



Executive Committee

Tuesday, 15th October,
2024

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Joe Baker (Chair), Councillor Sharon Harvey (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Juliet Barker Smith, Bill Hartnett, Wanda King, Jen Snape, Jane Spilsbury, Monica Stringfellow and Ian Woodall

Also Present:

Councillor Claire Davies

Officers:

Adrian Allman (WRS), Peter Carpenter, Mike Dunphy, Sue Hanley and Stephen Williams (WRS)

Democratic Services Officers:

Jo Gresham

35. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

37. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader welcomed all those present to the meeting. Members were advised that at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting that took place on 14th October 2024, Members had pre-scrutinised the Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy. This report was due to be considered at the Executive Committee meeting this evening. No recommendations were made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, following being pre-scrutinised.

Chair

The Leader thanked all Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their hard work in pre-scrutinising the report prior to its consideration at tonight's meeting.

38. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 3rd September 2024 be approved as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chair.

39. CONTAMINATED LAND INSPECTION STRATEGY

The Specialist Lead Officer (Contaminated Land) from Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) presented the Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy. It was explained that six Districts across Worcestershire would be looked at as part of the review, although not in any particular order. It was noted, however, that the Redditch Borough review was the first area to undertake such a review due to the number of contaminated land sites within the Borough.

During the presentation of the report the following was highlighted:

- Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 placed a duty on local authorities to review and assess risks through the contaminated land regime and that from time to time, Local Authorities could cause their area to be inspected in order to ensure that this regime was being adhered to. The term 'Contaminated Land' covered a range of sites including petrol stations, factories, depots and launderettes. The presence of a harmful substance did not mean that land would meet the definition of "contaminated land". However, it was reported that a very high bar must be met in order to deem it as not contaminated.
- Statutory guidance stated that action under contaminated land legislation should only be used when there was no other appropriate alternative. These included the planning and development control processes, as well as voluntary action taken by landowners to minimise the unnecessary burdens placed on taxpayers, businesses, and individuals.

- The new strategy had been amended in order to reflect the gradual reduction and withdrawal of central Government funding for Local Authority contaminated land work. It also outlined the inspection process, and the methodology applied.
- The strategy did not change the statutory responsibilities, and Local Authorities still had to adhere to the current statutory guidance.
- There were nine thousand three hundred contaminated land sites across Worcestershire and seven hundred and fifty of these were located in Redditch. This would result in a large number of inspections and investigations being carried out.

Following the presentation, the Leader thanked Officers for their detailed report and explained that it was clearly presented and therefore had allayed some concerns that had been previously raised.

Members raised questions in respect of some areas of the report, as follows:

1. Who was the responsible party when it came to remediation of contaminated land sites? - It was explained that this would be on a site-specific basis. In some cases, it might be the Council, however, the owner or a purchaser of a site might also be responsible.
2. Was the process of assessing contaminated land sites subject to quality assurance? – It was reported that there was detailed guidance and best practice guidelines in respect of this. Often these reports would be peer reviewed in order to ensure that the correct process had been undertaken. It was explained that there was a significant amount of expertise within WRS in this matter and that this level of expertise would be utilised when undertaking these kinds of inspections. This was particularly important as contaminated land site reports were usually lengthy and detailed and that a ‘fresh set of eyes’ was a useful tool when investigating. Members welcomed this and were reassured that any guidelines were being adhered to.
3. Equality and Diversity Implications – Members were concerned that the report seemed to indicate that there were no negative equity implications as part of the strategy. However, it also outlined that historically contaminated land

sites had been identified in areas of increased social deprivation. Officers explained, however, that although historically this had been the case, contaminated land could be identified anywhere within any area, either affluent or one of social deprivation. The report highlighted this and therefore stated that there were no negative equality impacts and that all sites would be investigated in detail regardless of the area in which they were located within.

Members reiterated that their concerns had been alleviated following discussions with Officers, particularly in respect of the scoring matrix contained within the strategy.

Following the discussion, the Portfolio Holder for Community Services and Regulatory Services took the opportunity to thank Officers for their detailed report.

RECOMMENDED to COUNCIL that

The Council adopt the revised Contaminated Land Inspection strategy which should be published on the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) website.

40. RESPONSE TO THE PROPOSED REFORMS TO THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK AND OTHER CHANGES TO THE PLANNING SYSTEM.

The Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager presented the Response to the Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system for Members' consideration. In doing so it was stated that there was one recommendation included in the report for Members' approval. This was as follows:

The response to the 'Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system' be submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

In presenting the report it was noted that there had been detailed discussions with Members at a Planning Advisory Panel (PAP) meeting whereby all Members had been given the opportunity to provide responses to the proposed reforms question document.

It was outlined that this had been a detailed consultation document and had included one hundred and six questions in respect of the proposed reforms.

This was then submitted as an Officer response on behalf of Redditch Borough Council.

Members' attention was drawn to the significant issues to note within the proposed reforms. These included the new way of calculating the housing target number for new house building across the country. It was clarified that the multiplier would now take into account housing stock within an area. It was suggested that by using this calculation an increase in the numbers of houses being built within Redditch per annum would increase from one hundred and forty-three to four hundred and eighty-nine. Another area to note was that it was proposed that there would be a reinstatement of strategic / regional planning and the introduction of a 'grey belt' policy. Which could potentially cause confusion in the future due to the ambiguity of what this term meant in real terms. The proposed reforms also included a stronger focus on the delivery of social rented housing, new intervention criteria on local plans and new planning application fees.

Officers were hopeful that a response from Central Government would be available prior to Christmas 2024. However, a definitive date had not been finalised at the time of this meeting.

