



Executive Committee

Thu 6 Nov
2025
6.30 pm

Oakenshaw Community Centre,
Castleditch Lane, B98 7YB

If you have any queries on this Agenda please contact
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GUIDANCE ON FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

Please note that this is a public meeting.

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

Notes:

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

Executive

Thursday, 6th November, 2025

6.30 pm

Oakenshaw Community Centre

Agenda

Membership:

Cllrs:

Sharon Harvey
(Chair)
Jane Spilsbury
(Vice-Chair)
Juliet Barker Smith
Juma Begum

Bill Hartnett
Jen Snape
Monica Stringfellow
Ian Woodall

1. Apologies

2. Declarations of Interest

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

3. Leader's Announcements

4. Appointments to the Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Panel (Pages 5 - 10)

5. Medium Term Financial Plan Budget Update and Consultation Report 2026/2027 - 2028/29 - Business Rates Pool (Pages 11 - 14)

6. Minutes / Referrals - Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Executive Panels etc.

To receive and consider any outstanding minutes or referrals from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Executive Panels etc. since the last meeting of the Executive Committee, other than as detailed in the items above.

7. To consider any urgent business, details of which have been notified to the Assistant Director of Legal, Democratic and Procurement 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

8. Exclusion of the press and public

Should it be necessary, in the opinion of the Chief Executive, during the course of the meeting to consider excluding the public from the meeting on the grounds that exempt information is likely to be divulged, it may be necessary to move the following resolution:

“That, under S.100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following matter(s) on the grounds that it/they involve(s) the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs (to be specified) of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act”.

These paragraphs are as follows:

Subject to the “public interest” test, information relating to:

- Para 1 – any individual;
- Para 2 – the identity of any individual;
- Para 3 – financial or business affairs;

and may need to be considered as ‘exempt’.

9. Minutes (Pages 15 - 42)

10. Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Pages 43 - 68)

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Executive
2025****Tuesday, 14 October****Appointments to the Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Panel**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillors Jane Spilsbury and Juma Begum
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Assistant Director	Assistant Director of Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services
Report Author: Jess Bayley-Hill	Job Title: Principal Democratic Services Officer Contact email: jess.bayley-hill@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Tel: 01527 64252 Ext: 3072
Wards Affected	(All Wards);
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Council Priorities	Financial sustainability
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

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

- 1) Councillor Craig Warhurst be appointed Chair of the Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Panel for the remainder of the 2025/26 municipal year; and**
- 2) Councillors Matthew Dormer, David Munro, Rita Rogers, Craig Warhurst and Paul Wren be appointed to serve on the Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Panel for the remainder of the 2025/26 municipal year.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This report details arrangements for the appointment of Members to the Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Panel to serve for the remainder of the 2025/26 municipal year.
- 2.2 Members are invited to consider approving these appointments.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1 At the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 2nd September 2025, Members considered a report on the subject of the Council's Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) grants scheme.

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- 3.2 Included within the report, was a proposal to introduce a Grants Panel, which will be responsible for considering and scoring applications received from VCS organisations for major grant funding. The terms of reference for the panel were approved as part of that report and are attached as an appendix to this report.
- 3.3 At the Council meeting held on 15th September 2025, Members subsequently agreed to allocate funding of £175,000 per annum over the three year period starting in 2026/27 to the Council's VCS grants scheme. Of this amount, up to £75,000 will be for a Financial Advice Grant. The remaining £100,000 will be for a grants scheme to which the VCS can apply and will be considered by a Grants Panel.
- 3.4 There is now a need for Members to be appointed to serve on the Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Panel for the remainder of the 2025/26 municipal year.
- 3.5 The Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Panel will not have any decision-making powers. Instead, it will make recommendations to the Executive Committee for approval.
- 3.6 The panel will therefore be established to operate as an Executive Advisory Panel. As with other Executive Advisory Panels at the Council, Members from different political groups may serve on the Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Panel, with nominations proposed by political party group leaders.
- 3.7 In accordance with the agreed terms of reference for the Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Panel, members appointed to the panel may not be members of the Executive Committee. In addition, the Chair must be a Councillor who is not a member of the controlling group. These arrangements are designed to ensure independence and transparency in the process for consideration of grant applications by the panel.
- 3.8 It should be noted that any member appointed to the Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Panel will be required to undertake training before they can serve at a meeting of the panel.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Panel will be scoring applications received from VCS organisations for funding from the Council. Members of the Grants Panel will need to be assured that all

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recommendations for funding comply with the Council's requirements under the scheme and will achieve best value for the Council.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 As the Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Panel is an Executive Advisory Panel it does not form part of the Council's political balance.
- 5.2 The Executive Committee has the authority to determine appointments to Executive Advisory Panels.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS**Local Government Reorganisation**

- 6.1 There are no specific implications arising from this report for Local Government Reorganisation or devolution.

Relevant Council Priority

- 6.2 The Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Panel will need to ensure that, through the recommendations they make to the Executive Committee, best value is achieved for the authority and the residents that the Council serves. This will help to support the organisational principle of financial sustainability.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.3 There are no specific implications for climate change.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.4 There are no specific equalities and diversity implications.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 There is a significant risk that the Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Panel will not be able to fulfil its duties if Members are not appointed to serve on the panel in a timely manner.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS**Appendix 1**

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Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Panel – Terms of Reference
(approved at the Executive Committee meeting held on 2nd September
2025).

Background Papers

Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Scheme 2026/27 to 2028/29,
report to the Executive Committee meeting held on 2nd September
2025: [Executive Committee agenda - 2nd September 2025](#)



APPENDIX 1

VOLUNTARY SECTOR MEMBERS GRANTS PANEL TERMS OF REFERENCE

Date:

Date of Review:

Chair: The Panel will be chaired by a Councillor who is not a member of the controlling group.

Meeting Frequency: The Panel shall meet a minimum of two times per year to review and score grant applications. The dates of the meetings will be identified and included in the annual calendar of meetings.

Quorum: The Panel shall consist of five members and the quorum will be three.

Overall functions and responsibilities:

The Grants Panel shall be an Executive Advisory Panel. Its recommendations will require ratification by the Executive Committee. When participating in meetings of the Grants Panel, Members will be required to abide by the Council's Member Code of Conduct.

The purpose of the Grants Panel will be to consider grant applications from various Voluntary and Community Sector organisations on behalf of Redditch Borough Council in accordance with the agreed eligibility guidelines.

Membership:

Members of the Panel will be nominated by political group leaders – Members of the Panel cannot be members of the Executive Committee.

The VCS Grants Officer will attend the meetings to provide the paperwork and answer any queries.

Members of the Panel will only be permitted to participate in meetings of the Panel once they have attended appropriate training.

Accountability and reporting arrangements:

The Grants Panel will report recommendations to the Executive Committee.

Each Member is responsible for:

- Attending an information and training session on the grant application process.
- Attending the Panel Meetings to score the higher grant applications using the scoring matrix.
- Ensuring that the grants budget for the relevant financial year is not exceeded.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of Redditch Borough Council's grant allocation process.
- Not being a signatory on any grant cheque.
- Declaring any interests that they, or their spouse, may have in applications received through the grants process. Members are advised to withdraw from taking part in the debate and vote on any applications with which they are so involved.
- Not sharing any information contained in the application forms outside of the Grants Panel Meetings.
- The results of any recommendations concerning grants applications will be referred to the Executive Committee for consideration and approval.

Agenda Packs and Papers:

The Grants Officer will support the administration of the Panel and will be responsible for consulting with the Chair and Members ensuring that the papers are sent out in a timely fashion.

Agenda packs and papers will be available to the members of the group five working days before the meeting.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE
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**Medium Term Financial Plan Budget Update and Consultation Report
2026/2027 to 2028/29 – Business Rates Pool**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Ian Woodall – Portfolio Holder for Finance
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Debra Goodall
Report Author	Debra Goodall, Assistant Director of Finance and Customer Service Debra.goodall@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	No
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	All
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

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

- 1) The Council approves joining the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Business Rates Pool for 2026/27**
- 2) Authority for the decision on the financial arrangements be delegated to the Section 151 officer following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This report provides an update on the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2026/27 – 28/29 in respect of the Business Rates Pool for 2026/27.
- 2.2 Under the Local Government Finance Act 2012, local authorities are permitted to form business rates pools to manage Business Rates income collectively. Pooling allows councils to:
 - Retain a greater share of business rates growth locally
 - Reduce the levy payable to central government
 - Share risks and rewards across a wider base
 - Support regional economic development through collaborative investment

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2.3 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has invited Councils to indicate their preferred pooling arrangements for the financial year, 2026-27, with the deadline for submission of proposals for 2026-27 pools being 24th November 2026. Therefore, the Council needs to make an urgent decision as to the option of joining the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Pool. The Council was previously part of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Pool so this would be a continuation. The other option the council has is:

- to not be in a Business Rates Pool and return a higher proportion of business rates growth (levy) to Central Government.

2.4 It is understood from other Districts across Herefordshire and Worcestershire that they will be entering the Pool for 2026-27, subject to a review of the figures across the area showing a positive benefit, enabling volatility risks to be shared with other councils and also additional financial benefits in terms of levy on business rates growth that was retained locally rather than paid over to the Government.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

3.1 The Council therefore needs to determine whether it wishes to continue to participate in a Herefordshire and Worcestershire wide pool for the year 2026/27 only.

