

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 24th November,
2025

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), and Councillors William Boyd, Claire Davies, Andrew Fry, Rita Rogers and Paul Wren

Also Present:

Councillor Sharon Harvey – Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Environmental Services
Councillor Bill Hartnett – Portfolio Holder for Housing

Officers:

Guy Revans, Simon Parry, Judith Willis and Doug Henderson

Democratic Services Officers:

M Sliwinski

45. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Warhurst and Mathur.

46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of party whip.

47. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no public speakers registered to speak at this meeting.

48. BEREAVEMENT SERVICES - BURIAL STRATEGY - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Environmental Services Manager presented a report on the Council's Burial Strategy. It was explained that the Burial Strategy was a crucial document for the Council to ensure a long-term,

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respectful, and inclusive management of burial spaces whilst meeting legal, cultural, and environmental needs. Without prior planning, Redditch faced a risk of running out of burial space and the Burial Strategy was designed to be a positive step in the effective management of burial space and future development of cemeteries within the Borough.

It was noted that Redditch Borough Council operated and managed three cemeteries, Plymouth Road, Edgioake Lane and Abbey Cemetery and St Stephen's, St Luke's and Feckenham closed church yards. Plymouth Road cemetery was closed to new burials, Edgioake Lane Cemetery had approximately five years of burial provision available at current usage but was under review to free up further space for 5+ years of burial provision.

Abbey Cemetery was the main burial area in Redditch Borough and had approximately 8 months left of burials space in early 2024. Through the later parts of 2024 a vigorous exercise of reviewing burial space within the cemetery led to securing a further 10 years of space at the site.

Work had been undertaken in recent years to assess the suitability of several different sites across the Borough as per previous reports. In total twenty-six sites were originally reviewed, the various sites including land at the rear of Morrisons, Foxlydiate Woods, additional extension to the existing Edgioake lane site, Ipsley Church Lane, Greenland's playing fields, Coldfield Drive, Oakenshaw Park, and Woodrow Park.

It was noted that following the change of administration in May 2024 the works at Ipsley Church Lane site were put on hold. In early 2025 a new site review was undertaken in respect of Land North of Morrisons and West of the B4497, B98 0JD (Proposed Site 2B). To date this site had passed the Environment Agency (EA) requirements to secure a standard permit.

Following the presentation of the report, a Member asked about the Edgioake Lane Cemetery and review being undertaken there. It was confirmed that officers were reviewing the prepaid plots at the site with a view of potentially recovering these plots. It was highlighted there was no plan to recover full graves on the site.

A Member queried if there was scope for natural burial ground provision. The Environmental Services Manager responded that this could not be accommodated at the Abbey Cemetery but would be considered as part of the provision at a new burial site. It was noted

in terms of burial practices that there was a relatively static number of burials each year in Redditch Borough. Nationally, the proportion was around 15 per cent burials and 85 per cent cremations.

In relation to the twenty-six potential sites originally reviewed by the Council it was noted that ground water, geology and associated testing was carried out at all these sites. In respect of the Land North of Morrisons and West of the B4497, B98 0JD (Proposed Site 2B), as it was near the lake, borehole and deep ground water testing had been carried out over winter/spring time to determine the suitability of the site and this confirmed that the site had passed the Environment Agency (EA) requirements to secure a standard permit.

It was noted that a further report would be prepared in respect of burial provision in due course which would also be submitted for consideration by Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

On being put to the vote, the recommendation of the report was endorsed.

RECOMMENDED that

the Redditch Borough Council Burial Strategy be approved.

49. QUARTER 2 HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE - PRE-SCRUTINY

A Q2 update on the Housing Improvement Plan was provided for Members' consideration. A summary of progress against each of the Consumer Standards was presented within the report and some of the Consumer Standards metrics were highlighted within the presentation for this item.

It was reported that for measure NC3 to establish a procedure to keep tenants informed of progress of their Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) cases, staff training was being provided and processes had been reviewed to ensure cases were managed as per process with a final visit when a case was being closed.

