confidential information is being discussed. If you wish to attend for a particular matter, it is advisable to check with the Democratic Services Team on (01527) 64252, ext: 3072 to make sure it is going ahead as planned. If you have any other queries, Democratic Services Officers will be happy to advise you. The full Council meets in accordance the Council's Calendar of Meetings. Meetings commence at 6.30pm.

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

Councillor Matthew Dormer, Leader and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships  
Councillor Nyear Nazir, Deputy Leader  
Councillor Joanne Beecham, Portfolio Holder for Leisure  
Councillor Peter Fleming, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services  
Councillor Anthony Lovell, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change  
Councillor Nyear Nazir, Community Services and Regulatory Services  
Councillor Karen Ashley, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling  
Councillor Craig Warhurst, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Procurement  
Councillor Lucy Harrison  
Councillor Emma Marshall

Decision including Whether it is a key Decision	Decision Taker Date of Decision	Details of Exempt information (if any) and any additional information for noting	Documents submitted to Decision Maker / Background Papers List	Contact for Comments
Asset Management Strategy and investment programme for council housing stock <b>Key:</b> No	Executive 7 Feb 2023 Council 27 Feb 2023		Report of the Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services	Simon Parry, Housing Property Services Manager Tel: 01527 64252
2023/24 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2025/26 (Including Treasury Management Strategy and Capital Programme) <b>Key:</b> No	Executive 7 Feb 2023 Council 27 Feb 2023		Report of the Executive Director of Resources	Peter Carpenter, Interim Section 151 Officer Tel: 01527 64252
Financial and Performance Monitoring Quarter 3 Report <b>Key:</b> No	Executive 7 Feb 2023		Report of the Executive Director, Finance and Resources	Peter Carpenter, Interim Section 151 Officer Tel: 01527 64252
Homelessness Prevention Grant 2023/24 <b>Key:</b> Yes	Executive 7 Feb 2023		Report of the Head of Community and Housing Services	Amanda Delahunty, Housing Strategy and Enabling Officer Tel: (01527) 881269

Decision including Whether it is a key Decision	Decision Taker Date of Decision	Details of Exempt information (if any) and any additional information for noting	Documents submitted to Decision Maker / Background Papers List	Contact for Comments
Housing Policies <b>Key:</b> No	Executive 7 Feb 2023  Council June 2023		Report of the Head of Community and Housing Services	Judith Willis, Head of Community and Housing Services Tel: 01527 64252 ext 3284
Independent Remuneration Panel Report 2023/24 <b>Key:</b> No	Executive 7 Feb 2023  Council 27 Feb 2023		Report of the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services	Darren Whitney, Electoral Services Manager Tel: 01527 882547
Matchborough and Winyates Regeneration Proposals <b>Key:</b> Yes	Executive Not before 7th Feb 2023		Report of the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services	Ostap Paparega, Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration Tel: 01562 732192
Treasury Management Report - Six Month Update <b>Key:</b> No	Executive 7 Feb 2023		Report of the Executive Director of Resources	Peter Carpenter, Interim Section 151 Officer Tel: 01527 64252

Decision including Whether it is a key Decision	Decision Taker Date of Decision	Details of Exempt information (if any) and any additional information for noting	Documents submitted to Decision Maker / Background Papers List	Contact for Comments
Parking Enforcement Service Level Agreement <b>Key: Yes</b>	Executive Not before 7th Feb 2023	This report may contain exempt information which would need to be discussed in private session.	Report of the Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services	Kevin Hirons, Environmental Services Manager Tel: 01527 881705
Pay Policy Statement 2023/24 <b>Key: No</b>	Executive 7 Feb 2023 Council 27 Feb 2023		Report of the Head of Business Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy	Becky Talbot, Human Resources and Development Manager Tel: 01527 64252 ext 3385
Worcestershire Housing Strategy 2040 <b>Key: No</b>	Executive 7 Feb 2023 Council Not before 1st Jun 2023		Report of the Chief Executive	Judith Willis, Head of Community and Housing Services Tel: 01527 64252 ext 3284
Council Tax Resolutions 2023/24 <b>Key: No</b>	Executive 27 Feb 2023 Council 27 Feb 2023		Report of the Executive Director of Resources	Peter Carpenter, Interim Section 151 Officer Tel: 01527 64252

Decision including Whether it is a key Decision	Decision Taker Date of Decision	Details of Exempt information (if any) and any additional information for noting	Documents submitted to Decision Maker / Background Papers List	Contact for Comments
Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2022-23 <b>Key:</b> Yes	Council 27 Feb 2023		Report of the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services	Joanne Gresham, Senior Democratic Services Officer Tel: 01527 64252 Ext: 3031
Compulsory purchase of a long term empty property <b>Key:</b> No	Executive Not before 21st Mar 2023  Council Not before 1st Jun 2023	This report will contain exempt information which will need to be considered in private session.	Report of the Head of Community and Housing Services	Matthew Bough, Housing Policy and Performance Manager Tel: 01527 64252 ext 3120
Decarbonisation of the Council Fleet <b>Key:</b> No	Executive Not before 21st Mar 2023  Council Not before 1st Jun 2023		Report of the Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services	Kevin Hirons, Environmental Services Manager Tel: 01527 881705
Financial Monitoring Report <b>Key:</b> No	Executive 21 Mar 2023		Report of the Executive Director Finance & Resources	Peter Carpenter, Interim Section 151 Officer Tel: 01527 64252

Decision including Whether it is a key Decision	Decision Taker Date of Decision	Details of Exempt information (if any) and any additional information for noting	Documents submitted to Decision Maker / Background Papers List	Contact for Comments
Quarterly Risk Update <b>Key:</b> No	Executive 21 Mar 2023		Report of the Executive Director of Resources	Peter Carpenter, Interim Section 151 Officer Tel: 01527 64252
Review of Governance Arrangements for Rubicon Leisure Limited <b>Key:</b> No	Executive Not before 21st Mar 2023  Council Not before 1st Jun 2023			Claire Felton, Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services Tel: 01527 881429
Environment Act - Changes to Waste Services - Implications <b>Key:</b> No	Executive Not before 1st Jun 2023  Council Not before 1st Jun 2023		Report of the Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services	Guy Revans, Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services Tel: 01527 64252 ext 3292
Future Plans for Auxerre House <b>Key:</b> No	Executive Not before 1st Jun 2023  Council Not before 1st Jun 2023	This report may contain exempt information which would need to be discussed by the Executive Committee in private session.	Report of the Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services	Simon Parry, Housing Property Services Manager Tel: 01527 64252

<b>Decision including Whether it is a key Decision</b>	<b>Decision Taker Date of Decision</b>	<b>Details of Exempt information (if any) and any additional information for noting</b>	<b>Documents submitted to Decision Maker / Background Papers List</b>	<b>Contact for Comments</b>
Playing Pitch and Built Facilities Strategies <b>Key:</b> No	Executive Not before 1st Jun 2023		Report of the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services	Jonathan Cochrane, Development Services Manager Tel: 01527 63051

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## Executive Committee

Tuesday, 25th October,  
2022

### MINUTES

#### Present:

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

#### Officers:

Ruth Bamford, Peter Carpenter, Jonathan Cochrane, Amanda Delahunty, Claire Felton, Sue Hanley, Michelle Howell, Ishrat Karimi-Fini, Guy Revans and Judith Willis

#### Principal Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley-Hill

#### 64. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Craig Warhurst.

#### 65. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 66. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised that due to the length of the Leisure Strategy, he had agreed that paper copies of the full length report should not be issued to every Member. However, paper copies were placed in each of the group rooms and the full report in the Additional Papers 1 pack had been made available to access on the Council's website and on the modern.gov app. The Leader also suggested that, in line with the Council's commitment to reduce carbon emissions and to support action on the green thread, Members should increasingly refer to electronic copies of agenda packs rather than using paper copies.