Following the presentation of the report, the Leader expressed his concerns regarding the submission of the response prior to its agreement by the Executive Committee. It was felt that the response should have been approved by the Executive Committee prior to it being submitted. It was explained that this had been an Officer response, and that the submission had been discussed in detail at the PAP meeting when Members had been provided with an opportunity to make suggestions that were included in the response document, as highlighted earlier in the meeting. It was also confirmed that this was within the Officer Delegations and due to the strict deadline of response times, that there had been no opportunity to bring this report to the Executive Committee prior to this meeting. It was raised that there potentially could have been the opportunity to have an Extraordinary Executive Committee or Full Council meeting. However, on this occasion this was not

requested. Officers also confirmed that if Members were unhappy with the response, it could be withdrawn or amended at any time. It was further noted that Officers would be working with the Legal team in respect of Delegations and Members noted that this would be something they would also look at.

Some Members explained that they considered the response a measured and well balance response as a result of the discussions at the PAP meeting and that Members had been provided with an opportunity to both agree or disagree with the proposed reforms.

Members queried when the new housing numbers would be applied from. It was reported that this would be in December 2026. However, the numbers would probably be kept under review and progress tracked as part of the implementation of the new Local Plan.

A specific query in respect of question fifteen within the response document was raised by Members. Question fifteen read as follows:

'Do you agree that Planning Practice Guidance should be amended to specify that the appropriate baseline for the standard method is housing stock rather than the latest household projections?'

Officers explained that there could never be a 'right way' to calculate housing numbers. However, included in the response was that there was a need in the future to utilise a clear baseline when calculating housing numbers as opposed to an aging projection dataset.

In terms of Climate Change, there was a query regarding the statement within the report suggesting that there was no impact on Climate Change as a result of the report. Members questioned this response as there would inevitably be some Climate Change impact as a result of extra house building in the future. Officers explained that Climate Change would be looked at once the proposed reforms had been implemented and as part of the Local Plan preparation. However, this report and the response within the appendix did not have a specific effect on Climate Change.

Following the discussion Members requested that an amendment to the recommendation be made. The amendment was as follows:

'The response to the 'Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system', having already been submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) be noted and endorsed.'

RECOMMENDED to COUNCIL that

The response to the 'Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system', having already been submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) be noted and endorsed.

41. RECOMMENDATION FROM THE AUDIT, GOVERNANCE AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 25TH JULY 2024

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the recommendation from the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee meeting held on 25th July 2024. Members were reminded that the recommendation had been as follows:

'That the Executive be asked to introduce compulsory cyber security training for all elected Members.'

Members were informed that there was a significant risk to the Council in respect of cyber security. Furthermore, that Members could be more at risk due to the nature of their role and that this was the context in which the recommendation had been made.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance explained that at the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee meeting it had been outlined that, during the General Election period, there had been daily cyber security attacks attempted and that training in this area would hopefully lessen the risk of such attacks.

Some Members explained that as part of the Member Delevelopment Steering Group process, a survey was to be developed in order to ascertain which training sessions should be identified as 'compulsory' and which were 'highly recommended'. It was noted that there were no sanctions currently in place for Members who did not attend some training sessions and, as a

result, this would be difficult to enforce. This, it was confirmed, would be further looked at by Members in due course.

RESOLVED that

the Executive Committee introduce compulsory cyber security training for all elected Members.

42. REFERRAL FROM THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 16TH SEPTEMBER 2024 - MOTION ON COMPOSTING

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services presented the referral from the Council meeting held on 16th September 2024 – Motion on composting item for Members consideration. In doing so, it was outlined that the Council was committed to increasing recycling as a whole. However, it must be noted that this was not quite the same as composting.

It was stated that the Council would work closely with Worcestershire County Council (WCC) in their 'Lets Waste Less' campaign as composting fell within their remit. In addition to this, a communications strategy would be developed in order to promote the services and initiatives already available and cascaded through Redditch Borough Council communications channels. It was hoped that this communication strategy, coupled with the potential of an education strategy regarding composting would increase residents' understanding of composting for the future.

In terms of the amendment made at the Full Council meeting regarding expansion of the garden waste fleet, it was explained that garden waste (brown bin) was not the same as composting and as such there would not be a need to increase the size of the fleet as a result of composting. Any fleet expansion would be considered when appropriate and a report would be considered at a future date by the Executive Committee in respect of this matter. However, this would not be undertaken imminently.

Following the presentation of the response, the Leader suggested that during events at local parks, such as Arrow Valley Country Park and Morton Stanley Park, that this could be an opportunity to have a Redditch Borough Council stall whereby information on these types of services could be provided to residents.

The Leader invited Councillor C. Davies, who was observing the meeting, to comment on the response that had been provided. As the original proposer of the Motion, she thanked the Executive Committee for the consideration of this Motion and welcomed the increase in communications and education in respect of the options for composting for the future.

RESOLVED that

the response in respect of the Motion on Composting be noted.

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

The Leader explained that there were no outstanding recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance drew Members' attention to the recommendations that had been included in the Award of a Contract to Upgrade the Town Hall and Update on Towns Fund report discussed at the Executive Committee meeting held on 3rd September 2024. It was explained that these were being actioned efficiently by Officers.

The Leader took the opportunity to thank all Members who were part of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, associated Working Groups and Task Groups for all their hard work in looking at the reports and investigating relevant topics for the residents of the Borough and in order to maintain the mechanisms within the Council.

44. TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT BUSINESS, DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, DEMOCRATIC AND PROPERTY SERVICES PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE MEETING AND WHICH THE CHAIR, BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, CONSIDERS TO BE OF SO URGENT A NATURE THAT IT CANNOT WAIT UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING

There was no Urgent Business on this occasion.

45. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 29th August and 2nd September 2024 be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 7.29 pm