

MINUTES

Present:

Councillors Susan Eacock, James Aston, Joe Baker, Roger Bennett, William Boyd, Brandon Clayton, Matthew Dormer, James Fardoe, Simon Farmer, Andrew Fry, Sharon Harvey, Joanna Kane, Wanda King, Nicola Lloyd, David Meredith, Gemma Monaco, Ashley Monk, Nic Pioli, Gary Slim, Jen Snape, Jane Spilsbury and Monica Stringfellow

Officers:

Mike Dunphy, Claire Felton, John Leach, Helena Plant, Guy Revans and James Walton

Democratic Services Officers:

Jess Bayley-Hill

42. WELCOME

The Mayor welcomed all those present to the meeting.

At the start of the meeting, the Mayor advised Members that the Equalities Strategy had been included twice on the agenda. It was noted that this had arisen as a result of an administrative error and that the report would be considered only once, as a recommendation arising from the Executive Committee meeting held on 8th September 2026.

In addition, Council was informed that the Food Waste Collections Implementation report had been withdrawn from the agenda for this meeting. This was because work relating to the Medium Term Financial Plan, as referenced in the recommendation, remained ongoing and therefore Council was not yet in a position to make a decision on the policy.

43. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Juliet Barker Smith, Bill Harnett, Rita Rogers, Craig Warhurst and Ian Woodall.

Chair

44. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

45. MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD ON 10TH AUGUST 2026 AND OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD ON 26TH AUGUST 2026

The minutes of the Council meetings held on 10th August and 26th August 2026 were submitted. Clarification was provided that the minutes were considered for accuracy only.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 10th August and 26th August 2026 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Mayor.

46. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following announcements were made at the meeting.

The Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor reported that she had attended the Redditch Carnival on Saturday 19th September 2026, which had attracted a substantial turnout, with hundreds of residents and their families in attendance. The Mayor expressed her appreciation to those Councillors who had supported with funding for the event and stated her hope that such support would continue in future years to help preserve the tradition.

The Mayor concluded her announcements by inviting Members to attend a Civic Service she would be hosting on Sunday 29th November 2026 at St Stephen's Church.

The Leader's Announcements

The Leader advised Members that he had attended a meeting of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Board in recent weeks, during which the Mayor of the West Midlands, Richard Parker, had highlighted that there were funding opportunities available for Redditch, including support for housing provision.

Chief Executive's Announcements

The Chief Executive provided Council with an update on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Members were informed that

the Minister for Local Government, Devolution and Regional Growth had written to Councils in Worcestershire on 7th September 2026 requesting that implementation work relating to LGR be paused. It was reported that the Council was considering the implications of this request and that officers had been asked to identify and highlight any concerns to ensure that Members remained informed.

In the meantime, the focus of work had shifted to preparatory and housekeeping activities associated with LGR. Members were advised that any references to a particular LGR model contained within reports on the agenda would be amended as appropriate. It was further reported that feedback from the Government was expected by the end of October 2026.

47. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE (PROCEDURE RULE 9)

The following Question on Notice was submitted by Councillor Sharon Harvey in advance of the meeting for the consideration of the Leader:

“Please can the Leader update the Council on the progress of the £1.6 million Community Investment Fund which was agreed within the last budget?”

In responding to the question, the Leader advised that on 23rd February 2026 the Executive Committee agreed the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), which was subsequently approved by Council on 2nd March 2026. As part of the MTFP, the creation of an earmarked reserve of £1.6 million for a Community Investment Fund (CIF) had been approved.

The Leader explained that the same report had also included approval of a capital programme incorporating new projects totalling £1.739 million. It had been noted within the report that only £1.1 million of funding was available within the capital financing budget and that any additional funding requirement would need to be financed from the CIF. As the additional capital funding had subsequently been approved by both the Executive Committee and Council, the funding available within the CIF had reduced to £0.961 million.

Members were further informed that, in May 2026, a report relating to the CIF had been withdrawn from the Executive Committee agenda at the request of Members in order to allow additional time for the details of the policy to be reviewed. Subsequently, a Financial Resilience Review had commenced which recommended

consideration of a range of matters, including the capital programme, revenue budget and earmarked reserves. The funding allocated to the CIF would therefore be considered as part of that review.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Harvey asked how the Leader would ensure that local communities received the investment they deserved in the coming months while funding through the CIF was on hold.