With regard to Consumer Standard SQ5 – Implement Total Mobile for Repairs and Maintenance – it was reported that in Q1 2025/26 the Council had lost the project manager assisting the team in the configuration and development prior to implementation of the Total Mobile (TM) system. Nevertheless, the system was now at the final testing stage.

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On the overdue repairs and maintenance jobs, it was reported that since the Regulatory Judgment, the number of overdue jobs had reduced from circa 3,000 to 1,052 at the end of Q2 2025/26, with 521 jobs currently in progress and a further 91 reported at no access to property.

For Electrical Inspection Condition Reports (EICR), work was progressing with contractors who were issued with properties where no certificate was currently held either at all or within the 5-year reporting cycle. There was greater co-ordination reported between Housing Tenancy Officers and the Electrical and Gas Teams in place to visit and seek to gain entry to hard-to-reach properties currently outstanding in terms of electrical and other inspections.

In terms of tenant engagement work, delays had been experienced but draft proposals for the range of formal and informal opportunities were being prepared. This would detail how tenants could interact with and influence Housing Services. It was highlighted that to provide meaningful engagement for tenants required work to understand their specific needs and, for those on tenants' panel, how they could participate fully in tenant governance arrangements. Senior Tenant Engagement Officer would be recruited into post in early 2026 to help progress this area of work.

As part of the monthly meetings with the Housing Regulator, it was agreed there would be a revision to this Housing Improvement Plan, which would be reflected in the Quarter 3 report to Members.

Following presentation of the report, a question was raised about the programme for the completion of all outstanding fire safety remedial actions. It was explained by officers that the target was to clear all outstanding fire remedial actions within two years. A Member questioned why the expected delivery was not quicker than around two years given a 12 per cent reduction in outstanding remedial actions between Q1 and Q2 of this year had already been achieved and additional capital would be provided into the programme. The Officer responded that this was due to the volume of properties affected and economies of scale in terms of it being easier to clear a larger proportion of backlog works in larger blocks, and more time-consuming to set up works separately at smaller sites. It was further explained that there were circa 700 fire door actions outstanding and these actions would require significant time to deal with.

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With regard to Electrical Compliance Manager recruitment, Members were informed that the Service went out to market on two occasions but did not find a suitable candidate. The Council's recruitment agency, Opus, would be approached to provide a temporary cover or undertake recruitment to a permanent post. Failing this arrangement, authority would be sought to go outside the ordinary arrangement.

A question was asked about Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) cases and how tenants were updated on the cases or know that the matter had been dealt with. The Assistant Director Community and Housing Services responded that Officers were required to update tenants in a timely manner, whilst a formal procedure was put in place. Work was in progress to provide further training to Neighbourhood Tenancy Officers regarding effective communication and positive case closure. This also included tracking of cases on the software system and implementation of a final visit at the case closure.

The effect of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) on the Housing Service within Redditch was discussed. It was noted that in terms of any changes to specific service delivery, support from tenants was needed. As part of LGR, the Redditch Council's stock of housing (Housing Revenue Account) would be moved to a larger unitary authority, whether a north Worcestershire or a whole Worcestershire model was adopted.

RESOLVED that

the Housing Improvement Plan Quarter 2 2025/26 Update, which includes actions to address areas for improvement, confirmed as part of the Regulator of Social Housing Inspection process, is noted.

50. QUARTER 2 HOUSING PERFORMANCE - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services presented the Housing Consumer Standards Report for Q2 2025/26. The report detailed the Council's performance in relation to 10 of the Regulator of Social Housing tenant satisfaction measures.

In respect of the Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standards measure, it was reported that, following a review of the asset management database the Council had identified an issue with software that had resulted in previous reporting being

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inaccurate. This had led to a revised figure for Q2 2025/26 which was a sharp increase in the number of properties that did not meet the Decent Homes Standards for this period. The percentage figure increased from 4.15 per cent up to 11.90 per cent. The Housing Regulator had been alerted to this error in previous reporting and Officers were working to identify properties affected and works that needed to be carried out in those properties. During Q2 2025/26 the Council had been working with the software provider to get the assurance that future reporting would be accurate.