3.2 As a general principle the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Pool and other Pools locally operate on the principle that no council is worse off in the Pool than outside the Pool. This means that the amounts paid into the Pool by councils are limited to the levy amount that they would have otherwise paid to the Government. However, in the event of significant losses, as in the case of the revaluation of GP surgeries, then the amount available from the Pool may be less than would be available from the Government National safety net facility.

3.3 The most significant factor in the Council's decision regarding Pool membership from 1 April 2026 is our view on the probability of further significant business rate losses in Redditch. Based on current appeals outstanding we have no reason to suspect there will be such losses. We have already made reasonable provision for outstanding appeals and we are not aware of any changes which would lead to further significant losses.

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- 3.4 There will be provision within the governance arrangements to ensure there is protection for Pool Members to ensure that there is no detriment to their position comparative to had they not joined the pool.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The arrangements for the business rates pool will continue to mitigate some but not all of the financial risk of the current business rates system. Work is currently ongoing at this point in time to assess whether the pooling arrangements (if approved) remain of overall financial benefit to this Council.
- 4.2 The precise impact on Council finances cannot be known as this will vary depending on a range of factors including whether business rates grow or contract, future appeals and mandatory reliefs.

Based on the information available to date, if the Council's position together with the overall position of the wider Herefordshire and Worcestershire family will be best protected by joining the proposed pool then it is recommended that the Council do so.

- 4.3 The proposed pool is only concerned with the money which is generated through the levy which would have been paid to central Government if the Pool members were not in the pool. The Pool is designed to continue to protect member authorities from the ups and downs that are likely to arise in Business Rate income in the future. These will have a direct impact on the amount of funding for the Council. It may be shown that by remaining in a pool, the Council can better protect against these variations and thus provide some protection to its base funding.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Any legal implications in relation to the business rates pool have already been assessed as part of previous work undertaken when the pool was originally established.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS**Local Government Reorganisation**

- 6.1 There are no implication at this stage arising from Local Government Reorganisation or Devolution

Relevant Council Priority

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- 6.2 The proposals detailed in this report support the organisational priority of Financial Stability.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.3 There are no climate change implications as a direct result of this report.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.4 None as a direct result of this report.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The Government is currently in the process of making changes to business rates, due to apply from 2026/27 onwards and work is ongoing to assess the impact of this.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Debra Goodall, Assistant Director of Finance and Customer Service

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MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Sharon Harvey (Chair), Councillor Jane Spilsbury (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Juliet Barker Smith, Juma Begum, Bill Hartnett, Jen Snape and Ian Woodall

Also Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Chair of the Fly Tipping Task Group)

Officers:

Toni Ainscough, Mark Cox, Tara Day, Rebecca Green, John Leach, Simon Parry, Andrew Rainbow, Guy Revans, Bob Watson and Judith Willis

Democratic Services Officers:

Jess Bayley-Hill

26. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Monica Stringfellow.

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

28. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised that at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1st September 2025, Members had pre-scrutinised the following items on the Executive Committee's agenda:

- Minute Item No. 31 – Voluntary Sector Grants Scheme 2026/27 to 2029/30
- Minute Item No. 32 – Adoption of Fixed Penalty Charge for Breach of Community Protection Notice
- Minute Item No. 33 – Housing Ombudsman Findings Report 1 Ref 202417927

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- Minute Item No. 34 – Housing Ombudsman Findings Report 2 Ref 202331009
- Minute Item No. 35 – Quarter 1 Housing Consumer Standards Report
- Minute Item No. 36 – Regulator of Social Housing Inspection Report
- Minute Item No. 41 – Disposal of Housing Revenue Account Assets – Four Garages at Ashorne Close, Matchborough, Redditch
- Minute Item No. 44 – Disposal of Housing Revenue Account Assets – 53 Parsons Road, Southcrest Redditch and 53 Crabbs Cross Lane, Crabbs Cross, Redditch

At the end of their discussions, the Committee had endorsed the recommendations contained within the reports. Whilst the Committee did not make any further recommendations, the Leader highlighted that for the Regulator of Social Housing Inspection Report, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had discussed potentially setting up a scrutiny working group focusing on this subject area.

In advance of the Executive Committee meeting, the Budget Scrutiny Working Group had pre-scrutinised the following items on the Executive Committee's agenda at a meeting held on 28th August 2025:

- Minute Item No. 37: Quarter 1 Finance and Performance Monitoring Report 2025/26
- Minute Item No. 38: Medium Term Financial Plan Scene Setting Report 2026/2027

Members were advised that the Budget Scrutiny Working Group had not made any recommendations on either item.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, the Leader thanked the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Budget Scrutiny Working Group for their hard work in pre-scrutinising these reports prior to the Executive Committee's consideration.

29. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 8th July 2025 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

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30. FLY TIPPING & BULKY WASTE TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT

The Chair of the Fly Tipping and Bulky Waste Task Group, Councillor Matthew Dormer, presented the group's final report for the Executive Committee's consideration.

Members were informed that the review had been completed over a period of two years. During this time, there had been a change to the membership of the Task Group, which had been launched following the submission of a Motion on the subject by Councillor Sid Khan at a Council meeting.

The remit of the Task Group had been:

- To review the current rates of fly tipping and bulky waste collections in the Borough.
- To assess how collection rates in the Borough compared to other local authority areas and to identify how those Councils managed their fly tipping and bulky waste collection services.
- To review the Council's current approach to communicating with the public about how the authority responded to fly tipping and promoted the Bulky Waste Collection service.
- To identify any actions that could be taken to reduce fly tipping and improve Bulky Waste collection services, taking into account the financial and legal implications of any proposals.

The Executive Committee was advised that the review had coincided with a change to the Council's arrangements for tackling fly tipping. In 2024, the Council had agreed that Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) should take on responsibility for environmental enforcement, including in respect of fly tipping.

The Council's Bulky Waste Collection Service was well used and demand was increasing. The Executive Committee was asked to note that the Council's charge for using the service was relatively cheap, particularly compared to equivalent services provided by private sector organisations. The suggestion was made that this should be highlighted in communications promoting the service in order to encourage greater uptake.

Fly tipping was a challenging issue for the Council to address. The group had learned that there were a number of hot spots across the Borough where fly tipping tended to be more prevalent. In more rural parts of the Borough, trade waste was more likely to be the subject of fly tipping whilst domestic waste tended to be more prevalent in residential areas.

At the end of the review, the Fly Tipping and Bulky Waste Task Group had concluded that WRS should be invited to provide a bi-

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annual update to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the subject of fly tipping data and enforcement work in the Borough. This recommendation had been approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at a meeting held on 7th July 2025. As the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had the power to determine items to be added to the Committee's work programme, no decision was required from the Executive Committee on this subject. However, due to the importance of the subject and in recognition of the group's hard work, the Task Group's final report and findings were being presented for the Executive Committee's consideration.

Following the presentation of the report, Members discussed the group's findings and in so doing commented that they were aware of a number of locations in the Borough where fly tipping tended to occur relatively frequently. It was noted that the report contained a lot of useful data pertaining to fly tipping rates and Members commented that this would help inform officers' efforts to address the problem. Members highlighted that tackling fly tipping in the Borough was a priority for the Council.

The suggestion was made that action needed to be taken to educate the public about the impact of fly tipping as well as the availability of the Bulky Waste Collection service. It was noted that action could be taken to encourage and enhance community pride in order to try to tackle rates of domestic fly tipping. However, Members noted that it was unlikely that there would ever be a situation where no fly tipping was occurring.

Concerns were raised about the practices of some private organisations that charged to collect trade and domestic waste. Whilst Members acknowledged that there were a lot of legitimate operators, it was also highlighted that some organisations charged to collect bulky items which they then disposed of in inappropriate manners creating further issues with fly tipping.

Reference was made to the information included in the report which recorded that a Fly Tipping Strategy would be developed for the Council. The suggestion was made that this needed to be accompanied by effective communications that would inform and educate people on the subject of fly tipping. Confirmation was provided by Officers that a Fly Tipping Strategy was in the process of being developed and the associated communications were being considered as part of this process. Officers were also aiming to review the available data when developing the strategy.

The potential impact of the cost of living crisis on demand for the Bulky Waste Collection service and fly tipping rates in the Borough was briefly discussed. On the one hand, concerns were raised that the cost of living crisis may be deterring some residents from using

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the Bulky Waste Collection service due to individual and family financial pressures. On the other hand, Members noted that the charge for the Bulky Waste Collection service provided by the Council was relatively cheap and the suggestion was made that if somebody could afford to replace a bulky piece of furniture, then they could afford to pay for their bulky domestic waste to be collected.

In concluding the discussions, on behalf of the Executive Committee, the Leader thanked the members of the Fly Tipping and Bulky Waste Task Group for their hard work and report, noting that this would be a useful document that could help to inform the content of the Council's future Fly Tipping Policy.

RESOLVED that

the Fly Tipping and Bulky Waste Task Group's final report and the response of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to this report be noted.

31. VOLUNTARY SECTOR GRANTS SCHEME 2026/27 TO 2029/30

The Community Services Manager presented a report on the subject of the Voluntary Sector Grants Scheme 2026/27 to 2029/30.

The Executive Committee was informed that for the previous three-year period, the Council had provided £150,000 in support to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). This included a grant of £50,000 to the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and £100,000 in major as well as small grants to a range of VCS organisations and local groups. During this time, decisions on funding had been made by Officers.