In response, the Leader advised that a number of issues affecting the Council's finances required consideration. By way of example, reference was made to discussions at a previous Council meeting regarding the need to replace the roof of the Town Hall, a project for which funding had not been identified within the budget. The Leader stated that, whilst this was not a community investment project in itself, it nevertheless represented an important financial commitment for the authority. It was further noted that this was only one of a number of budgetary pressures facing the Council. Once the Financial Resilience Review had been completed, there would be a clearer understanding of the funding available and the Council's financial position. Members would be updated accordingly as further information became available.

48. MOTIONS ON NOTICE (PROCEDURE RULE 11)

Maggs Day Centre

The following Motion on Notice was presented by Councillor Monica Stringfellow at the meeting:

“This Council notes the exceptional work performed by the Maggs Day Centre charity across Worcestershire in supporting people facing homelessness, housing insecurity, drug addiction and social exclusion.

Maggs Day Centre in Redditch provides housing advice, and harm addiction support, supporting more than 100 people during its first six months of operation, showing the great need there is in Redditch for such a service. The numbers of homeless people in Redditch are difficult to assess as we are aware of those who are not currently sleeping rough, but who are moving from place to place “sofa surfing”.

The limited opening hours currently offered by Maggs means that there is nowhere for people seeking help to access this support and means that most of the time there is nowhere for these vulnerable people to go for help, perhaps at a time when they most

need support. Getting the support and care they need in a timely manner, leads to a reduction in financial burden on the NHS, the emergency services and the Council.

We request that the Portfolio Holder for Housing works in partnership with the Council, the NHS and other organisations such as Cranstoun to explore the possibility of increasing funding to Maggs to enable them to extend their current provision to five days a week aligning with the both the government target of ending homelessness and addressing the issue of anti-social behaviour in Redditch Town Centre, in particular Church Green, to support both those who require these services and the wider population in feeling safe within our town.

Concerns regarding rough sleeping and associated anti-social behaviour in parts of the town centre can affect public confidence, footfall and the perception of Redditch as a safe and welcoming town centre.”

The Motion was proposed by Councillor Monica Stringfellow and seconded by Councillor Jane Spilsbury.

In response, the Leader thanked Councillors Stringfellow and Spilsbury for bringing forward the Motion and for recognising the valuable work undertaken by Maggs Day Centre, in partnership with the Council’s Homelessness Prevention Team, in supporting some of the Borough’s most vulnerable residents.

The positive impact of the service was highlighted, it was noted that it had supported more than one hundred individuals during its first six months of operation.

Members were reminded that the Council had already demonstrated its commitment to tackling rough sleeping and preventing homelessness through the commissioning of support services.

The Leader reported that, on 13th January 2026, the Executive Committee had approved the allocation of Homelessness Prevention Grant funding for a three-year period from 2026 to 2029. As part of this decision, the Council had agreed to provide funding for the Maggs Rough Sleeper Outreach Service of £106,822 per annum for each of the three years.

It was further noted that this represented a significant change from previous funding arrangements. By moving to a three-year funding programme, the Council had sought to provide greater financial certainty and stability for delivery partners, enabling longer-term service planning. In addition, as part of the Council’s response to

the National Rough Sleeper Programme, officers had already been engaging positively with Maggs Day Centre regarding the proposal outlined in the Motion to expand its local provision. Initial discussions had indicated that extending the service to a five-day-per-week model would require additional revenue funding of approximately £145,000 per annum, together with an estimated capital investment of £19,000.

The Leader confirmed that, alongside the Portfolio Holder for Housing, he welcomed the ongoing work between officers, Maggs Day Centre and partner organisations to explore opportunities for funding, external grants and joint commissioning arrangements to support the development of enhanced services in Redditch.

In concluding his remarks, the Leader reaffirmed the Council's commitment to preventing homelessness and rough sleeping and to working collaboratively with partners to ensure that vulnerable residents were able to access the support they required.

During the subsequent debate, Members commented on the following points:

- The Portfolio Holder for Housing advised that he had visited Maggs Day Centre and was engaged in discussions with the organisation regarding funding opportunities.
- Members emphasised the importance of the language used within the Motion and observed that anti-social behaviour was often linked to factors such as drug and alcohol misuse rather than homelessness itself. The suggestion was made that greater support should be provided to those experiencing addiction and that attention should be focused on addressing the underlying causes of homelessness.
- Members noted that homelessness extended beyond those visibly sleeping rough and included individuals experiencing insecure housing, sofa surfing, or fleeing domestic abuse, amongst other circumstances. It was also highlighted that advice and support relating to drug and alcohol misuse were available through Maggs Day Centre.
- Reference was made to the Government's Homelessness Reduction Strategy analytical annex, which recognised the multiple and often complex factors that could contribute to homelessness.