Chair

Members were asked to note that at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2022, Members had pre-scrutinised the Leisure Strategy, the Climate Change Strategy, the Voluntary Bodies Scheme and the Asset Strategy, which were due to be debated at the Executive Committee meeting. The Committee had made recommendations on all of these items which he urged the Executive Committee to refer to during the meeting.

**67. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED that**

**the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2022 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.**

**68. LOCAL LETTINGS PLANS**

The Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager presented a report on the subject of the Local Lettings Plan Policy.

The Executive Committee was informed that the Council had a Housing Allocations Policy, which informed decisions about social housing allocation in the Borough. Local Lettings Plans could be utilised by Councils to vary the allocations scheme, which might be considered desirable by the local authority for a variety of reasons, including to ensure a greater mix of social housing in local developments or to address Anti Social Behaviour. Social housing landlords would be consulted on the plans, including Redditch Borough Council as a social housing provider. Relevant partners, including West Mercia Police and the Community Safety team, had been consulted in developing the policy to ensure that the process could meet the community's needs.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) had been produced when developing the Local Lettings Policy and this would remain a live, working document. Additional EIAs would need to be developed for each Local Lettings Plan as and when these were proposed in the future.

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) **the Local Lettings Plan Policy be approved; and**
- 2) **authority be delegated to the Head of Community and Housing Services, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Procurement, to agree and adopt future local lettings policies.**

**69. LEISURE STRATEGY**

The Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services presented the Leisure and Cultural Strategy for the Executive Committee's consideration.

The Executive Committee was advised that external consultants had been commissioned to work on the Leisure Strategy. The Leisure Strategy was designed to provide strategic direction for the Council's approach to delivering and supporting leisure and cultural activities and services in the Borough up to 2032. The strategy comprised a number of different parts, including the main Leisure and Cultural Strategy and two other strategies which underpinned this document, including the Arts and Culture Strategy and the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy. Two further leisure strategies were due to be presented for the consideration of the Executive Committee in 2023 on the subjects of built facilities strategy and playing pitches strategy.

In developing the Leisure Strategy, Officers and the consultants had identified a number of actions that could be taken within budget to enhance leisure and cultural service provision in the Borough. These actions were the subject of recommendations detailed in a table within the Leisure Strategy. Any actions that would require additional financial expenditure would need to be outlined in business cases and presented for Members' consideration.

The vision of the Leisure and Cultural Strategy was to ensure that communities were physically active and connected to leisure and cultural spaces in the Borough. There was the potential for participation in Leisure and Cultural activities to have a positive impact on people's health and wellbeing.

During consideration of this item, Members noted that at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 20<sup>th</sup>

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October 2022, Members had pre-scrutinised this report. At the end of the debate, Members had proposed the following recommendation on the Leisure Strategy:

*“O&S to advise the executive on Social Prescribing as there is no mention in the strategy of the Council working with the NHS, CCG and Rubicon. Other Councils (e.g. Cannock Chase) have such arrangements where patients who have recently been discharged from hospital with e.g. Stroke/ Heart Conditions can greatly benefit from gentle exercise. I think this strategy has missed an opportunity and I ask executive to consider including such a strategy. The benefits are many to individuals and the costs are low to the NHS.”*

The Executive Committee considered this recommendation and in doing so noted that there would be some benefit to making reference to social prescribing in the Leisure Strategy. However, Members concurred that the recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in its current wording would be difficult to implement. With that in mind, the Executive Committee agreed that an amendment should instead be made to the end of paragraph 1.7 of the Leisure Strategy, as detailed below:

*“The priority of Improved Health and Wellbeing is key to this Leisure and Culture Strategy. The addendum to the Council Plan 2019-2024 states that Redditch Borough Council will work with communities to help them identify and develop their strengths. We will look at ways to encourage physical movement into people’s everyday routines. We will prioritise aligning leisure and culture services with the emerging Integrated Care System (ICS) in order to best achieve this including the role that social prescribing can play to support health and wellbeing.”*

Members subsequently discussed the recommendations detailed in the table within the Leisure and Culture Strategy in detail. Questions were raised about the seventh recommendation, which referred to the planning development process and Members queried how the Leisure Strategy could shape the planning process. The Executive Committee was advised that, in relation to planning and heritage matters, there were limits to the amount of influence that the Leisure Strategy could have on the planning development process. The Council’s Local Plan also had implications in this context and Members could influence the

content of the Local Plan, including through attendance at meetings of the Planning Advisory Panel.

Reference was made to plans to develop a partnership with the National Trust, working on the 8 Hills Project and Members questioned what this would entail. Officers explained that the National Trust had received funding from the Government to create a regional park in eight relatively local hills, including the Clent Hills and Lickey Hills. Research suggested that residents in the region, including in Redditch, would be more likely to visit these hills should the area be designated as a regional park and this could have a positive impact on their health and wellbeing.

Consideration was also given to progress that was being achieved by the Council in working towards green flag status for parks in the Borough. The Executive Committee advised that work was being undertaken to enable four parks in the Borough to achieve green flag status over the following five year period. The first park that the Council would aim to help to achieve green flag status would be Morton Stanley Park, which had been subject to a number of changes in recent years, including the introduction of a new café in the park. A submission would be made in the green flag process in January 2023 and it was likely that the outcome of this submission would be confirmed in September 2023.

Members also noted that the sixteenth recommendation referred to a feasibility study being undertaken in respect of the allotments and Officers were asked to confirm when this would take place and whether allotment holders would be consulted as part of the process. Officers advised that at a corporate level there was already work ongoing to review the allotments, taking into account the approach in place at other local authorities. Consideration would subsequently be given to a pilot project.

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) subject to amending paragraph 1.7 to add the line “including the role that social prescribing can play to support health and wellbeing”, the Leisure and Culture Strategy and its supporting documentation, the Arts and Culture Strategy and the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy, are endorsed; and**

- 2) **that delegated authority is given to the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure services, to implement the following Recommendations 1, 2,8,9,10,11,12 13,15,16,17,20,22,24,25, 40,41, 42,43,44,45,46 and 47 as set out in the Leisure and Culture Strategy.**

## **70. CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY**

The Head of Community and Housing Services presented the Climate Change Strategy / Carbon Reduction Implementation Plan for Members' consideration.

The Executive Committee was informed that the strategy would apply over the following three year period, although would be considered twice a year by the Climate Change Cross Party Working Group and would be reviewed annually. The strategy detailed how the Council was aiming to achieve net zero by 2040.