In the report, Officers were proposing to change the Council's approach to funding VCS organisations, although it was important to note that funding would remain available. Under these proposals, it was proposed that the Council should allocate £175,000 per year to support VCS groups. This would include £75,000 for a financial advice service and distribution of higher and lower value grants to VCS groups. It was further proposed that a Grants Panel, comprising a membership of elected Members, should be reintroduced to consider applications for higher value grants. Smaller grants would continue to be determined by Officers.

Members were asked to note that there was funding, derived from scrap metal recovered through the cremation scheme operated by Bereavement Services, which was invested in VCS activities. This was entirely separate to the rest of the VCS funding programme

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and the level of funding could not be predicted in advance as it varied year to year. Officers were proposing that authority should be delegated to the Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community Spaces and the Voluntary Sector, to distribute this funding.

Following the presentation of the report, Members discussed the arrangements for the proposed Grants Panel and in doing so questioned whether Officers would score applications prior to consideration by the panel. Clarification was provided that Members would undertake scoring at meetings of the Grants Panel. The role of the Grants Officer would be to assess all applications prior to consideration by the Grants Panel to ensure that they were compliant with the process.

The purpose of a Grants Panel and the rationale for reintroducing such a panel after a number of years when Officers had had delegated authority to consider applications was also discussed. Members suggested that a Grants Panel would create greater transparency and democratic accountability for the distribution of public money to VCS organisations.

Consideration was given to the proposed grant for a financial advice service. Members questioned whether this would be the total grant or whether the funding would be valued at up to £75,000. Officers confirmed that the value of this grant would be up to £75,000.

Reference was given to the evidence that had been provided in the report regarding the impact of the financial advice service that had been provided by the CAB on behalf of the Council in recent years. Members commented that it was important to ensure that evidence was also available about the impact of major grants, in particular, to help Members assess the value of this funding moving forward. Clarification was provided that organisations in receipt of major grants were required to submit evidence relating to how funding was being used halfway through the funding process. Groups in receipt of small grants were required to provide evidence to the Council by the end of a financial year.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the funding for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Grants Scheme be agreed for a further three-year period with a total grant pot of £175,000 per annum.**

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RESOLVED that

- 2) subject to approval of recommendation 1 above, the VCS Grants Scheme be delivered in accordance with Option 2 which would entail:
 - a) including up to £75,000 in the total grant funding to be available for a Financial Advice Grant;
 - b) a Grants Panel, comprising elected Members, to be established to consider and make recommendations to the Executive Committee in relation to higher grants (valued at £2,000 up to £10,000);
 - c) delegated authority being granted to the Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services, following consultation with the Officer Grants panel, to consider and agree decisions on lower grants (valued at £500 up to £2,000);
- 3) subject to agreement of proposal 2 above, five Members be appointed to serve on the Grants Panel, with appointments to be made in accordance with nominations received from the political group leaders;
- 4) the Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Policy be approved;
- 5) subject to approval of proposal 2b above, the proposed terms of reference for the Grants Panel be approved;
- 6) distributions to be passported to bereavement charities following an application process and funded by receipts from the Recycling of Metal Recovered from Cremation Scheme; these to be managed separately from the Voluntary and Community Grants Scheme; and
- 7) authority be delegated to the Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community Spaces and the Voluntary Sector, to passport the distribution of receipts from the Recycling of Metal Recovered from Cremation Scheme.

**32. ADOPTION OF FIXED PENALTY CHARGE FOR BREACH OF
COMMUNITY PROTECTION NOTICE**

The Technical Services Manager (WRS) and the Principal Officer
(Planning and Environmental Crime Enforcement – WRS)

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presented a report on the subject of the adoption of Fixed Penalty Charge Notices (FPNs) for breaches of Community Protection Notices (CPNs).

Members were informed that WRS had assumed responsibility for planning and environmental enforcement in 2024. There were certain enforcement powers that could be deployed by the Council where non-compliance was identified. There had been five cases since May 2025, involving fly tipping and littering, that had been closed.

There was a process that needed to be followed in respect of enforcement. Where anti-social behaviour (ASB) was identified, Officers would seek to impose a Community Protection Warning (CPW), which gave notice that an individual or organisation needed to address their behaviour. There was a high bar that needed to be met in order to issue a CPW. Should evidence emerge that a CPW was being breached, then a CPN could be issued. Where a CPN was breached, an FPN could be issued.

In presenting the report, Members were asked to note that FPNs would provide an additional tool that could be used to address poor behaviour where breaches of CPNs occurred. In some cases, it would be more appropriate to issue an FPN than to take court action.

Members welcomed the report and in doing so noted that enforcement action was important to deter and address poor behaviour, such as littering and fly tipping. Concerns were raised that fly tipping and litter could create health and safety challenges, including by attracting pests which had a negative impact on the local community. Members commented that it was important to ensure that business owners understood their responsibilities in respect of the environment and the consequences of poor behaviour. Where poor behaviour was unreasonable and persistent there was a need for the Council to act and FPNs could assist with this process.

During consideration of this item, Members noted that the report had been pre-scrutinised at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1st September 2025. Concerns had been raised at that meeting about the extent to which enforcement action was being taken. The Executive Committee noted that enforcement action was being taken and the FPNs would enhance this process by providing an additional tool that could be used by officers where appropriate.

In concluding their discussions in respect of this matter, Members commented that the Council had a duty to communicate to the

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public and local businesses the action that the authority was taking to address planning and environmental crimes through enforcement activities.

RECOMMENDED that

the Council adopt a Fixed Penalty Notice Charge of £100 for failure to comply with a Community Protection Notice.

33. HOUSING OMBUDSMAN FINDINGS REPORT 1 REF 202417927

The Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services presented the Housing Ombudsman's Findings Report in respect of case 202417927. This related to a complaint that had been submitted to the Housing Ombudsman by a local resident.

The purpose of the report was to learn lessons from the Housing Ombudsman's findings when investigating this complaint. This had concluded that there had been maladministration at the Council in respect of the following areas:

- The resident's reports of damp and mould in the property.
- The installation and maintenance of aids and adaptations.
- The resident's reports of structural problems with the balcony wall.
- The resident's reports of a leak to the communal entrance.

The Housing Ombudsman had identified issues with poor record keeping at the Council as well as in respect of how staff worked with people who had vulnerabilities. Staff required training in order to provide appropriate support to residents with different vulnerabilities. Issues had also been identified with complaint handling at the Council, with an emphasis having been placed on the need for staff to have empathy when working with residents. Officers were working through the Housing Ombudsman's findings with a view to identifying the most appropriate action to be taken to prevent similar issues from occurring in the future.

There was a need for the Council to be open and transparent in acknowledging that mistakes had been made and to highlight that action was being taken to address the issues that had been identified by the Housing Ombudsman. In addition, the authority needed to improve arrangements for reporting back to residents when complaints were received.

After the report had been delivered, Members discussed the Housing Ombudsman's findings and in doing so expressed disappointment that the issues that had been identified had occurred. Members acknowledged that the Council had failed the

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resident on this occasion and that lessons needed to be learned in order to ensure that other residents did not have similar experiences in the future.

During consideration of this item, Members noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had pre-scrutinised this report at a meeting held on 1st September 2025. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had discussed the findings in the report in some detail and there had been robust debate and challenge, which was welcomed by the Executive Committee. Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had suggested that it might be helpful for the Council to recruit a case worker, or multiple case workers. Executive Committee Members suggested that this could involve recruiting family liaison case workers to help address issues when they were reported to the authority at a much earlier stage. In addition, the potential to work in partnership with other organisations to recruit these case workers as multi-agency staff was highlighted for consideration.

The role of staff in handling complaints and responding to initial requests for help was discussed. Members expressed concerns that the issues identified by the Housing Ombudsman appeared to indicate that there were cultural issues amongst staff in the Housing department that needed to be addressed. Members commented that residents should be the Council's focus, as the authority's customers but unfortunately in this case, the customer had been failed. To address these cultural issues, Members commented that there needed to be greater engagement with and empowerment of Council tenants.

Reference was made to the potential for the Council to make better use of available data when training staff on how to manage different situations and to respond to residents' queries and complaints. The suggestion was made that patterns might emerge in the data that could assist staff in assessing the issues that were reported and how best to respond.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the findings, orders and recommendation from the Housing Ombudsman be noted; and**
- 2) compliance with those matters by the Council and the wider learning points be noted.**

34. HOUSING OMBUDSMAN FINDINGS REPORT 2 REF 202331009

The Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services presented the Housing Ombudsman's Findings Report in

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respect of case 202331009. As with the previous item, Members were informed that this report related to a complaint that had been received from a local resident.

In the report, the Housing Ombudsman had highlighted two key areas in which maladministration by the Council had been identified in relation to this case:

- Maladministration in the Council's response to reports from the resident of damp and mould.
- Maladministration in the Council's complaint handling.

Officers were keen to learn lessons from this case and to ensure that action was taken to address the issues that had been identified by the Housing Ombudsman moving forward.

In considering the report, Members were asked to note that the Council had already agreed to introduce a specialist Damp and Mould team. There had been successful recruitment to all of the posts in this team and new staff would commence employment with the authority over the coming weeks and months.

Consideration was given to performance data relating to damp and mould. The performance data for the first quarter of 2025/26 indicated that there had been improvements compared to the previous quarter in 2024/25.

Members discussed the report and in doing so acknowledged that there were serious issues that had been identified in the report which should not have occurred. The report had been pre-scrutinised at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1st September and there had been a very robust and challenging debate on the subject which had been very helpful.