In summing up the debate, Councillor Stringfellow thanked Members for their supportive comments. She explained that a number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Redditch town centre had complex needs and that coordinated packages of support were being put in place to assist them. Members were further advised that discussions with the Police had indicated their support for extending the service.

On being put to the vote the Motion was carried.

RESOLVED that

This Council notes the exceptional work performed by the Maggs Day Centre charity across Worcestershire in supporting people facing homelessness, housing insecurity, drug addiction and social exclusion.

Maggs Day Centre in Redditch provides housing advice, and harm addiction support, supporting more than 100 people during its first six months of operation, showing the great need there is in Redditch for such a service. The numbers of homeless people in Redditch are difficult to assess as we are aware of those who are not currently sleeping rough, but who are moving from place to place “sofa surfing”.

The limited opening hours currently offered by Maggs means that there is nowhere for people seeking help to access this support and means that most of the time there is nowhere for these vulnerable people to go for help, perhaps at a time when they most need support. Getting the support and care they need in a timely manner, leads to a reduction in financial burden on the NHS, the emergency services and the Council.

We request that the Portfolio Holder for Housing works in partnership with the Council, the NHS and other organisations such as Cranstoun to explore the possibility of increasing funding to Maggs to enable them to extend their current provision to five days a week aligning with the both the government target of ending homelessness and addressing the issue of anti-social behaviour in Redditch Town Centre, in particular Church Green, to support both those who require these services and the wider population in feeling safe within our town.

Concerns regarding rough sleeping and associated anti-social behaviour in parts of the town centre can affect public

confidence, footfall and the perception of Redditch as a safe and welcoming town centre.

Face Coverings

A second Motion on Notice was presented by Councillor Nic Pioli at the meeting:

“Council is asked to resolve

That Executive Committee be requested to instruct officers to engage with the police and re-visit the levels of reported incidents of anti-social behaviour in Redditch town centre where face coverings such as face masks or balaclavas were involved. That a report summarising the outcome of that engagement with the police be presented to the Executive Committee of the Council within three months to enable consideration to be given as to whether it would be appropriate to extend the measures contained in the PSPO for Redditch to include a restriction on the wearing of face coverings.”

The Motion was proposed by Councillor Nic Pioli and seconded by Councillor Roger Bennett.

In presenting the Motion, Councillor Pioli explained that the proposal did not seek the immediate introduction of a ban on face coverings. Rather, the intention was to establish an evidence base through officer engagement with West Mercia Police in order to determine whether amendments to the current Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) should be considered. It was argued that residents and businesses should feel safe in the town centre and that concerns had been raised regarding anti-social behaviour involving individuals wearing face coverings. Members were advised that the purpose of the Motion was to gather evidence and consider whether additional restrictions would be justified and proportionate. It was also acknowledged that any future consideration of PSPO restrictions would need to take account of relevant legal safeguards, including requirements relating to public consultation and the rights of individuals.

Following the presentation of the Motion, Members had detailed discussions and commented on the below points:

- A review of the existing PSPO was scheduled to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee in November 2026, ahead of the current Order expiring on 1st January 2027.

- The current review recommended a straightforward extension of the existing PSPO area and restrictions for a further three years in order to ensure continuity of enforcement powers and to avoid any lapse in the Order.
- It was reported that initial consultation with West Mercia Police and Safer Redditch partners had not identified sufficient evidence to support the inclusion of restrictions relating to face coverings as part of the forthcoming renewal process.
- Members acknowledged concerns regarding anti-social behaviour in the town centre and agreed that any future amendments to the PSPO should be evidence-based and supported by appropriate public consultation.
- Reference was made to reports of increasing anti-social behaviour, including incidents involving face coverings, and concerns raised by local businesses.
- It was recognised that face coverings could be worn for a variety of legitimate reasons and that any proposals for restrictions would need to be carefully considered.
- Members noted that the Council had the ability to amend a PSPO in the future where new evidence emerged and following the necessary consultation process.
- It was suggested that future consideration of PSPO provisions should also include wider issues, such as anti-social behaviour associated with electric scooters, electric bikes and certain locations not currently covered by existing restrictions.
- Members emphasised that the Motion sought only to facilitate further investigation and evidence gathering, rather than to introduce any immediate changes to the PSPO.