Following the presentation of the report, Members discussed the content and in doing so commented that the strategy was necessary in a context in which the country was increasingly experiencing extreme weather patterns and other impacts of climate change. Reference was made to recent work undertaken by Members who were also serving as County Councillors, in which Worcestershire County Council had been benchmarking its progress in tackling climate change and it was suggested that Redditch Borough Council was performing well compared to other local authorities in the country. Members also welcomed the transparency of the report, in terms of highlighting both action taken to date and forthcoming challenges.

During consideration of this item, reference was made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's pre-scrutiny of the report at a meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2022. At the meeting, reference had been made to actions, such as the installation of solar panels, which could help to reduce climate emissions. Members were asked to note that this would require action in relation to the Council's planning process which could be investigated further through work on the Local Plan. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had concluded by endorsing the Climate Change

Strategy and Action Plan and Members thanked the Committee for their contribution.

**RECOMMENDED that**

**the Council's Carbon Reduction Strategy and Action Plan be endorsed and adopted.**

**71. VOLUNTARY BODIES SCHEME**

The Head of Community and Housing Services presented a report on the subject of the Voluntary Bodies Scheme for Members' consideration.

The Executive Committee was advised that the Council's existing Voluntary Sector grants scheme was due to expire in March 2023. For the new scheme, Officers were proposing that the concessionary rents element of the existing scheme should be removed and that there should be a budget of £100,000 from which Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) groups could apply for funding, together with a £50,000 grant for Financial Advice and Problem Solving. In addition, it was suggested that the income from the community lottery scheme should be allocated to the VCS grants budget.

A consultation exercise had been undertaken with VCS groups. In the feedback received from VCS organisations, it had been consistently reported that groups needed funding to help cover both core costs and the costs of delivering new projects. Four options had been identified for the VCS grants scheme moving forward and the feedback from VCS groups had indicated that the second option would be appreciated the most by the sector. This would entail implementing the proposed changes to the scheme, together with allowing two types of application to be submitted; the first for smaller grants valued at between £500 and £2,000 and the second for larger grants valued at over £2,000 up to £10,000.

During consideration of this item, reference was made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2022 at which the report had been pre-scrutinised. The Committee had concluded by recommending that the Council should adopt the second option. The Executive Committee discussed this recommendation and in doing so noted that this corresponded with

the feedback that had been received from VCS organisations. Taking this into account, the value of the work delivered by VCS groups in the local community, and the potential additional flexibility that would be created from offering two different types of application, the Executive Committee also agreed to support the second option in the report.

**RECOMMENDED that**

- 1) **the funding for the VCS Grants Scheme be agreed for a further three year period in line with option 2**

**RESOLVED that**

- 2) **delegated authority be given to the Head of Community and Housing Services, following consultation with the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships, to agree a revised VCS Grants Policy in accordance with the proposals within this report.**

**72. ASSET STRATEGY**

The Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services presented a report on the subject of the Council's Asset Disposal Strategy.

Members were advised that the Council needed to manage a range of assets in a way that supported the authority's strategic purposes and also achieved best value. Whilst the Energy Performance Regulations 2012 currently required all non-domestic rental buildings to have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of E, by 2026 the Council would need to ensure all assets had an EPC rating of at least C and by 2030 they would need to achieve a B rating. Work was being undertaken by the Council to improve the EPC ratings of Council assets that were rented out. However, the financial costs and other wider considerations, such as the value of those assets, needed to be taken into account when determining how the assets should be managed and whether disposal would be appropriate.

During consideration of this item, Members noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had pre-scrutinised the report at a meeting that took place on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2022. Members had endorsed the



recommendation detailed in the report. In addition, a request had also been made by some Members of the Committee for all reports concerning the potential disposal of assets to be scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to a decision being taken by the Executive Committee. Members discussed this suggestion and in doing so noted that all of the business due to be transacted at meetings of the Executive Committee was advertised in advance on the Executive Committee's Work Programme, copies of which were considered at every meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could therefore identify items for pre-scrutiny, which could include items proposing the disposal of assets, on an ongoing basis.

Members subsequently discussed the content of the report and in doing so commented that the Council had a responsibility to ensure that the authority's assets were managed effectively. The condition of assets needed to be monitored and Members commented that if the condition deteriorated this could impact on the value of those assets.

**RESOLVED that**

**the Asset Disposal Strategy be approved for implementation.**

**73. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2023/24 TO 2025/26 -  
UPDATE**

The Interim Section 151 Officer presented an update on the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2023/24 to 2025/26.

The Executive Committee was advised that the Council would run the MTFP process in two tranches in the build up to setting the budget in February 2023. The Council set an MTFP every year, which covered a three-year period, with the final Council Tax Resolutions being approved by Council in February.

Work on the budget was being undertaken in a challenging context, due to the following factors:

- Starting the process from an initial deficit position from the 2022/23 MTFP.
- This being the first year that the Government would start to pay for the Covid-19 pandemic.

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- The cost of living crisis.
- Changes at a national level, in respect of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.
- The Council having limited Reserves and Balances.

As such, it was considered prudent to split the budget process into two tranches. The initial tranche would seek to close as much of the deficit as possible using information known as at the end of September 2022 and seeking approval for those savings to be implemented at Council in January 2023. The second tranche would be considered after the Christmas break, which would be approved in February 2023. This would take into account the Local Government Settlement, the final detail for which was not due to be known until early January 2023.

The starting position for the 2023/24 MTFP, was to consider the three year “gap” that needed to be bridged for the Council’s budget to come back into a balanced sustainable position. The revised gap was because the MTFP had been rolled on a year to include 2025/26. During the period, the gap was expected to increase from £949,000 in 2023/24 to £1.04 million in 2025/26. In addition, there were unallocated savings in the existing MTFP. These would need to be addressed as part of the ongoing 2022/23 budget setting process and would be set out in the Q2 Finance and Performance Report.

The emerging national picture, including the expected settlement dates, remained unclear by the date of the Executive Committee meeting. There was the potential that clarity would be provided in the Chancellor’s statement on the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022. Should this proceed on this date, it was likely that the Local Government Financial Settlement would be confirmed in the final week before Christmas, like previous years. There was also uncertainty about whether Councils would be offered a single year settlement or multiple year settlement. However, in the current national context, it was suggested that it might be better for Councils to have a single year settlement.

In reviewing the initial tranche, Officers had made a number of base assumptions, including the following:

- That Council Tax would increase by the maximum 1.99 per cent possible without triggering a local referendum and that

there would be the ability to increase this by £104,000 from 2024/25.

- An assumption that there would be no growth in the business rates base. Members were asked to note that this was being reviewed in light of the post Covid-19 environment.
- An assumption that the Council would receive no New Homes Bonus (NHB) funding from 2023/24 onwards.
- An assumption there would be no local services grant from 2023/24 onwards
- Assumptions about the Local Government Pension Fund for Worcestershire, taking account of the latest triennial valuation which was received in September 2022.
- The severe impact of increasing inflation on Council budgets including:
  - the £1,925 proposed increase to staff wages, which would cost the Council an additional £928,000.
  - 10% inflation on contracts and transport, which would cost an additional £251,000.
  - An assumption that there would be at least a 200 per cent increase on utilities costs, representing an extra £1.14 million.
- Assumptions regarding increases to fees and charges of 10 per cent, with some exceptions, to cover increasing costs due to inflation.