For stock condition surveys, it was reported that these commenced in August 2025 with a target to complete 1,340 surveys in 2025/26. In Quarter 2, 121 surveys had been completed with additional resources allocated to target 100 surveys per week over the remainder of the fiscal year.

The Council's performance in non-emergency and emergency repairs completed within the landlord's target timescale showed improvement over the previous quarter whilst for building safety measures it was reported that fire safety checks were rated red due to consultant capacity issues with a shortage of fire risk assessors. This capacity issue had now been addressed.

In terms of work carried out to reduce fire risk within apartment blocks, it was highlighted that the caretaking team now operated a full service in communal areas of regular cleaning that included full checks for fire risks.

Another red rated measure was in respect of lift safety checks. It was explained that there was a drop in performance as the Council's insurer experienced difficulties accessing one of the lifts for inspection. This had now been remedied across the blocks as key safes were in place for inspectors to access lift shafts.

It was highlighted in relation to direct tenant data that in Q2 2025/26, the Service experienced a drop in performance in relation to complaints handling, but that Senior Complaints Officer had now been recruited which would improve capacity within the complaints' team. It was reported that 113 compliments were received by the Service during Q2.

With respect to repairs it was stated that the Service undertook around 10,000 repairs annually and there were now monthly reports submitted from complaints officer to classify each complaint and implement appropriate remedial action(s).

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The Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services stated that the Council's Housing Service had more sufficient mitigations in place now to address the issues with performance highlighted in the report. External consultant had been employed to check whether the measures undertaken to date were enough to address outstanding issues.

The annual tenant satisfaction survey would be released in mid-January 2026 and Members were asked to help engage with residents and tenants to maximise the response rate to the survey.

RESOLVED that

the Council's Quarter 2 Housing Performance for 2025/26 in respect of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (Landlord) be noted.

51. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME - SELECTING ITEMS FOR SCRUTINY

The Executive Committee Work Programme was submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

the Executive Committee's Work Programme be noted.

52. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme was submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be noted.

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

As Councillor Warhurst, who chaired all of the working groups and task groups covered in this agenda item, had submitted his apologies, there were no updates provided at this meeting.

It was noted with respect of Budget Scrutiny Working Group that at its meeting on 20th November 2025 it considered, and endorsed, two Executive Committee reports in respect of Quarter 2 2025/26

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Performance Monitoring Report and Quarter 2 2025/26 Finance Monitoring Report (including Financial Saving and Half Yearly Treasury Management Report).

RESOLVED that

the Task Groups and Working Groups Update Reports be noted.

54. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

Updates on the meetings of External Scrutiny Bodies were provided as follows:

- a) West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Council Representative, Councillor Boyd

Councillor Boyd reported that he had not attended the most recent meeting of WMCA Overview and Scrutiny, which took place this morning (24th November 2025) as the meeting was not sent to his calendar. In respect of the previous meeting of WMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Boyd reported that discussion concerned regional transport which was of little direct relevance to Redditch Borough.

- b) West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Transport Delivery Overview and Scrutiny – Council Representative, Councillor Fardoe

As Councillor Fardoe was not present, there was no update provided on the recent meetings of this External Body.

- c) Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) – Council Representative, Councillor Fry

Councillor Fry reported that the main point of discussion at the recent HOSC meeting on 10th October 2025 was in respect of pharmaceutical needs assessment in Worcestershire. Councillor Fry reported that the professionals from the Local Pharmaceutical Committee (LPC) present at the meeting expressed concerns that pharmaceutical services were in crisis with 109 total contractors, including 88 community pharmacies and 21 dispensing GP practices in Worcestershire. This represented a 6 per cent reduction in the number of service providers since the last assessment in 2022. It was noted that even though most residents in

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Worcestershire had good access to pharmacy services, there were parts of the county which saw pharmacies close over the past few years.

RESOLVED that

the External Scrutiny Bodies updates be noted.

55. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

It was agreed that exclusion of the public and press was not necessary in relation to Minute Item 56. Minutes (of the meeting of 1 September 2025), as the contents of the exempt minute record would not be discussed in the meeting. The meeting remained in public session for its entire duration.

56. MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 1st September 2025, including the exempt minutes record, were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1st September 2025 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 7.15 pm