In concluding the debate, Councillor Pioli thanked Members for their contributions and reiterated that in his opinion the issue appeared to be becoming more prevalent. It was acknowledged that the Motion had been amended prior to being presented to Council to avoid any risk to the timely renewal of the existing PSPO and to focus on gathering the evidence required to inform future decision-making.

On being put to the vote the Motion was carried.

RESOLVED that

Executive Committee be requested to instruct officers to engage with the police and re-visit the levels of reported

incidents of anti-social behaviour in Redditch town centre where face coverings such as face masks or balaclavas were involved. That a report summarising the outcome of that engagement with the police be presented to the Executive Committee of the Council within three months to enable consideration to be given as to whether it would be appropriate to extend the measures contained in the PSPO for Redditch to include a restriction on the wearing of face coverings.

49. INTRODUCTION OF THE NATIONAL SCHEME OF DELEGATIONS OF PLANNING FUNCTIONS

The Chair of the Constitutional Reform Working Party (CRWP) presented the report and informed Members that the proposals were significant, reflecting substantial legislative changes due to come into effect on 31st October 2026.

Members were advised that the Government was introducing a mandatory National Scheme of Delegations for planning functions, requiring all local planning authorities in England to amend their constitutions to ensure compliance. The proposals had been considered by the CRWP prior to their submission to Council.

It was explained that, under the current arrangements, planning authorities were able to determine their own local procedures for the consideration of planning applications. This typically involved routine applications being determined by officers under delegated powers, with other applications referred to the Planning Committee. The circumstances in which applications were referred to the Planning Committee varied between authorities and could include factors such as the number of objections received, the size of a development site, or where a Member had requested that an application be called in for determination by the Committee.

It was reported that Government considered these differing local arrangements to create inconsistencies and uncertainty for applicants and developers, and that the new scheme sought to establish a more uniform approach across England. It was anticipated that the reforms would enable Planning Committees to focus on more complex and significant applications.

The principal implications for Redditch Borough Council were summarised as follows:

- All planning applications would be classified as either Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 applications.
- Schedule 1 applications would be determined exclusively by officers under delegated powers and would not be referred to the Planning Committee. The existing ability for Members to call in applications affecting their wards would therefore cease to apply in respect of these applications.
- Schedule 2 applications could be determined either by officers or by the Planning Committee. However, there would be a presumption in favour of determination by officers under delegated powers. Such applications could only be referred to Planning Committee where they met one or both elements of the "gateway test", namely:
 - where the application raised one or more issues of economic, social or environmental significance to the local area; and/or
 - where the application raised one or more significant planning matters having regard to the development plan or other material considerations.

Council was informed that the legislation also prescribed how the gateway test was to operate. Each authority would be required to appoint both a nominated officer and a nominated Member. For Redditch Borough Council, it was proposed that the nominated officer would be the Assistant Director for Planning, Leisure and Culture Services with the nominated Member ordinarily being the Chair of the Planning Committee. Deputy appointments would also be made to provide cover in cases of absence.

The nominated officer and nominated Member would meet regularly to review Schedule 2 applications where the gateway test might apply. They would consider case summaries prepared by the relevant planning officer, together with information regarding the potential application of the gateway test criteria. Following consideration of the information provided, a decision would be reached as to whether the application should be referred to the Planning Committee. Applications not referred would be determined by officers under delegated powers. The outcome of each gateway test assessment would be formally recorded and published, and

information regarding decisions would also be reported to the Planning Committee.

Members were advised that the intention would be for the nominated officer and nominated Member to reach agreement on each application. Where agreement could not be reached, the application would be determined by officers under delegated powers.

It was noted that certain application types listed within Schedule 2, including applications for advertisement consent and works to trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders, were already routinely determined by officers under delegated powers at Redditch Borough Council. Guidance issued by the Government and the Planning Advisory Service made clear that local authorities could retain existing delegated arrangements for such matters through their constitutions. Officers had therefore recommended that these established arrangements should continue, as they were working effectively and any change could result in a significant increase in applications requiring gateway test consideration. Accordingly, a limited number of Schedule 2 applications would continue to be determined by officers under delegated powers, as outlined in the report.