From a strategic perspective, the Council had come into the 2023/24 budget process with a number of conflicting issues. These included:

- An ongoing budget deficit position from the 2022/23 MTFP of £1.0 million.
- Significant inflationary increases due to the cost of living crisis.
- Limited reserves to call on to reduce any deficit (the existing MTFP general fund balances were due to fall to £0.228 million by 2025/26 should no action be taken). Earmarked reserves were valued at just under £7 million.
- Increases in Council Tax had to be limited to 1.99 per cent or £5, which was significantly lower than the rate of inflation.

The Council needed to move to financial sustainability over the timescale of the next MTFP. Given the magnitude of the savings to be made, Members were informed that it was not prudent to expect the movement to sustainability to happen by 2023/24. However, the level of reserves and balances presently held suggested that

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moving to sustainability by 2025/26 would be too late and would leave inadequate resources for any emergency situations. As such, the strategy needed to move the Council to financial sustainability by the 2024/25 financial year.

To get to this position, there would be the need for investment and possibly the requirement to fund redundancies (both from reserves and balances). For both these requirements, there would be outputs from the Council having to implement changes to the way it operated in order to continue to be a viable entity going forward and this would take 18 months to implement fully.

Tranche two of the budget would adjust for any funding that the Government would provide and also look at other options to close any deficit should the Government settlement not bridge any resultant gap. Initiatives that would be assessed in tranche two, for which more time was required to analyse the individual options, included:

- Ensuring grants were maximised.
- Ensuring agency work reflected the income provided for its delivery.
- Minimisation of Bed and Breakfast temporary accommodation costs.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the Council's largest contracts.
- Maximising the efficiency of the Council's refuse fleet.
- Reviewing the location and effectiveness of the Council's depot.
- Assessing the Council's leisure and cultural strategy in terms of affordability.
- Reviewing recharging mechanisms between Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District Councils for appropriateness.
- Rationalisation of back office services as the Council increasingly made use of additional technology for service delivery.

Many of these initiatives would require investment, for which the only source of funding was reserves. Key areas of investment would be documentation of processes, investment in automation and robotic processes as well as possible redundancy costs arising from restructures.

For tranche one, overall, the Council had identified £1.5 million of savings. This more than offset the £1.0 million budget deficit. However, when inflationary pressures, not including utilities costs, were added to the calculations, the Council moved to a deficit position of £599,000 which reduced to £125,000 over the three-year period. Officers were reviewing utilities costs separately, due to the potential for significant Government support to be made available in future. Should this not materialise, then the overall deficit position would increase to £1.7 million and then reduce to £1.3 million on present working assumptions.

The existing MTFP had anticipated that general fund balances would reduce from £2.292 million to £228,000 by 2024/25, should no action be taken to address the budget gap. However, this was not a sustainable level of general fund reserves and Members were advised that a level of 5 per cent of gross budget was usually advised, representing £2.5 million for Redditch Borough Council.

The Council also had earmarked reserves which were held for specific purposes. These earmarked reserves were valued at £6.666 million in total. All reserves would be reviewed for their ongoing applicability.

The Council, over a number of years, had not spent its capital programme allocations in year. A review had therefore been launched of all schemes that had not started, both from 2022/23 and from previous years, as well as schemes that had yet to start. This would assess deliverability and links to the Council's revised strategic purposes. Any scheme that had not yet started, unless this was grant funded or in receipt of S106 funding, would be required to rebid for funds as part of the 2023/24 budget process. There would be the need to add items to the capital programme (which would be finalised over the following couple of weeks) to include sums for ICT hardware, such as laptops and property maintenance budgets, and significant work was required to ensure energy efficiency compliance.

The priority in the capital programme was for the Council to spend its grant funding. By the date of the Executive Committee meeting, the Council was in receipt of the following capital grant funding:

- Towns Funding of £17.2 million.
- UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) of £2.4 million.

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- A bid had been submitted for Levelling Up Funding of £20 million for the redevelopment of Matchborough and Winyates District Centres.

This funding was time limited, and all needed to be spent by 2026, except for funding for the UKSPF, which needed to be spent by 2025. Therefore, consideration needed to be given to what resources would be available to manage any significant capital spend above these schemes.

In terms of the robustness statement for the Council, the MTFP highlighted that the current financial position was untenable without some form of intervention. Whilst a balanced budget for 2022/23 was approved with the use of reserves and balances in February 2022, the Council was forecasting a £1.7 million overspend in 2023/24, due to the additional demands placed on the authority by the present rates of inflation, which in turn would require the Council to utilise the remaining available reserves and balances to fund these pressures unless other action was taken.

Given all the uncertainty, Officers had made assumptions based on the best available information to the Council at the time. Work would continue in validating all assumptions, robustly challenging estimates and ensuring the delivery of existing saving plans. Updates would also be included in tranche two of the MTFP and balanced budget setting process.

Following the presentation of the report, Members discussed the content and as part of this process commented that developments at a national level were clearly having a significant impact on the Council's financial position as well as the potential to plan for the future. The Executive Committee noted that it was the collective responsibility of all Portfolio Holders to work closely with their lead Heads of Service to identify further savings that could be made. Members also concurred that, given the number of variables and the level of uncertainty, a one year settlement from the Government would be preferable at this time.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1) that the inputs into the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan as at the start of October 2022, and the associated risks and opportunities, be endorsed;**

- 2) to note that these inputs have been used, along with the 2022/23-24/25 Medium Term Financial Plan agreed by Council in February 2022, to project an initial “gap” to be closed;
- 3) to note that an initial tranche of savings proposals, as set out in the associated Savings Proposal Document, was published on the 16<sup>th</sup> October and any feedback will be considered by Executive Committee in December 2022 and at Council in January 2023; and
- 4) to note that tranche two of this process will add further information such as the Local Government Settlement to give a final financial position for the Council.

#### **74. FEES AND CHARGES 2023/24**

The Interim Section 151 Officer presented the Fees and Charges 2023/24 report for the Executive Committee’s consideration.

Members were informed that the MTFP was being prepared on the basis that additional income would be generated from fees and charges. The process being followed for the review of income to be realised from 1st April 2023 included an assessment of each fee to identify how it met the Council’s strategic purposes and the level of increase that was proposed as well as taking account of present economic conditions, including inflation running at over 10 per cent. The levels of increase had been based on a robust estimate of the impact of cost increases and demand within the services and the Council’s overall financial position. This included assessing the affordability of any of these increases to residents and customers.

The Council’s proposal was to increase all fees and charges by 10 per cent, with some exceptions. The 10 per cent increase had been applied to contributions and fees and charges budgets and not to Income from Service Level Agreements (SLAs), not to the Lifeline Service, where charges were set statutorily, and not to Regulatory Services, where a 5 per cent increase to fees had been proposed for all Councils forming part of Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) to ensure consistency across the county. In addition, higher increases were proposed for Dial a Ride and Shopmobility, at 35 per cent.