The Committee welcomed the introduction of the Damp and Mould team and noted that new staff in this department would be commencing employment with the authority at a time when, following the end of summer, reports of damp and mould were likely to start to increase. The introduction of this team was therefore considered to be timely and would hopefully help to ensure that reports of damp and mould were handled more appropriately in future.

The need for the Council to be open and transparent in admitting failings and focusing on learning lessons for the future was highlighted by Members. It was noted that complaints needed to be taken seriously and the needs and experiences of residents was the Council's priority moving forward.

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RESOLVED that

- 1) **the findings, orders and recommendation from the Housing Ombudsman be noted; and**
- 2) **compliance with those matters by the Council and the wider learning points be noted.**

35. QUARTER 1 HOUSING CONSUMER STANDARDS REPORT

The Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services presented the Housing Consumer Standards Report for the first quarter of the 2025/26 financial year. In considering the report, Members were asked to note that the title of the report would be changing in the future. The new title would highlight the purpose of the report in monitoring the performance of Housing Services.

The report detailed the Council's performance in relation to the Regulator of Social Housing's tenant satisfaction measures. These measures were monitored as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the service, alongside performance in relation to important health and safety actions, such as completion of gas inspections at Council properties. The available data indicated that the Council's performance in relation to these KPIs was improving, when compared to the same quarter in the 2024/25 financial year. In addition, information available from the Power BI system that the Council was now using was enabling Officers to more accurately identify and assess issues when they occurred.

Following the presentation of the report, Members noted that the report had been pre-scrutinised at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1st September 2025. At this meeting, the issues raised and the Council's response had been scrutinised in detail. Comments had been made at this meeting that there had been some slippage in performance in recent years and questions were raised about whether this was supported by available evidence. Officers clarified that there were difficulties in assessing the available data as the Council had moved from an archaic IT system to a modern system in 2022 and therefore the data would need to be reviewed carefully. However, the focus of the Council remained on improving performance moving forward rather than on reflecting back to the past.

Members welcomed information contained in the report that indicated that overall performance was improving compared to the same quarter in 2024/25, although there remained areas for improvement. The suggestion was made that once handheld Totalmobile devices were introduced for the use of frontline staff, performance, including records of performance, would improve.

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RESOLVED that

the Council's 2025/26 performance against the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (Landlord) be noted.

36. REGULATOR OF SOCIAL HOUSING INSPECTION REPORT

The Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services presented the Regulator of Social Housing Inspection Report for the Executive Committee's consideration. Members were asked to note that this report included an Improvement Plan, which had incorporated a proposed governance structure, designed to address areas of concern identified by the regulator.

Following changes nationally, all social landlords managing in excess of 1,000 properties, which included Redditch Borough Council, were required to undergo an inspection by the Regulator of Social Housing. An inspection had been carried out of Redditch Borough Council's Housing Service, starting in January 2025 with a final report having been issued by the regulator in July 2025. During this inspection process, the Council's performance had been assessed in relation to housing consumer standards.

There were four different grades that could be awarded to a social housing provider in an inspection:

- C1, which was awarded to the providers that demonstrated best practice.
- C2
- C3
- C4, which was the worst grade that could be awarded.

In the final report issued by the regulator, the Council had been awarded a C3 rating. This rating had been issued for a number of reasons including:

- A lack of effective and efficient repair and maintenance services.
- Concerns relating to fire remediation actions.
- A limited stock condition survey having been conducted in the preceding five-year period. Members were asked to note that this would have been assessed at a higher level if stock condition surveys conducted in the years immediately leading up to this period had been taken into account.
- A lack of tenant engagement mechanisms where residents had opportunities to hold the authority, as landlord, to account.

There had been some positive areas of practice which had been highlighted by the regulator. This included:

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- Staff at the Council knew what stage the Council had reached and where it needed to be.
- The Council was open and transparent.

Tenant engagement was recognised as an area where the Council needed to improve. Funding was therefore proposed to support the employment of a new Tenant Engagement and Participation Officer.

Following the presentation of the report, Members noted that this item had been pre-scrutinised at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1st September 2025. All Members had been invited to attend that meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to observe the debate in respect of this item as it was recognised that it was important to ensure that all Members were informed on this subject. There had been a robust debate at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding this item and the Executive Committee welcome the challenge arising.

Consideration was given to the grade that had been awarded to Redditch Borough Council's Housing Service in the inspection. Members expressed disappointment that the Council had received a C3 grading, although it was noted that over 50 per cent of local authority social housing providers had received the same grade. To address the issues identified, Officers were already liaising with a Council that had received a C1 rating with a view to learn lessons from this provider about best practice and how to improve services. Further visits would take place in due course.

Concerns were raised that some tasks that the Council was required to complete might have been delivered but had not been recorded correctly by staff. In addition, sometimes staff might allocate tasks requested by residents to the wrong category of action, which had a negative impact on both record keeping and performance data. In this context, Members commented that it was important to ensure that cases were logged in appropriate ways and should reporting arrangements improve, Members suggested that there might be an improvement in performance data. In addition, Members highlighted that it was important not just to deliver a task but to do so correctly and to then measure tenant satisfaction with the outcomes. This would involve consideration of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Whilst some areas of performance were considered to be disappointing and in need of improvement, Members welcomed the fact that the Council had achieved 100 per cent compliance in respect of gas, fire, asbestos and lift safety checks.

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Reference was made to the approach to supporting service users adopted by other organisations. When working with people with disabilities and mental health illnesses in particular, Members commented that it was helpful to involve tenants in co-production and co-design of services. Concerns were raised that limited reference was made in the report to the involvement of tenants, which would enable this to occur, although it was acknowledged that tenant representation was proposed for the Housing Improvement Board and the Housing Strategic Oversight Board.

The Committee was informed that Officers were in the process of drafting a report that would be considered by the Executive Committee in due course on the subject of tenant involvement and how tenant engagement would work. As part of this process, Officers were aiming to have a robust structure in place. In terms of satisfaction surveys, the Totalmobile devices would be able to automatically generate tenant satisfaction surveys which would be issued to all customers who provided the Council with a mobile phone number. The questions in the survey would be structured around the tenant satisfaction measures. The results would be reported back to officers and would prompt a response where the feedback was concerning.

During consideration of this item, reference was made to an example of good practice that had been observed by Members in recent months in respect of tenant engagement. Members commented that a senior manager had recently met in person with a group of tenants in one of the community centres to discuss their concerns. The tenants had appreciated the in person dialogue and this had helped to provide the Council with credibility and it had been recognised that the staff were working with integrity. Members suggested that this approach to engagement with tenants should be encouraged amongst staff in order to improve residents' experiences.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Regulatory Judgement published by the Regulator for Social Housing on 30th July 2025 be noted, following an inspection of Redditch Borough Council's Housing Service;**
- 2) the Housing Improvement Plan, which includes actions to address areas for improvement, confirmed as part of the inspection process, be approved;**
- 3) delegation be given to the Assistant Director Environment and Housing Property and Assistant Director Community and Housing, following consultation with the Housing**

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Portfolio Holder, to revise the Housing Improvement Plan following consultation with the Regulator for Social Housing as part of their Provider Improvement Process or in response to legislative changes; and

- 4) the proposed structure for governance of the Housing Improvement Plan be approved.**

RECOMMENDED that

- 5) a supplementary estimate of £60,000 be added to the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2025/26 funded from the Housing Revenue Account Balance Reserves to:
 - a) appoint a Senior Tenant Engagement & Participation Officer (£25,000 – part year effect); and**
 - b) establish, train and manage the development of participation opportunities for Council Housing tenants and leaseholders to influence changes in the delivery of Housing services (£35,000); and****
- 6) £75,000 ongoing expenditure budget be added to the Housing Revenue Account base budget in 2026/27, funded from the Housing Revenue Account to:
 - a) continue to employ a Senior Tenant Engagement and Participation Officer (£50,000 – full year effect); and**
 - b) continue to train and manage the development of participation opportunities for Council Housing tenants and leaseholders to influence changes in the delivery of Housing services going forward (£25,000).****

**37. QUARTER 1 2025/26 FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE
MONITORING REPORT**

The Chief Finance Officer presented the finance and performance monitoring report for the first quarter of the 2025/26 financial year. Members were advised that in future, financial and performance monitoring data would be reported separately for the Executive Committee's consideration.

By the end of the first quarter, Officers were anticipating that there would be an overspend of £19,900 by the end of the financial year. Changes could occur prior to the end of the financial year but Officers would continue to monitor the budget position moving forward.

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In respect of treasury management, the Council had not borrowed from external sources during the quarter and the authority was debt free in the General Fund. Investments were held in security, liquidity and yield, which ensured that the Council received a rate of return.

Information had been included in the report in respect of expenditure on Members' ward budgets. This revealed that Members had spent more than a third of the available ward budgets by the end of the first quarter of the financial year.

Once the report had been presented, Members discussed the content and in doing so noted that savings targets had been included in the report. The Executive Committee would continue to monitor progress in relation to these savings targets as the financial year progressed.

Reference was made to the figures that had been included in the report in respect of expenditure of Members' ward budgets and questions were raised about whether the detail provided was accurate. Members commented that they were aware of some Councillors who were recorded as not having spent their budgets when they had in fact agreed to some expenditure. Officers clarified that the report related to expenditure in the first quarter of the financial year, from April to June 2025, and would not include any expenditure of ward budgets agreed by Members in July or August. This would be addressed in the monitoring report for the second quarter of the financial year instead.