In addition to the introduction of Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 applications, Members were informed that new provisions would apply to planning applications submitted by the Council itself, relating to Council-owned land, or submitted by Members or officers. These were referred to as "own interest" applications. Whilst the new legislation permitted such applications to be determined by officers under delegated powers, officers had concluded that, in the interests of openness and transparency, the majority of own interest applications should continue to be determined by the Planning Committee. The decision to direct such applications to committee would be undertaken jointly by the nominated officer and nominated Member. However, there might be occasions where minor or technical own interest applications would be considered suitable for determination under delegated powers.

Officers had been preparing for the implementation of the new arrangements and Planning Committee Members had already received briefing sessions on the changes. Ongoing support had also been provided to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee.

Given the scale of the reforms, it was recommended that the CRWP undertake a review of the new arrangements after six months, as detailed in the recommendations contained within the report.

Council was further advised that an amended version of the Planning Committee Procedure Rules and the Code of Conduct for Planning Matters had been circulated to Members. A minor amendment had been made to reflect the possibility that certain own interest applications could, in appropriate circumstances, be determined under delegated powers.

Finally, Members were informed that authority was also sought to grant delegated powers to the Assistant Director for Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services to make any consequential amendments required to the Constitution arising from the implementation of the new arrangements.

After the presentation had been delivered, Members had detailed discussions about the report and commented on the following points:

- The Leader noted that the Council was legally required to implement the National Scheme of Delegations and make the necessary constitutional changes. Whilst acknowledging the need to comply with the legislation, he expressed concerns regarding the principles underpinning the reforms, particularly the removal of Members' ability to call in planning applications. He emphasised the importance of local democratic decision-making in planning matters and welcomed the commitment to review the arrangements after six months, including feedback from the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee.
- Concerns were expressed that the changes would reduce local democratic oversight and restrict opportunities for residents to influence planning decisions. The Chair of the Planning Committee referenced his forthcoming role in the gateway test process for Schedule 2 applications and expressed the hope that the new arrangements would operate constructively.
- Clarification was sought regarding opportunities for public participation where planning applications were not referred to the Planning Committee. It was confirmed that the statutory consultation process would remain unchanged and that members of the public would continue to have the opportunity to submit comments on planning applications,

which would be taken into account during the determination process.

- A query was raised regarding whether Members would continue to receive reports on planning applications. Officers confirmed that the reporting arrangements for applications considered by the Planning Committee would remain unchanged. The purpose of the proposed amendments was to determine which applications would be considered by the Planning Committee and which would be determined under delegated powers.

In closing the debate, the Chair of the CRWP acknowledged that a number of legitimate concerns had been raised by Members during the discussion. However, she emphasised that the introduction of the new arrangements would not remove opportunities for residents and Members to be consulted on planning applications. The consultation processes would continue and Members would still have the opportunity to engage with planning matters affecting their wards.

The value of the weekly planning application lists issued to Ward Members was highlighted, which identified applications submitted within their respective wards. It was commented that these notifications were particularly useful and Members welcomed the continuation of this information-sharing arrangement.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Jane Spilsbury and seconded by Councillor Matthew Dormer.

NOTED

- 1) the matters set out in the report relating to the introduction of the National Scheme of Delegation of Planning Functions; and**
- 2) the mandatory requirement for the Council to adopt the National Scheme of Delegation in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026.**

RESOLVED that

- 3) the arrangements set out in the report be adopted with effect from 31st October 2026;**

- 4) the Constitution be updated by adopting the following documents: -
 - Scheme of Delegations for Development Management
 - Scheme of Delegations for Trees
 - Planning Committee Procedure Rules
 - Planning Code of Conduct
- 5) authority be delegated to the Assistant Director for Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services to make any further consequential amendments required to the Constitution; and
- 6) the new arrangements be reviewed by the Constitution Review Working Party after the scheme has been operating for 6 months, such discussion to include feedback from Members including the Chair/ Vice Chair of Planning Committee.

**50. AUDIT, GOVERNANCE AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26**

The Mayor advised that, under normal circumstances, the Annual Report would be presented by the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee who had served during the year covered by the report. However, the former Chair was now a member of the Executive Committee and, under the Council's Constitution, Executive Committee Members were not permitted to serve on the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee due to its role in holding the Executive to account. In addition, the former Vice-Chair was no longer a serving Councillor.