The estimated growth in income generated from the proposed increases would rise from £339,000 in 2022/23 to £342,000 in 2025/26. Should these increases be agreed, these figures would be incorporated into the first tranche of the MTFP. Increases did not apply to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Rents, which would be addressed in a separate report later in the municipal year.

Following the presentation of the report, Members discussed the proposal to increase fees and charges in general by 10 per cent, with a few exceptions. Members commented that there was the potential in some cases that a 10 per cent increase might not cover the Council's costs involved in delivering those services, given the potential impact of inflation. Officers were urged to review fees and charges carefully on an ongoing basis and to report back to Members should further increases to fees be required.

**RECOMMENDED that**

**all of the proposed fees and charges for 2023/24 be approved.**

**75. QUARTERLY RISK UPDATE**

The Interim Section 151 Officer presented the Quarterly Risk Update report for Members' consideration.

The Executive Committee was informed that progress had been made in relation to the initial action plan for risk management that had been considered by the Audit, Governance and Standards and the Executive Committees in July. This included:

- An initial Officer Risk Board meeting had taken place on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2022 and two further meetings had taken place on 22<sup>nd</sup> June and the 21<sup>st</sup> September, helping to embed the process.
- Each department had nominated a representative to a Council Risk Board. These representatives met on a quarterly basis and reported back to their management teams.
- Each department was due to complete an updated Risk Register by April. This report would be the second update of the Risk Register, following initial re-baselining in April 2022.
- The Audit, Governance and Standards Committee, at a meeting in April 2022, had received a verbal update on progress. Subsequently, the Committee had reviewed the Risk



# Executive Committee

Tuesday, 25th October, 2022

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Register in July 2022 and was due to receive a further update in October. These reports had also been presented for the consideration of the Executive Committee.

- The Corporate Management Team (CMT) had been updated at a meeting on 13th April 2022 on progress and were presented with an initial draft Corporate Risk Register.
- The Officer Group was updating the Risk Register and formally reporting to CMT on this subject on a quarterly basis. These quarterly updates had happened on the 29<sup>th</sup> June and the 28<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

The total number of departmental risks had reduced from 96, as reported previously, to 83 by the end of September 2022. There remained some risks that were considered to be more concerning. This included:

- Performance data for the Revenues team was not considered to be robust.
- Failure to identify, maintain and test adequate disaster recovery arrangements for IT software.
- The system functionality for managing records from an ICT perspective.
- Within Housing, a failure to meet Care Quality Commission (CQC) requirements at St David's House.

All the items on the Risk Register had been reviewed by the risk champions and respective Departmental Management Teams in each Service Area, as required by the Risk Board. Risks were being reviewed departmentally on a monthly basis across all services (with one exception in August 2022). Service representatives continued to challenge individual items to ensure that all controls and assurances were properly monitored and assured.

The Officer Risk Board had reviewed risks using a new definition of what constituted a corporate risk. These corporate risks had also been reviewed by CMT, and one extra corporate risk had been added since the previous review of the risk register. This related to risks involved in the delivery of the Levelling Up, UKSPF and Town's Fund projects within the timescales set by the Government. Members were asked to note that many Councils were competing for the same contractors to deliver these works in tight timescales and this could impact on the feasibility of meeting those deadlines.

Members welcomed the report and the work that had been undertaken by the Council in respect of risk management during the year. Reference was made to the availability of contractors to work on large infrastructure projects and Members suggested that demand had potentially peaked and was even starting to decline, which might make it easier for the Council to secure contractors to deliver works in the timescales required by the Government.

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) **the present list of Corporate Risks be approved; and**
- 2) **the progress made on the Action Plan approved by CMT on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2022 be noted.**

**76. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Executive Committee was advised that there were no minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration on this occasion.

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

The Chair confirmed that there were no referrals from either the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or any of the Executive Advisory Panels on this occasion.

**78. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT**

The following verbal updates were provided on the Executive Advisory Panels and other groups:

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

Councillor Lovell explained that he was hoping to arrange for a meeting of the Climate Change Cross Party Working Group to take place shortly. During this meeting, Members would be invited to consider further information about the climate change implications of the planning process.

# Executive Committee

Tuesday, 25th October, 2022

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

The Executive Committee was advised that a meeting of the Constitutional Review Working Party was in the process of being organised and it was likely that this would take place in November 2022.

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

Councillor Nazir confirmed that there were no updates from the Corporate Parenting Board on this occasion.

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

Councillor Dormer explained that the latest meeting of the Member Support Steering Group had had to be rescheduled as it had not been quorate on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2022. The meeting was now due to take place on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2022.

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

Members were informed that there had been no meetings of the Planning Advisory Panel since the previous meeting of the Executive Committee.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm  
and closed at 7.41 pm

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## **Executive Committee**

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Tuesday, 6th December,  
2022

### **MINUTES**

#### **Present:**

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), and Councillors Karen Ashley, Joanne Beecham, Peter Fleming, Lucy Harrison, Anthony Lovell, Emma Marshall and Craig Warhurst

#### **Officers:**

Peter Carpenter, Kevin Dicks, Claire Felton, Kevin Hiron, Matthew Mead, Deb Poole and Becky Talbot

#### **Democratic Services Officers:**

Jo Gresham

#### **79. APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Nyear Nazir.

#### **80. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **81. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Leader advised that during the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022, Members pre-scrutinised the Workforce Strategy which was due to be debated at the Executive Committee meeting. The Committee had endorsed the recommendation in the report. Members were urged to refer to this when debating this item.

#### **82. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED that**

Chair

**the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2022 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.**

**83. HR AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT / PEOPLE STRATEGY**

The Head of Transformation & Organisational Development and Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager presented the HR and Organisational Development / People Strategy for the Executive Committee's consideration.

The Executive Committee was advised that the strategy set out the Council's aspiration for the Council's workforce now and for the future. It was reported that the HR and Organisational Development / People Strategy was designed to ensure that the right people with the right skills were in the right place within the workforce.

In developing the HR and Organisational Development / People Strategy, Officers had outlined three key themes. These were as follows:

1. Workforce Planning and Talent Management – this included how the workforce were recruited and retained.
2. Engagement - this included how the workforce could be motivated.
3. Health, Safety and Wellbeing – this included how to provide a safe and healthy workplace for Council staff.

Members were informed of the importance of a diverse workforce, and that the HR and Organisational Development / People Strategy took this into account in the hope that this would produce a workforce that better understood customers' needs.

During consideration of the report Members were pleased to see that wellbeing had been given such a high priority within the HR and Organisational Development / People Strategy. It was noted that showing an interest in the wellbeing of people was important as the biggest asset to an organisation was its people, and looking after their wellbeing would help to get the best out of staff. It was also noted that the work being undertaken in culture and engagement would also motivate staff and was fundamental to the success of a

workforce. In addition to this, Members expressed that it was pleasing to see that work was actively being undertaken to attract younger people to the Council and that planning, and succession plans were in place.