The deadline for expenditure of the Members' ward budgets was also questioned. Members noted that they were being encouraged to spend ward budgets by the end of December 2025 and they queried whether this represented the final deadline. Clarification was provided that ideally ward budgets would be spent by the end of December 2025, as this would help with budget monitoring and planning for the future. However, the actual deadline for expenditure of the Members' ward budgets would be the end of the financial year on 31st March 2026. To ensure that these budgets were spent in a timely manner and in accordance with the proper process, Members requested that a reminder be issued to all Councillors regarding the deadline for expenditure of Members' ward budgets together with a copy of the form that Members needed to complete.

The performance data included in the report was also discussed. Members welcomed the inclusion of additional contextual information for some of the measures included in the report. The suggestion was made that it would be helpful for more contextual information to be included in future in respect of ASB and crime.

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Further information regarding the take up of business grants and the circumstances under which applications tended to be submitted for these grants was also requested.

During consideration of this item, Members noted that the Budget Scrutiny Working Group had pre-scrutinised this report at a meeting held on 28th August 2025. However, the group had not proposed any recommendations on this subject.

RESOLVED to NOTE

- 1) the current Revenue position of £0.020 million unfavourable variance;
- 2) the current Capital spending of £3.429 million against a budget of £8.082 million;
- 3) the current savings delivery of £0.545 million against an annual target of £2.342 million for 2025/26;
- 4) Earmarked Reserves of £27.117 million.
- 5) the Ward Budget allocation position to date of 13 approved allocations at £15,800, leaving a balance of £38,200 to be allocated before year end;
- 6) the updated procurements position set out in Appendix D, with any new items over £200,000 to be included on the Executive Committee's Work Programme;
- 7) the position on Council Tax and Business Rates;
- 8) the position on benefits processing; and
- 9) the Performance data for the period April to June 2025 (Quarter 1).

RECOMMENDED that

- 10) the Balance Sheet Monitoring Position for Quarter 1 be noted – which was the Treasury Monitoring Report and required to be reported to Council.

38. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN SCENE SETTING REPORT 2026/2027

The Chief Finance Officer presented the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Scene Setting Report 2026/27 for the Executive Committee's consideration.

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The report detailed the proposed approach to setting the budget for the period 2026/27 to 2028/29. Officers acknowledged that by the final year of the plan, the Council was no longer due to exist and would have been replaced by a unitary authority. However, it was considered prudent to include this final year in case any changes were made to the Government's timetable for Local Government Reorganisation in the meantime.

The main change that was being proposed to the budget setting process in 2026/27 was that this would be reported to Council on a single occasion, in February 2026, rather than in two tranches. This change had been made to the process in recognition of the fact that the issues identified in the Section 24 Notice that was issued to the Council in 2022 had been resolved and therefore the additional steps that had occurred in the two tranche process were no longer necessary. There would continue to be multiple opportunities for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Budget Scrutiny Working Group to challenge and scrutinise the content of the budget. In addition, it was proposed that there would be check and challenge sessions for each of the Assistant Directors as well as a Star Chamber process reviewing the budget, which would help to challenge expectations.

Following the presentation of the report, Members discussed the content and in doing so noted that there were three key elements to this report:

- Increased transparency
- Increased simplicity
- Enhanced performance monitoring

Members commented that the two-tranche process for budget setting had been very time consuming. The approach detailed in the report would be more efficient and would enable Officers to also dedicate sufficient time to working on Local Government Reorganisation.

Consideration was given to the proposed pay award of 2 per cent that had been incorporated into the report alongside a cost of living increase of 1 per cent. Members questioned whether this was prudent at a time when inflation was at 3 per cent. Officers clarified that it was considered best practice to anticipate a pay increase that matched the Government's guidelines for where inflation should be. There was a risk that if the Council recorded an anticipated increase of 3 per cent or above this could raise expectations that staff would receive greater increases to their pay than the target inflation level. However, Officers were anticipating that inflation

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would be higher than 2 per cent and for that reason, the 1 per cent cost of living increase had been included as a contingency.

Questions were also raised with regard to the Fairer Funding Review for local government and whether the outcomes of this review had been confirmed. Clarification was provided that the Council had responded to the Government's recent consultation on the Fairer Funding Review. External experts consulted about the review had indicated that they were anticipating that Redditch Borough Council would benefit from this review by circa £900,000, due to the levels of deprivation in the Borough. There was the possibility that, depending on the outcomes of further reviews of the indices of multiple deprivation in relation to Redditch, there might be more favourable outcomes for Redditch in the future.

During consideration of this item, Members noted that the Budget Scrutiny Working Group had pre-scrutinised this report at a meeting held on 28th August 2025. However, the group had not proposed any recommendations on this subject.

RESOLVED that

the proposed budget process be followed for the 2026/27 annual budget and for the Medium Term Financial Plan up to 2028/29.

39. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Members considered the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 7th July 2025 and in doing so noted that there were no outstanding recommendations requiring consideration on this occasion.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 7th July 2025 be noted.

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

There were no referrals from either the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or the Executive Advisory Panels on this occasion.

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41. DISPOSAL OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT ASSETS - FOUR GARAGES AT ASHORNE CLOSE, MATCHBOROUGH, REDDITCH

The Housing Property Services Manager presented the Disposal of Housing Revenue Account Assets – Four Garages at Ashorne Close, Matchborough Redditch report.

The Executive Committee was informed that Redditch Borough Council managed in excess of 1,000 garages located across the Borough. These garages had been built in a variety of styles and were in various different conditions by the date of the meeting. Unfortunately, some of the garages were dilapidated and could become a potential hazard to the public if they were left in their current condition. Many of the garages had been designed in the 1960s and 1970s and they were now difficult to repair. Whilst four garages had been referred to in the title of the item, Members were in fact being asked to agree to dispose of eight garages.

Members discussed the proposals detailed in the report and in doing so commented that many of the garages were quite small and not fit for purpose for modern vehicles, which tended to be quite large. Furthermore, many of the garages were no longer used by local residents. At the same time, parking remained a challenge, particularly in Matchborough. Once removed, the garages would be replaced with car parking spaces and Members commented that this was likely to be welcomed by local residents.

RESOLVED that

- 7) the 8 garages located at Ashorne Close, Matchborough be declared surplus to requirements and demolished on the grounds of structural safety; and**
- 8) subject to planning permission, the garages be replaced with 10 parking spaces.**

42. 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 discussed on this occasion.

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43. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that:

Under S100 A (4) 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 matters on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 of the said act, as amended.

Minute Item No 44 – Disposal of Housing Revenue Account Assets – 53 Parsons Road, Southcrest, Redditch and 53 Crabbs Cross Lane, Crabbs Cross, Redditch.

44. DISPOSAL OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT ASSETS - 53 PARSONS ROAD, SOUTHCREST, REDDITCH. 53 CRABBS CROSS LANE, CRABBS CROSS REDDITCH

The Housing Property Services Manager presented a report concerning the disposal of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) assets at 53 Parsons Road, Southcrest, Redditch and 53 Crabbs Cross Lane, Crabbs Cross, Redditch.

The Executive Committee was informed that both properties were in a dilapidated condition. The potential for the Council to upgrade these properties had been reviewed but the conclusion had been reached that it would be too financially costly to bring these properties into a habitable state. Therefore, it was considered preferable to dispose of both properties and the Council could use the capital receipts to invest in new properties as part of the Housing Growth Programme.

Members noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had pre-scrutinised this report at the meeting held on 1st September 2025. There had been robust debate, including in exempt session, at that meeting. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was thanked for their hard work in reviewing this matter.

There was general consensus amongst Members that it would be appropriate for the Council to dispose of these assets due to the condition of the properties. Members expressed hopes that the capital receipts arising could be used to make better investments moving forward.

RESOLVED that

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- 1) **53 Parsons Road, Southcrest, Redditch be declared surplus to Council requirements;**
- 2) **authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer and to the Assistant Director of Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services to dispose of the site at market value;**
- 3) **any HRA capital receipt received from the sale of No. 53 Parsons Road, Southcrest be allocated to the HRA Capital Programme;**
- 4) **53 Crabbs Cross Lane, Crabbs Cross, be declared surplus to Council requirements;**
- 5) **authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer and to the Assistant Director of Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services to dispose of the site at market value; and**
- 6) **any HRA capital receipt received from the sale of 53 Crabbs Cross Lane, Crabbs Cross be allocated to the HRA Capital Programme.**

(During consideration of this item, Members voted on matters that, if debated in public session, would have necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. This information was not discussed in the public domain on the grounds that information would be revealed which related to any individual, information which was likely to reveal the identity of any individual and information relating to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)).

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 8.12 pm

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 1, 2, 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), Councillor Craig Warhurst (Vice-Chair) and Councillors William Boyd, Claire Davies, James Fardoe, Andrew Fry, Sachin Mathur, Rita Rogers and Paul Wren

Also Present:

Councillor Sharon Harvey – Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Environmental Services
Councillor Jane Spilsbury – Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Performance, Engagement and Governance
Councillor Juma Begum – Portfolio Holder for Community Spaces and Voluntary Sector
Councillor Bill Hartnett – Portfolio Holder for Housing

Officers:

Guy Revans, Simon Parry, Judith Willis, Toni Ainscough, Mark Cox, Tara Day and Andrew Rainbow

Democratic Services Officers:

Mat Sliwinski

28. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no apologies for absence.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of party whip.

30. MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny meeting of 7th July 2025 were submitted for Members' consideration.

Chair

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RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 7th July 2025 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

31. PUBLIC SPEAKING

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

32. REGULATOR OF SOCIAL HOUSING INSPECTION REPORT AND HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PLAN - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services presented a report on the subject of the Inspection Report by the Social Housing Regulator and the Housing Improvement Plan. Members were informed that the Council received a C3 Regulatory Judgment in relation to its social housing, indicating serious failings in delivering housing services, particularly in repairs and maintenance, fire safety, tenant engagement, and data management. It was noted that the regulatory judgment was graded from C1 to C4 with C1 being the highest grade and C4 representing most severe level of non-compliance. 56 per cent of local authorities (with social housing stock) inspected had received C3 gradings.

The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) identified key concerns around approximately 3,000 overdue repairs, 3,000 outstanding fire safety actions, limited stock condition surveys, and insufficient tenant involvement mechanisms. The RSH acknowledged the Council's commitment to improvement, and highlighted positive practices in electrical safety, anti-social behaviour management, and the establishment of a Damp and Mould team.

The Council had developed a Housing Improvement Plan with the interim plan approved by the Executive Committee in June 2025. The Plan had been updated following the announcement of the inspection result on 30 July 2025. The Plan contained a set of targeted actions which included the appointment of a Senior Tenant Engagement and Participation Officer, establishment of tenant forums and training programmes, implementation of new systems for repairs and safety compliance, development of a five-year rolling programme for stock condition surveys, and an enhanced governance through a multi-tiered oversight structure.

The Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services highlighted areas of progress that had already been made

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within the housing service. It was noted that many of these improvement actions had been in progress for some time prior to the inspection and the inspection result. The areas of progress included:

1. Publication of annual report to council tenants at the end of July 2025. The annual reports would now be produced every year.
2. Work on initiatives for tenant engagement.
3. A 50 per cent reduction in overdue repairs with this outcome prompted by a root and branch analysis undertaken in June and July 2025.
4. A 94 per cent reduction in outstanding water safety inspections.
5. Mobilisation of a caretaker service for communal areas within communal blocks etc.
6. Recruitment of a Damp and Mould team to deal specifically with tenants experiencing issues in this area.
7. Improvement in complaint handling with Q1 2025-26 recording progress over the same quarter in 2024-25, as the Council responded to a larger proportion of complaints within agreed timescales. (For Stage 1 complaints 93 per cent responded to within timescales, up from 62 per cent at Q1 2024-25, for stage 2 100 per cent within timescales up from 80 per cent at Q1 2024-25).
8. Commencement of a fire door / hazard inspection programme within communal blocks.

Members subsequently discussed the report in detail and in doing so commented on the following areas:

- Concern among Members that some changes were only prompted or accelerated by the inspection, for example in relation to Council's engagement and communication with tenants. A Member reported that for many Members large amount of casework continued to be from tenants in relation to housing matters. It was further highlighted that this high casework levels tended to occur where officers did not communicate effectively with tenants. this needed to continue to be addressed moving forward. Officers reported that the report proposed the employment of a Senior Tenant Engagement and Participation Officer in addition to development of participation opportunities for Council Housing Tenants to address these issues.
- The improvements that had taken place since the Service Review and restructuring of the Housing Property Services

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including the Capital Team in 2019. It was highlighted that in 2019 the Service was at a point of full failure within no performance measures, lack of data on voids, a lack of gas safety records, lack of oversight in respect of contractors and many other issues. Since the restructure and change of leadership and management, there had been an overhaul in operations with improvements made as set out within the officer presentation.

- The Council's commitment to keep progressing was highlighted with the increased capital investment in its housing stock as shown through the 5-year Housing Capital Programme and the long-term HRA 30-year Capital Investment Programme, agreed in February 2023.
- The decrease in the number of stock condition surveys carried out over the last two years. It was noted that as improvements in other areas of the service were prioritised over the last few years, there had been a drop to the condition surveys. Members were assured that this was being actively addressed. It was noted that stock condition surveys were carried out to 20 per cent of the housing stock in the last five years but this figure would increase to 75 per cent if data for the last six years was taken into account in the inspection report.
- Changes to modern data management systems. Officers explained that the Council had changed to Civica CX housing management system as part of the restructure, which had led to significant improvements in data management with performance data no also reported through PowerBI. Further improvements were being introduced and in respect of contractors inputting data and signing off completed jobs electronically, it was reported that Total Mobile application was in the testing stage. Once fully released this would enable contractors to sign off completed repairs electronically. Currently, however, repairs reports were undertaken on paper which increased likelihood of error in reporting fixed repairs.
- The frequency with which Officers had previously reported on the Council's performance in respect of the Housing Regulator's tenant satisfaction measures. Members were informed that this had been identified as a gap in reporting procedures and there would be a quarterly report to Members on Housing Performance and quarterly updates on the Housing Improvement Plan going forward.

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- The need for cross-party housing improvement panel / working group to be set up to enable Members to scrutinise progress in carrying out the Housing Improvement Plan initiatives. The Officers responded that it was envisaged that task and finish groups would be set up by Overview and Scrutiny to look at specific housing issues as appropriate.
- The need for a tenant advisory panel which would be a mechanism through which feedback could be provided directly to Portfolio Holder for Housing and senior officers. It was noted that tenant engagement was considered within the proposed governance structure including through tenant representation at the Housing Strategic Oversight Board (appendix 5 to the report).
- Learning from peers post-inspection and in the process of delivering the Housing Improvement Plan. The Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services reported that the Council had had an active engagement with the Regulator with monthly meetings set to continue to promote oversight. In addition, the Council had held meetings with chief officers at Berneslai Homes, a social housing provider company controlled by Barnsley Council, which was the first local authority to have received the highest C1 grading for Housing Regulator's Consumer Standards. Redditch Borough Council Officers were due to travel to Barnsley to observe their arrangements in October 2025.
- The inclusion of the Housing Improvement Plan on the Council's Corporate Risk Register. It was stated that whilst the Plan was not currently included in the risk register, in response to Members' feedback Officers would check as an action how the Plan could be flagged up as a corporate risk.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing addressed the Committee and commented that following the restructure of the service both administrations had made improvements to the service but there remained a lot of work to resolve the problems highlighted within the inspection report. The Portfolio Holder explained that the main weakness in relation to Council's performance lied in the data gaps in areas such as housing stock condition and tenant profile data. It was highlighted that the Council had improved its complaints handling among other things. The Council's Social Housing Annual Report provided to tenants also gave an honest and transparent

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reflection of Council's performance at this point and actions that would be implemented.

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Performance, Engagement and Governance addressed the Committee and noted that one of the main issues highlighted by the Regulator was in the area governance and tenant engagement and to address this there were Governance Proposals within the Housing Improvement Plan to improve tenant representation and the communication between senior leadership and operational level. The Portfolio Holder highlighted that the changes required involved a lot of culture change across the organisation, including at operational level, and it was imperative that qualitative data was considered as well as quantitative to drive sustainable improvement.

The recommendations as set out in the report were endorsed by the Committee.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) The Regulatory Judgement published by the Regulator for Social Housing on 30th July 2025 is noted, following an inspection of Redditch Borough Council's Housing Service.**
- 2) The Housing Improvement Plan, which includes actions to address areas for improvement, confirmed as part of the inspection process, is approved.**
- 3) Delegation be given to the Assistant Director Environment & Housing Property and Assistant Director Community & Housing, following consultation with the Housing Portfolio Holder, to revise the Housing Improvement Plan following consultation with the Regulator for Social Housing as part of their Provider Improvement Process or in response to legislative changes.**
- 4) The proposed structure for governance of the Housing Improvement Plan be approved.**
- 5) A supplementary estimate of £60,000 is added to the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2025/26 funded from the Housing Revenue Account Balance Reserves to:**

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- a. appoint a Senior Tenant Engagement & Participation Officer (£25,000 – part year effect) and:
 - b. establish, train and manage the development of participation opportunities for Council Housing tenants and leaseholders to influence changes in the delivery of Housing services (£35,000).
 - 6) £75,000 ongoing expenditure budget is added to the Housing Revenue Account base budget in 2026/27, funded from the Housing Revenue Account to:
 - a. continue to employ a Senior Tenant Engagement & Participation Officer (£50,000 – full year effect) and:
 - b. continue to train and manage the development of participation opportunities for Council Housing tenants and leaseholders to influence changes in the delivery of Housing services going forward (£25,000).
- 33. VOLUNTARY SECTOR GRANTS SCHEME 2026/27 TO 2029/30 - PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Community Services Manager presented a report on the subject of the Voluntary Sector Grants Scheme 2026/27 to 2029/30. Members were informed that for the previous three-year period, the Council had provided £150,000 in support to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). This included a grant of £50,000 to the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and £100,000 in major as well as small grants to a range of VCS organisations and local groups. During this time, decisions on funding had been made by Officers.

In the report, Officers were proposing to change the Council's approach to funding VCS organisations, although it was important to note that funding provision would remain available. Under the report's proposals, it was proposed that the Council should allocate £175,000 per year to support VCS groups. This would include £75,000 for a financial advice service and £100,000 for distribution of higher and lower value grants to VCS groups. The sum for higher and lower level grants would be further split with a pot of £90,000 allocated to provision of higher value grants (£2,000 to £10,000 in value) and £10,000 pot for smaller value grants (£500 to £2,000 in value).