The Mayor therefore invited Members to note the report and on behalf of the Council, thanked the Committee and all Members who had served on it during the 2025/26 municipal year for their hard work and commitment.

During the discussion, Members recognised the significant contribution made by those serving on the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee and acknowledged the important role the Committee played in supporting good governance and holding decision-makers to account.

Particular reference was made to the importance of the Council's risk management arrangements, including the role of the Risk Champion and the maintenance of an up-to-date Corporate Risk Register. Members were advised that reports relating to risks facing

the authority were considered regularly by the Committee and were encouraged to familiarise themselves with the Risk Register and the risks identified within it.

RESOLVED that

the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee Annual Report 2025/26 be noted.

51. BOROUGH OF REDDITCH LOCAL PLAN - GATEWAY 1 SELF-ASSESSMENT AND SUMMARY OF SCOPING CONSULTATION

The Leader presented the report, which represented the next stage in the preparation of Redditch Borough Council's Local Plan.

Members were reminded that the Government had introduced a new plan-making system and that work already undertaken, including the Issues and Options consultation conducted during the previous year, would continue to inform the new process. It was reported that the required scoping consultation had been undertaken between 3rd July and 14th August 2026 and had generated thirty-three responses from residents, statutory consultees, developers and landowners. Officers had reviewed the responses received and concluded that no issues had been identified that would prevent the Council from progressing to the next stage of the process.

It was explained that the next step was Gateway 1, which involved the Council's self-assessment of its readiness to prepare the new Local Plan, including confirmation that appropriate resources, governance arrangements and processes were in place to meet the requirements of the Government's revised timetable.

Members were informed that the report did not seek approval of the final Local Plan, housing allocations or specific development sites. It was emphasised that significant further work and consultation would be undertaken before decisions on such matters were reached.

The proposed timetable was outlined, with the first draft of the new Local Plan scheduled for consultation in summer 2027. This draft would incorporate feedback from previous consultations, additional evidence-based documents, including a revised Green Belt Review, and further work relating to infrastructure requirements. The proposed submission version of the Local Plan was expected to be published in spring 2028, with adoption currently scheduled for April 2029.

Members were also advised that there was a financial incentive to maintain progress against the timetable. The Council had been awarded additional funding of £108,000 towards the preparation of the Local Plan, subject to publication of the Gateway 1 Self-Assessment by 31st October 2026. It was noted that failure to progress in accordance with the timetable could result in the funding being returned.

It was therefore reported that the purpose of the report was to ensure continued progress on an evidence-led Local Plan process and to provide further opportunities for residents and stakeholders to help shape the future development of the Borough.

During debate on the item, Members made the following comments:

- Concern was expressed regarding the level of public participation in the scoping consultation, with particular reference made to the relatively small number of responses received from residents. It was suggested that future consultation exercises should seek to engage the public more effectively and encourage wider participation.
- Members recognised the work undertaken by officers and the Planning Advisory Panel (PAP) in progressing the Local Plan process. It was noted that further stages of consultation would take place and were likely to generate greater public interest and engagement. Members were encouraged to attend PAP meetings to gain a fuller understanding of the process.
- It was suggested that additional engagement methods, including greater outreach and the use of focus groups, could help to capture a broader range of views from residents. Reference was also made to the importance of establishing clear consultation and research processes to inform future planning work.
- Concerns were raised regarding the availability of brownfield land and the need to ensure that all appropriate development opportunities were explored before considering alternative sites.

In closing the debate, the Leader thanked Members for their comments. He emphasised the importance of progressing the Local Plan, noting that the absence of an up-to-date Local Plan could leave the Borough more vulnerable to speculative development proposals. Whilst acknowledging, and supporting, concerns

regarding development on green belt land and the limited availability of brownfield sites within the Borough, he reported that the Council was required to plan for Government housing targets and consider the land available to meet those requirements. Members were further advised that it was imperative that the Local Plan process continued in accordance with the proposed timetable and that the Council secured the Government funding available to support its preparation.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Matthew Dormer and seconded by Councillor Gemma Monaco.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The Local Plan Gateway 1 Self-Assessment be approved for formal publication on the 30th October 2026, and following publication the Council progresses with plan-making as per the published timetable.**
- 2) The Local Plan Summary of Scoping Consultation be approved and published alongside the Gateway 1 Self Assessment.**

52. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Council considered recommendations that had been agreed at three separate meetings of the Executive Committee held on 17th March, 28th July and 8th September 2026. As announced by the Mayor at the commencement of the meeting, at the previous ordinary meeting of Council, consideration of the Empty Homes Policy had been deferred to allow Members additional time to consider an updated version of the document.