**RESOLVED that**

**The approach taken by the Chief Executive, as Head of Paid Service, to address the Workforce Strategy be endorsed.**

**84. INTRODUCTION OF VIRTUAL PARKING PERMITS FOR REDDITCH AND OFF STREET PARKING ORDER FOR STAFF CAR PARKS**

The Environmental Services Manager presented the report on the subject of Introduction of Virtual parking Permits for Redditch and off street parking order for staff car parks. Prior to consideration, Officers informed Members that there were two errors on pages 48 and 52 of the Equality Impact Assessment appendix and that two extra rows within the table should have been removed prior to publication.

It was reported to Members that the Council had operated a Residents' Parking Scheme (RPS) since 2009 with an average number of 550 permits issued each year. Members were informed that currently the permits were printed, laminated and posted or emailed to residents for printing and the permit displayed in the windscreen in order to avoid a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN). However, if the virtual parking permit system was agreed this process would effectively be eliminated. In addition to this, residents would be able to update their details through the online Mii Permit App. It was reported that this system had been successfully implemented in across the County in Worcester City, Wyre Forest and Bromsgrove and would certainly be beneficial in light of the shared future use of the Town Hall and Trafford Car Parks with the NHS.

The Executive Committee was advised that if agreed, it was hoped that the virtual permits would go live for staff car parks on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 and 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 for residents' virtual parking permits. Members were advised that residents who qualified for the virtual parking permits, would be provided with information on how to access and use the Mii permit scheme and open evenings would be

arranged prior to the launch for any residents who required additional assistance.

During consideration of this item, it was reiterated by Members that support would be provided to residents during the transition to the virtual parking permits.

**RESOLVED that**

**the Council adopts a Virtual Parking Permit system for all Residents' Parking Schemes and Town Hall Staff Car Parks, including adding these latter car parks to the existing Off-Street Parking Order.**

**85. IMPROVEMENTS TO VEHICULAR ENTRY AND EXIT ARRANGEMENTS, ARROW VALLEY CAR PARK, BATTENS DRIVE**

The Environmental Services Manager was invited to present the Improvements to Vehicular Entry and Exit Arrangements, Arrow Valley Car Park, Battens Drive report.

Members were advised that the new Lidl retail store located on Battens Drive, Redditch shared access with Arrow Valley Country Park. It was noted that this current format was not ideal. The Executive Committee were informed that Officers had negotiated with the consultants for Lidl, the Woodbine Group Ltd, that these access arrangements be improved. As part of negotiations regarding an easement located on Council land, the Woodbine Group Ltd had agreed to provide funding for changes to access arrangements and Members were advised that the monies had already been received by the Council.

During consideration of this report, it was discussed that the outcome had been a result of Officers within Environmental Services and Leisure Services working together to progress these plans. It was highlighted that these changes would improve safety in terms of access. It was noted, however, that a number of parking spaces would need to be removed from Arrow Valley Park as a result of the new access arrangements. There was a suggestion from Members that perhaps a plan could be implemented in the future to replace any lost spaces.



**RECOMMENDED that**

**A budget of £28.3k be added to the 2022/2023 Capital Programme to be funded from monies already received from Woodbine Group Ltd in order to pay for the improvement works set out in this report.**

**86. FINANCIAL AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT - QUARTER 2 2022-23**

The Interim Director of Finance presented the Financial and Performance Monitoring Report - Quarter 2 2022-23 and in doing so explained that this was the second of such reports presented to Members during this municipal year.

The Executive Committee were advised that in Q1 2022/23 the budget had included £595k of organisational cross-cutting efficiency targets which had not been allocated to services. The projected figure at Q2 was reported as a £369k overspend. It was noted, however that this overspend did not take into account the pay award which had been agreed by employers at £1,925 per pay point. This pay award would result in an extra £700k of pressure on the Councils' finances and as it was not funded would have to be funded from reserves.

In terms of Capital Monitoring, it was reported to the Executive Committee that projects included in the Capital Programme of £4.1m approved in March 2022 were moving forward. Furthermore, Members were advised that as at Q2 the overall spend was £1.5m of the £4.1m overall budget.

Members were advised that £15.2m of spending would be available as a result of the Towns Fund. In addition to this, it was hoped that the outcome of the Levelling Up 2 funding application would soon be available. Members were informed that the Towns Board had recently met regarding the UK Shared Prosperity funding.

During the presentation of this report Members were reminded that as previously reported any projects that had not been started in Q1 would have to be reviewed. This would allow resource to be allocated as necessary to the Towns Fund and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund projects which were a priority and needed to be delivered within a specific time limit.

Members were informed that one of the recommendations contained within the report, if agreed, would result in the allocation £150k of funding split between HR and ICT. The funding would be used to clear any current backlogs in HR, and to invest in automated and robotics projects in ICT in order to provide more streamlined processes in the future and deliver savings to the Council.

In respect of the HRA, it was reported to Members that currently there was a surplus in the region of £141k which would be transferred to HRA Balances. In addition, Officers noted that its Capital Programme was £10.1m against £14.m budget. Members were reminded that this was a result of a number of projects that had only recently been through the procurement process and that spending would catch up at the beginning of the next financial year.

The Interim Director of Finance advised that the report set out the second series of Performance Indicators for the Council. The areas of collections rates were highlighted for Members' attention, and it was noted that the collection rates on Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates were below expected levels. Officers noted that this was expected to continue as a result of the current cost of living crisis.

During discussion of this item Members noted that this was a robust and comprehensive report. Further clarification was requested in respect of the collection rates and Members were keen that any debt management schemes be signposted to local residents. It was confirmed that there were schemes in operation and that the Council, could arrange payment plans for residents who required assistance. In addition to this, it was noted there had been communications produced that contained information of support available during the cost of living crisis. Furthermore, Members were advised that the new Civica Housing system that had recently been implemented would enable the Council to work more proactively with its tenants.

There was a discussion regarding the impact of inflation and Members highlighted the difficulty in predicting what could happen in the future and the importance of remaining cautious when managing the budgets in such an uncertain landscape. Another area that was highlighted by Members was the potential that a

higher number of residents may require housing support from the Council in the future due to the cost of living crisis. It was reported that £263k had already been provided in respect of this area and that more funding may be available in the future.

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) the current financial position in relation to Revenue and Capital Budgets for the period July to September 2022 be noted; and**
- 2) the Q2 Performance data for the Period July to September 2022 be noted; and**
- 3) That £150,000 is allocated from the Financial Services Reserve to fund cross council improvements in HR and ICT.**

**87. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2023/24 TO 2025/26 - UPDATE**

The Interim Director of Finance provided the Executive Committee with the Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2025/26 – Update.

As Members were already aware, the Council's budget was being delivered in two tranches for this financial year. The first tranche had been published on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2022 and had identified over £1.5m worth of savings. In addition to this, it was reported that as detailed in the previous report, that £400k of unallocated savings had been addressed. It had been hoped that more detail would be available from Government, however at the time of the meeting the details of Local Government Settlement was not available and would not be until the final week in December 2022, much later than in previous years. It had been recognised by Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) that this would make the budget setting difficult for local authorities and an update on the provisional Settlement would be provided imminently by DLUHC.