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It was further proposed that a Grants Panel, comprising a membership of elected Members, should be reintroduced to consider applications for higher value grants. Smaller value grants would continue to be determined by Officers.

Members were asked to note that there was funding, derived from scrap metal recovered through the cremation scheme operated by Bereavement Services, which was invested in VCS activities. This was entirely separate to the rest of the VCS funding programme and the level of this funding could not be predicted in advance as it varied year to year. Officers were proposing that authority should be delegated to the Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community Spaces and the Voluntary Sector, to distribute this funding.

Following the presentation, some Members expressed reservations about reintroducing an elected member Grants Panel and questioned the rationale of how this would improve the scheme. It was commented that for a number of years Officers had had delegated authority to consider VCS grant applications and this was felt by some Members to be a more transparent approach, ensuring efficiency of decision-making and removing possibility of political influence over the process. In response, it was explained that the Member-led Grants Panel would be cross-party and would ensure democratic accountability and public scrutiny of the decisions over allocations.

Consideration was also given to the advantage of a Member-led Grants Panel in that smaller charities, for example those that could not afford to employ professional bid writers, had a more equal chance in this format as Members could ask questions and clarify points on the application submitted with each applicant before the decision to award a grant is made. With an officer assessed grants format, this was more difficult. It was clarified that under the new grants policy there would still be a uniform scoring matrix as under officer delegations and that meetings of the Grants Panel would be overseen by the Grants Manager.

Given the point raised about the advantage of a Member-led grants panel, a Member questioned why there would only be a Panel for higher level grants, where it was more likely that applications would mostly be received from larger voluntary sector organisations that could afford to employ bid writers. A Member commented it would be more sensible instead to have an elected Member Grants Panel for lower grants where most organisations applying would be small and where explanations provided in Panel meetings could be of

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most relevance. It was replied that this was not deemed practical as this would require Panel to convene at numerous meetings due to the volume of applications.

It was reiterated that it was planned the elected member Grants Panel would comprise five Members and it would be a cross-party forum. It was anticipated that Members on the Panel would be required to attend two to three meetings to consider all applications received.

It was clarified that the VCS Grants Policy required and would require each applicant to disclose other sources of grant funding that they received, including from public bodies. The Council encouraged funding applications from existing and/or ongoing or started projects, rather than only proposed/planned projects. Officers highlighted that the VCS Grants Scheme had seen increased numbers of organisations applying and it was noted that the scheme had historically been over-subscribed. A Member questioned why the scheme needed changing given that demand was increasing and was already successful in attracting both small and large voluntary sector organisations.

The recommendations as stated in the report were endorsed by the Committee.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) The funding for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Grants Scheme be agreed for a further three-year period with a total grant pot of £175k per annum;**
- 2) Subject to approval of recommendation 1 above, the VCS Grants Scheme be delivered in accordance with Option 2 which entails:**
 - a) Including up to £75k in the total grant funding to be available for a Financial Advice Grant**
 - b) A Grants Panel, comprising elected Members, to be established to consider and make recommendations to the Executive Committee in relation to higher grants (valued at £2k up to £10k)**
 - c) Delegated authority being granted to the Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services, following consultation with the Officer Grants panel, to consider and agree decisions on lower grants (valued at £500 up to £2k);**

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- 3) Subject to agreement of proposal 2 above, five Members be appointed to serve on the Grants Panel, with appointments to be made in accordance with nominations received from the political group leaders;
- 4) the Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Policy be approved;
- 5) Subject to approval of proposal 2b above, agreement of the proposed terms of reference for the Grants Panel be approved;
- 6) Distributions are passported to bereavement charities following an application process and are funded by receipts from the Recycling of Metal Recovered from Cremation Scheme; these are managed separately from the Voluntary and Community Grants Scheme; and
- 7) Authority be delegated to the Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community Spaces and the Voluntary Sector, to passport the distribution of receipts from the Recycling of Metal Recovered from Cremation Scheme.

34. ADOPTION OF FIXED PENALTY CHARGE FOR BREACH OF COMMUNITY PROTECTION NOTICE - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Technical Services Manager (WRS) and the Principal Officer (Planning and Environmental Crime Enforcement – WRS) presented a report on the subject of the adoption of Fixed Penalty Charge Notices (FPNs) for breaches of Community Protection Notices (CPNs).

Members were informed that WRS had assumed responsibility for planning and environmental enforcement in 2024. There were certain enforcement powers that could be deployed by the Council where non-compliance was identified.

There was a process that needed to be followed in respect of enforcement. Where anti-social behaviour (ASB) was identified, Officers would seek to impose a Community Protection Warning (CPW), which gave notice that an individual or organisation needed to address their behaviour. There was a high bar that needed to be met in order to issue a CPW. Should evidence emerge that a CPW was being breached, then a CPN could be issued. Where a CPN was breached, an FPN could be issued.

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It was stated that FPNs would provide an additional tool that could be used to address poor behaviour where breaches of CPNs occurred. In some cases, it would be more appropriate to issue an FPN than to take court action. Equally, there would be no obligation to issue FPN if this was not identified as a correct course of action.

Some Members expressed frustration that they had not seen enough enforcement work undertaken in Redditch and were unsure how anti-social behaviour breaches would be enforced given the lack of capacity within WRS at the moment. It was responded that currently there were three officers dealing with enviro-crime across Redditch and Bromsgrove. It was highlighted that the WRS had issued two CPNs in Bromsgrove District and this measure was thought to be an important additional tool to officers.

Some Members questioned in what way the adoption of a fixed penalty for breaches of a CPN would lead to offenders changing their behaviour. It was explained that a CPN was served where there were reasonable grounds to believe the offender's conduct was having a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality. Section 52 of Part 4 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 provided that might issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) as an alternative to prosecution for breach of a CPN. In cases of lower end offences this enabled a tool to be in place that allowed a reprimand to be given to offenders without going to prosecution. In addition, it could prompt a person served with a CPN to engage with enforcement officers before the matter was escalated to the courts.

It was commented that evidence needed to be seen of how this measure could lead to behavioural changes in communities going forward and the extent to which enforcement action was being taken. In this regard it was proposed that Crime and Disorder should consider a report on the Community Protection Notice (CPN), and the effectiveness of the fixed penalty notice and the wider WRS anti-social behaviour (ASB) enforcement regime on the levels of ASB within Redditch. This proposal was seconded and on being put to the vote resolved.

RECOMMENDED that

the Council adopt a Fixed Penalty Notice Charge of £100 for failure to comply with a Community Protection Notice.

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RESOLVED that

the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel receive a report on the Community Protection Notice (CPN), which assesses the effectiveness of introducing the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) enforcement regime, including the fixed penalty notice referenced in the above resolution, on reducing Anti-Social Behaviour.

35. QUARTER 1 HOUSING CONSUMER STANDARDS REPORT - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services presented the Housing Consumer Standards Report for the first quarter of the 2025/26 financial year. The report detailed the Council's performance in relation to 10 of the Regulator of Social Housing tenant satisfaction measures. It was reported that Council had achieved targets regarding Building Safety measures covering compliance, however, there remained urgent remedial works, for example in relation to outstanding high-risk fire remedial actions.

The available data indicated that the Council's performance across the 10 landlord measures in Housing was improving, when compared to the same quarter in the 2024/25 financial year. In addition, information available from the Power BI system that the Council was now using was enabling Officers to more accurately identify and assess issues when they occurred. It was highlighted in relation to direct tenant data that in Q1 2025/26, the Service received 23 complaints and 54 complements.

Following the presentation of the report, a Member queried the reason for a drop in performance in lift safety checks, from 100 per cent in Q1 2024/25 to 87 per cent in Q1 2025/26. The Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services explained that in Quarter 1 of 2025/26, the Council's insurer experienced difficulties accessing one of the lifts for inspection. This had now been remedied and the inspection undertaken, however, as it was not completed in the required timescales which had resulted in the reported figure.

It was queried whether joint gas and electric inspections were still being undertaken. It was responded that this had been discontinued for practical reasons as electrical tests were done every five years and gas tests every twelve months and combining these in a single visit created scheduling challenges. It was noted that analysis was being done why some properties did not reach the target in relation

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to the various safety checks but difficulties in gaining access to the properties had been highlighted as an issue in some cases.

RESOLVED that

the Council's 2025/26 performance against the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (Landlord) is noted.

36. HOUSING OMBUDSMAN FINDINGS REPORT 1 REF 202417927 - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services presented the Housing Ombudsman's Findings Report in respect of case 202417927. This related to a complaint that had been submitted to the Housing Ombudsman by a local resident.

The Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services apologised on behalf of the Housing department to the residents affected and the Committee for the maladministration found in the two Ombudsman cases presented before the Committee this evening.

The purpose of the report was to learn lessons from the Housing Ombudsman's findings when investigating this complaint. This had concluded that there had been maladministration at the Council in respect of the following areas:

- The resident's reports of damp and mould in the property.
- The installation and maintenance of aids and adaptations.
- The resident's reports of structural problems with the balcony wall.
- The resident's reports of a leak to the communal entrance.

The Housing Ombudsman had identified issues with poor record keeping at the Council as well as in respect of how staff worked with people who had vulnerabilities. Staff required training in order to provide appropriate support to residents with different vulnerabilities. Issues had also been identified with complaint handling at the Council, with an emphasis having been placed on the need for staff to have empathy when working with residents. Officers were working through the Housing Ombudsman's findings with a view to identifying the most appropriate action to be taken to prevent similar issues from occurring in the future.

Following the presentation, a Member commented that when any concerns with tenant's property or vulnerabilities were identified, it should be the responsibility and due diligence of every employee

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who comes into contact with that tenant to escalate any concerns urgently with the Housing department. There needed to be a similar principle to safeguarding, that it is everyone's responsibility, to be adopted by all employees/contractors coming in contact with a tenant. A Member commented that the detail described within the Housing Ombudsman Findings Report appeared to indicate that there were cultural issues amongst staff in the Housing department that needed to be addressed.

Some Members suggested it might be helpful for the Council to have a case worker, or multiple case workers, who could be someone 'entrenched' within the system and be a central point of contact in relation to a tenant. This would enable problems, such as special support needs, repairs or damp and mould, to be raised with management at an early stage.

It was suggested that this could involve recruiting family liaison case workers. In addition, the potential to work in partnership with other organisations to recruit these case workers as multi-agency staff was also highlighted for consideration. It was commented that the Council's Neighbourhood and Tenancy Officers were also well placed to spot concerns with a tenant's property at an early stage, however, the team's capacity remained limited.

Members commented that residents should be the Council's focus, as the authority's customers but unfortunately in this case, the customer had been failed. To address cultural issues, Members commented that there needed to be greater engagement with and empowerment of Council tenants.

It was highlighted that in cases where access to the property was difficult or where tenants were refusing access, there was a need to involve tenancy officers at an early stage and for more junior officers to be proactive in raising and addressing concerns.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) The findings, orders and recommendation from the Housing Ombudsman be noted.**
- 2) Compliance with those matters by the Council and the wider learning points be noted.**

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37. HOUSING OMBUDSMAN FINDINGS REPORT 2 REF 202331009 - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services presented the Housing Ombudsman's Findings Report in respect of case 202331009. As with the previous item, Members were informed that this report related to a complaint that had been received from a local resident.

In the report, the Housing Ombudsman had highlighted two key areas in which maladministration by the Council had been identified in relation to this case:

- Maladministration in the Council's response to reports from the resident of damp and mould.
- Maladministration in the Council's complaint handling.

In considering the report, Members were asked to note that the Council had already agreed to introduce a specialist Damp and Mould team. There had been successful recruitment to all of the posts in this team and new staff would commence employment with the authority over the coming weeks and months.

Officers explained that complaint handling in quarter 4 2024/25 was below par and the improvements seen in quarter 1 2025/26 needed to be embedded. It was noted that a programme of training was being rolled out in the Housing department to prioritise training of staff, including courses for relevant staff to be trained in relation to dealing with queries from vulnerable customers. The Regulator for Social Housing would be introducing a training qualification standard which would require all staff to gain the right qualifications for specific requirements.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) The findings, orders and recommendation from the Housing Ombudsman be noted.
- 2) Compliance with those matters by the Council and the wider learning points be noted.

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

It was requested that the following items from the Executive Work Programme be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme as pre-scrutiny items:

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- Bereavement Services – Burial Strategy (due for 24 November 2025 Overview and Scrutiny meeting)
- Biodiversity First Consideration Report (due for 12 January 2026 Overview and Scrutiny meeting)
- Climate Change Strategy 2026 to 2031 (due for 12 January 2026 Overview and Scrutiny meeting)

It was requested that all the finance-related reports referenced within the Executive Work Programme be added for the consideration of Budget Scrutiny Working Group.

RESOLVED that

the items detailed above be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme.

39. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

It was confirmed that the Overview and Scrutiny work programme would be updated with items selected for pre-scrutiny under the previous agenda item – the Executive Committee's Work Programme.

RESOLVED that

the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be updated as per the items selected under the previous agenda item.

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

Updates were provided on the meetings of Task Groups and Working Groups as follows:

- a) Budget Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Warhurst

Councillor Warhurst reported that the last meeting took place on Thursday 28 August and the Working Group had not made any recommendations concerning any of the finance reports considered (that are due to be considered by Executive Committee on 2 September).

- b) Performance Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Warhurst

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It was confirmed that the only meeting of this group to have been arranged to date for this municipal year remained scheduled to take place on 2 October 2025.

c) Post-16 Education Task Group – Chair, Councillor Warhurst

It was noted that further meetings of this Task Group are being arranged for Autumn 2025.

RESOLVED that

the Task Groups, Short Sharp Reviews and Working Groups Update Reports be noted.

41. 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 had submitted his apologies from the latest meeting which took place in the morning (1st September).

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

Councillor Fardoe reported that at the last meeting an update relating to Midlands Rail Hub (region's rail improvement scheme) was provided including that two trains per hour would continue with up to three services per hour at peak times on the cross-city line (Redditch-Lichfield line through Birmingham).

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

Councillor Fry reported that the first meeting of this body in this municipal year took place on 30th July 2025 at Pershore (hosted by Wychavon District Council). The main item on the agenda was routine immunisation in relation to which it was noted that there was concern around increase in measles cases in the UK, with concern around higher risk of importation of measles from abroad during the summer holidays. In relation to vaccinations uptake, there was a slow but gradual decline in the pre-school vaccination uptake over

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the last ten years, although this trend was less pronounced in Worcestershire than England as a whole.

Councillor Fry noted in relation to the governance of the HOSC Committee that the Committee comprised representatives from the Worcestershire County Council (WCC) and the six district councils in Worcestershire. The WCC had yet to appoint its two representatives to the Committee and there remained two elected member vacancies on the HOSC Committee as a result. Councillor Fry expressed hope that these positions could be appointed to by WCC in the near future to ensure full membership.

RESOLVED that

the External Scrutiny Bodies updates be noted.

42. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that

under S.100 (A) (4) 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 matters on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act, as amended:

Minute Item 43 – Disposal of Housing Revenue Account Assets – Four garages at Ashorne Close, Matchborough, Redditch – Pre-Scrutiny

Minute Item 44 – Disposal of Housing Revenue Account Assets – 53 Parsons Road, Southcrest, Redditch. 53 Crabbs Cross Lane, Crabbs Cross, Redditch – Pre-Scrutiny.

43. DISPOSAL OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT ASSETS - FOUR GARAGES AT ASHORNE CLOSE, MATCHBOROUGH, REDDITCH - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Housing Property Services Manager presented the report and advised the Committee of a typographical error in the title of the report in that this report concerned the proposal to dispose of eight garages at Ashorne Close and not four as stated in the title of the report.

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The eight garages were built in the 1970s and were concrete beam garage. These garages had been deemed uneconomic to repair and it was proposed that they be demolished on the grounds of structural safety. It was clarified that in respect of Ashorne Close, it was proposed that ten car parking spaces be created that would be free of charge and accessible on a first-come, first-served basis.

A Member asked whether secure bike parking could be installed as part of this proposal and it was responded that this would be considered for similar schemes in the future. In response to a further question, it was stated that this land was not appropriate for housing as the area was too small.

A question was also asked regarding the potential to install Zest electric vehicle charging points at the site. Officers responded that electric charging points take up more space than ordinary parking so might not be suitable for this particular site, however, as part of the Council's contract with Zest there was an opportunity to review EV charging locations and the potential sites would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

The recommendations as stated in the report were endorsed by the Committee.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) The 8 garages located at Ashorne Close, Matchborough (as shown on the plan at Appendix 1) be declared surplus to requirements and demolished on the grounds of structural safety.**
- 2) Subject to planning permission the garages be replaced with 10 parking spaces as shown on the plan at Appendix 2.**

(During consideration of this item, Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to move to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed that included information relating to any individual.)

44. DISPOSAL OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT ASSETS - 53 PARSONS ROAD, SOUTHCREST, REDDITCH. 53 CRABBS CROSS LANE, CRABBS CROSS, REDDITCH - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Housing Property Services Manager presented a report concerning the disposal of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) assets

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at 53 Parsons Road, Southcrest, Redditch and 53 Crabbs Cross Lane, Crabbs Cross, Redditch.

Overview and Scrutiny was informed that both properties were in a dilapidated condition. The potential for the Council to upgrade these properties had been reviewed but the conclusion had been reached that the cost of bringing these properties to a habitable state would not be financially viable for the Council. Therefore, it was considered preferable to dispose of both properties and the Council could use the capital receipts to invest in new properties as part of the Housing Growth Programme.

During the debate, Members discussed the specific conditions and planning features of the two properties and it was concluded that these properties would not be viable to bring back to use by the Council.

The recommendations as stated in the report were endorsed by the Committee.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) 53 Parsons Road, Southcrest, Redditch be declared surplus to Council requirements.**
- 2) Authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer and to the Assistant Director of Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services to dispose of the site at market value.**
- 3) Any HRA capital receipt received from the sale of No. 53 Parsons Road, Southcrest be allocated to the HRA Capital Programmes.**
- 4) 53 Crabbs Cross Lane, Crabbs Cross, be declared surplus to Council requirements.**
- 5) Authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer and to the Assistant Director of Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services to dispose of the site at market value.**
- 6) Any HRA capital receipt received from the sale of 53 Crabbs Cross Lane, Crabbs Cross be allocated to the HRA Capital Programmes.**

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(During consideration of this item, Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to move to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed that included information relating to any individual, information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual, and information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)).

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 9.12 pm

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 1, 2, 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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