Although there were a number of areas that were still to be confirmed there were some known areas within the budget setting process. These were the potential to increase Council Tax by 1% providing £70k. In addition to this, the Council no longer were

required to pay National Insurance contributions of 1.25% on all salaries. The Government had reported that a cap would be placed on rents at 7% and further detail would be made available in a future Executive Committee report. In addition to this, the Government had announced £13b worth of funding for protection of rate payers alongside a further £1b worth of Household Support funding.

Inflation was again highlighted during the presentation of this report and Members were informed that the Council was being extremely cautious in terms of the potential inflation on utilities in the future. The Interim Director of Finance reported that he had allowed for an increase of 200% on utilities but it could potentially be more. It was highlighted that the Council's utilities contracts were due to expire in April 2023 and due to the long notice period in concluding such contracts, it may be necessary to extend the existing contracts. This could help mitigate any potential increases if contracts were made with a new provider.

Members thanked Officers for a clear and comprehensive report and were pleased that the Finance team were operating with caution at such an unpredictable time.

**RESOLVED that**

**That Officers continue to work on additional options, as outlined in the Strategy section of the Tranche 1 Report for presentation to Executive in February as Tranche 2 of the Budget.**

**RECOMMENDED that**

**The Tranche 1 savings proposals, the updated WRS Fees and Charges proposals and the single Growth item in respect of the Climate Change Officer are approved for implementation to ensure maximum benefit as at 1st April 2023.**

**88. RECOMMENDATION FROM THE AUDIT, GOVERNANCE AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

The Interim Director of Finance presented the recommendation from the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee as recommended at its meeting that took place on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

It was reported that number of cyber-attacks across the Public Sector had increased by 42%. As a result, it was reported that it had been very difficult for the Council to obtain insurance in respect of cyber security for this year. It was envisaged that insurance renewal may not be possible for future years as had already been experienced by a number of Councils nationally.

The Audit, Governance and Standards Committee had felt, that in light of the difficulties experienced in securing insurance for this year, it would be prudent to contact the Local Government Association to see what plans were in place in order to facilitate a process to help Local Government in the future.

**RESOLVED that**

**given the possibility of no Cyber Security insurance in future years, recommend to the Local Government Association (LGA) that they facilitate a process to help local government cover this deficiency.**

**89. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Executive Committee was advised that there were no minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration on this occasion.

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

The Chair confirmed that there were no referrals from either the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or any of the Executive Advisory Panels on this occasion.

**91. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT**

The following verbal updates were provided on the Executive Advisory Panels and other groups:

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

# Executive Committee

Tuesday, 6th December, 2022

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Councillor Lovell explained that the fourth meeting of the Climate Change Cross Party Working Group was due to take place on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2022.

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

The Executive Committee was advised that the next meeting of the Constitutional Review Working Party was due to take place in March 2023.

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

As Councillor Nazir had submitted her apologies for this meeting there were no updates from the Corporate Parenting Board on this occasion.

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

Councillor Dormer explained that the next meeting of the Member Support Steering Group was due to take place on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

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

Members were informed that the next meeting of the Planning Advisory Panel was due to take place on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm  
and closed at 7.06 pm

## Executive Committee

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Tuesday, 13th December,  
2022

### MINUTES

#### Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), and Councillors Karen Ashley, Joanne Beecham, Peter Fleming, Lucy Harrison, Anthony Lovell, Emma Marshall and Craig Warhurst

#### Also Present:

Councillor Joanna Kane

#### Officers:

Michael Birkinshaw, Peter Carpenter, Sue Hanley, Guy Revans, Michael Rowan and Carl Walker

#### Principal Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley-Hill

#### 92. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Nyear Nazir.

#### 93. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 94. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised that at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 8th December 2022, Members had pre-scrutinised the report on the Appropriation of Land off Ipsley Church Lane for Planning Purposes, which was due for consideration during the Executive Committee meeting. At the end of their debate, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had endorsed the recommendation in the report.

The Leader commented that he was aware that a number of members of the public had either spoken or submitted evidence in writing for consideration at that meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. On behalf of the Executive Committee, the

Chair

# Executive Committee

Tuesday, 13th December, 2022

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Leader thanked those residents for their time and for making their contributions.

## 95. MINUTES

**RESOLVED that**

**the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2022 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.**

## 96. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Officers confirmed that no Questions on Notice had been received for consideration at this meeting.

## 97. APPROPRIATION OF LAND OFF IPSLEY CHURCH LANE FOR PLANNING PURPOSES

The Bereavement Services Manager presented a report on the subject of the appropriation of land off Ipsley Church Lane for planning purposes.

Members were advised that the Council had already been granted permission by the Planning Committee for change of use of the land at Ipsley Church Lane for use as a cemetery. Part of the conditions that had been applied to this planning permission had related to the need for the Council to preserve the biodiversity of the land once it was in use as a cemetery.

The Council had the power, under Section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972, to appropriate land belonging to the authority for planning purposes. The appropriation of the land was required as it was classified as primary open space. In order to appropriate the land, the Council had had to advertise locally its intention to do so for a period of two consecutive weeks and this was subject to public consultation. In this context, the Council had placed three advertisements in the Redditch Standard in September 2022 advertising the authority's intention to appropriate the land. The first advert had contained an incorrect email address and therefore the decision had been taken to place an advertisement in the local press for a third week, thereby ensuring that the process was publicised for a longer period of time than was stipulated in the legislation.

A total of 69 objections had been received from the public during this consultation process. A number of issues had been raised by the public, many of which related to planning considerations, such as issues relating to ground water and highways concerns. The



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main point that had been raised by a majority of respondents had related to concerns that there would be a loss of recreational space. Many respondents had highlighted that they used the land for a range of recreational purposes, including to walk their dogs, sledging, running and for picnics in the summer months.

When considering objections about the loss of recreational space, the Executive Committee was advised that it was important to take into account the availability of other recreational space near to the site and the impact that the appropriation of the land would have on the availability of recreational space locally. Members were advised that the site itself measured 4.6 hectares. Within a kilometre of the centre of the site, there was a further 55 hectares of open space, which could be accessed within approximately 600 metres from the site. The site represented around 8 per cent of the land in that area of the Arrow Valley Park. In the wider context of the whole of the park, comprising 364 hectares, this site represented just over 1 per cent of the open space available for recreational purposes.

During consideration of this item, reference was made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's pre-scrutiny of the report at a meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022. Concerns had been raised at this meeting that there would be a loss of open space as a result of the appropriation of the land. However, the Executive Committee was informed that in planning terms, there would be no loss of open space as a result of the appropriation of the land. Instead, Planning Officers had previously advised that the typology of the open space would change from parks to a churchyard, cemetery or crematoria open space.

The Executive Committee was advised that there were no direct financial implications arising from the proposals detailed in the report. However, there were indirect financial implications, insofar as the Council had already committed funding to works on the cemetery, including the planning process.

There was a need for the Council to have a clear approach to management of the land following its appropriation and appropriate arrangements were in place. The appearance of the cemetery remained to be determined, which would form the focus of the next report on this subject to the Planning Committee. The Council would take into account responsibilities in respect of protecting the biodiversity of the land as part of this stage of the process.

Following the presentation of the report, the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services welcomed the report and in doing so commented that the Council had a moral responsibility to ensure that burial provision was available to residents living in the Borough.

# Executive Committee

Tuesday, 13th December, 2022

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Members discussed the report and questioned how the number of objections received during the latest consultation process compared to the number of objections that had been received by the Council when the planning application had been submitted in 2021. Officers advised that there had been approximately 840 objections received in response to the planning application and 69 objections received in relation to the latest consultation process.

Reference was made to the new typology of open space that would apply to the land following its appropriation, which would be churchyard, cemetery and crematoria open space. Members commented that this would be close to Ipsley Church and questioned whether this would cause any conflict. Officers clarified that this was the typology classification in terms of open space in the planning process, which was separate and unrelated to the role of Ipsley Church. Members were also advised that Ipsley Church had submitted an objection in the planning process.

Consideration was given to the length of time it would take for all of the land to be used for burial plots. Officers explained that it would take between 80 and 100 years after the first burial before the cemetery would be full at the site. During that time, the site would remain available for recreational use, although it was acknowledged that some people might not feel comfortable using the land for recreational purposes once burials had started to take place.

The Committee subsequently discussed the action that was being taken to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the site and questions were raised about how this would be managed once burials started to take place. Members were informed that the Council had an opportunity to design the cemetery in a way that would enhance the biodiversity of the land. As discussed at previous meetings, there was no requirement for the cemetery to have a traditional Victorian appearance. Instead, there were a range of options available, including woodland burials. The Council would work with an ecologist to ensure that appropriate arrangements were in place.

Questions were raised about the potential for burials to be situated in rows, rather than in different locations at the site once it started to be used. Members commented that there were some residents who might otherwise be concerned about potentially causing offence or showing disrespect by inadvertently stepping on a grave. Officers explained that the interior of the site would be considered as part of the next stage of the planning process. Similarly, gravestones and the potential for more significant memorials to be installed by families would also be considered as part of this process.

# Executive Committee

Tuesday, 13th December, 2022

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**RESOLVED that**

**the Land off Ipsley Church Lane be appropriated under section 122 (2A) of the Local Government Act 1972 for planning purposes.**

**98. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Members considered the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2022. The Leader confirmed that there were no outstanding recommendations arising from that meeting requiring Members' consideration.

**RESOLVED that**

**the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2022 be noted.**

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

The Chair advised that there were no referrals from either the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or any of the Executive Advisory Panels on this occasion.

**100. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT**

The Chair advised that there had been no changes in respect of Executive Advisory Panel meetings since the previous meeting of the Executive Committee.

During consideration of this item, in relation to the work of the Member Support Steering Group, the Chair commented that cyber security training was due to be provided to Members at a session scheduled to take place on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2022. All Members were urged to attend this training.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm  
and closed at 7.00 pm

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**Overview & Scrutiny**

Committee

1<sup>st</sup> December 2022**WORK PROGRAMME 2022-23**

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>Subject Matter</b>	<b>Officer(s) / Member(s) Responsible for report</b>
<b>ALL MEETINGS</b>	<b>REGULAR ITEMS</b>	<b>(CHIEF EXECUTIVE)</b>
	Minutes of previous meeting Consideration of the Executive Committee Work Programme Call-ins (if any) Pre-scrutiny (if any) Task Groups / Short, Sharp Review Groups – feedback Working Groups - feedback Committee Work Programme	Chief Executive Chief Executive Chief Executive Chief Executive Chair of Task Group / Short, Sharp Review Chair of Working Group Chief Executive

**Overview & Scrutiny**

Committee

1<sup>st</sup> December 2022

MEETING DATE	ITEM TO BE CONSIDERED	RELEVANT LEAD
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023</b>	Update on the work of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel	Chair of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel, Councillor Sid Khan
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023</b>	Bulky Waste and Fly Tipping Task Group presentation (to help establish Terms of Reference for the task group)	Guy Revans, Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023</b>	Draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2022/23	Chair of Overview and Scrutiny, Councillor Bill Hartnett
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023</b>	Rubicon Leisure Limited - Finances – Overview item	Peter Carpenter, Interim Director of Finance
<b>23<sup>rd</sup> February 2023</b>	Pre-Decision-Scrutiny – 30-year HRA business plan, investment programme and asset management strategy for council housing	Simon Parry, Housing Property Services Manager
<b>Not before 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023 (Executive on 21 March)</b>	Pre-Decision-Scrutiny - Review of Governance Arrangements for Rubicon Leisure Limited	Claire Felton – Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services
<b>Not before 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023 (Executive on 21 March)</b>	Pre-Decision Scrutiny - Worcestershire Housing Strategy 2040	Judith Willis, Head of Community and Housing Services
<b>Not before 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023</b>	Pre-Decision-Scrutiny - Future Plans for Auxerre House	Simon Parry, Housing Property Services Manager
<b>Not before 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023</b>	Pre-Decision Scrutiny - Environment Act - Changes to Waste Services – Implications	Guy Revans, Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services

**Overview & Scrutiny**

Committee

1<sup>st</sup> December 2022

<b>Not before 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023</b>	Parking Enforcement Service Level Agreement - Pre-Decision Scrutiny	Kevin Hiron, Environmental Services Manager
<b>Not before 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023</b>	Pre-Decision Scrutiny - Matchborough and Winyates Regeneration Proposals	Ostap Paparega, Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development
<b>Date to be confirmed</b>	Health Priorities in Redditch - Overview item	Kevin Dicks, Chief Executive Officer

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In the pre-meeting, discussion was held on the range of functions of the “Integrated Care Board” (ICB). This is the new overriding organisation for the NHS. There was concern that individuals would be able to influence the board to get outcomes for their own units and the relationship aspect between the Board and the cottage hospitals was also raised.

It was explained that the ICB was a very complex system based on integrating the various organisations. There are three areas to accomplish: 1. Assess the existing engagements, 2. Talk to partners including HOSC and 3. Have a draft strategy document ready for January.

Various “who” and “why” questions were asked, the answers were: that testing at the early stages and age and prevention were to be part of the Integrated Care Strategy. The benefits of the integrated system were stated as focus on collaboration, not competition, and removal of competition when procuring services. Finally, public engagement on the Strategy was to be held in early December to then be reflected in the revised Strategy.

County Hospitals need a few more beds, but their minor injury units (MIUs) are being well used. There is an average of 24 days stay with a 7% turn over on bed occupancy but it was hoped this will improve. The range of care packages can be complex and difficult to arrange given that patients and families have a say in the implementation.

After visitors left members commented on their local hospitals, the MIU opening times, phoning 111, and not all were complementary.

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This is likely to be the shortest report ever as the majority of the time was taken up with a visit to the new Emergency Department.

The first part of the meeting was to discuss the poor handover rates but was taken over by discussion on an unannounced CQC inspection that had taken place from the 21 to 23 November. Although the CQC inspection report is not due until Jan/Feb, there were no immediate safety concerns identified during the inspection.

The main area of discussion was the new facilities where it was suggested that as ambulances will be redirected there would be an improvement. The Worcestershire Acute Hospitals Chief Executive did say that at present it was “not good enough” and more work was necessary to bring the hospitals up to an acceptable level.

There followed a general question session on the Minor Injury Units and patient discharge.

We then split into two groups and visited the new A&E, part of which was due to be opened on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> December.

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