Empty Homes Policy

The Portfolio Holder for Housing presented the report and thanked officers for their work in preparing the policy and responding to concerns raised by Members. It was explained that the proposed amendments were minor but important, consisting of revised wording to make clear that the policy related exclusively to empty homes in the private sector and not to the Council's own housing stock. Members were assured that these amendments would help to avoid any potential misunderstanding.

During the debate, the importance of bringing empty properties back into use was highlighted, particularly given the ongoing demand for housing within the Borough. Whilst Redditch compared

favourably with many other areas in relation to the proportion of long-term empty homes, it was noted that there were still approximately 320 properties that had been vacant for more than six months. Members were advised that each property returned to occupation had the potential to provide an additional home and formed an important part of making best use of existing housing stock alongside the delivery of new homes.

Members welcomed the revised policy and the additional clarification provided in the document to address concerns that had previously been raised.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Ashley Monk and seconded by Councillor Matthew Dormer.

Food Waste Collections Implementation

The Mayor advised that this item had been withdrawn from the agenda at the request of officers.

Treasury Management Outturn Report 2025/26

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Finance, the Leader presented the Treasury Management Outturn Report 2025/26.

The purpose of the Annual Report was to set out the Council's treasury management and capital financing position, together with performance against the Prudential Indicators for the year. It was noted that the reporting period had been characterised by continued economic uncertainty and fluctuating interest rates. Throughout this period, the Council's primary objective had been the prudent management of borrowing and financial risk.

As at 31st March 2026, the Council's total external borrowing stood at £115.93 million, which remained within the Council's authorised borrowing limit. Members were advised that the Council's treasury management activities during the year had been conducted in accordance with the Treasury Management Code and the Council's approved Treasury Management Strategy. It was further reported that the Council had complied with all relevant Prudential Indicators and investment limits.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Matthew Dormer and seconded by Councillor Gemma Monaco.

Quarter 4 Financial Monitoring and Outturn Report 2025/26

The Leader presented the Quarter 4 Financial Monitoring and Outturn Report 2025/26, which set out the Council's final revenue and capital outturn position for the 2025/26 financial year.

The General Fund revenue outturn reflected an overspend of £579,000, which would be funded from the Council's General Fund balance.

It was explained that, whilst there were significant financial pressures within individual service areas, resulting in service expenditure being £2.715 million over budget, this had been substantially offset by £2.136 million of additional corporate financing. This additional income had principally arisen from Section 31 grant funding and investment income.

In relation to the capital programme, actual expenditure had totalled £8.154 million against a revised programme budget of £31.847 million. As a result, £23.693 million would be carried forward and reviewed as part of the 2026/27 Capital Programme. Members were advised that this highlighted the need to ensure that capital schemes remained deliverable and that a review of the programme was already underway.

The Housing Revenue Account outturn was reported as being broadly in line with the revised budget. At the end of the financial year, the Council held General Fund earmarked reserves of £20.957 million and Housing Revenue Account earmarked reserves of £9.160 million.

During the debate, concerns were raised regarding the underlying service overspend of £2.715 million. In response, the Leader acknowledged that there were financial challenges facing the Council and advised that a review was currently being undertaken. Members were informed that, once this work had been completed and the issues fully assessed, further updates would be provided via Member briefings.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Matthew Dormer and seconded by Councillor Gemma Monaco.

RBC Equality Strategy 2026-2028 (Including Engagement Policy)

The Leader presented the Redditch Borough Council Equality Strategy 2026-2028 and accompanying Engagement Policy. The previous strategy had reached the end of its intended period and

the new strategy provided an updated framework through to the end of 2028.

It was explained that the strategy was based on the principles of treating people fairly, with dignity and respect, ensuring services were accessible, and understanding the impact of Council decisions on the communities it served.

The four key objectives of the strategy were outlined:

- Delivering fair and accessible services.
- Strengthening inclusive engagement and communication.
- Improving the Council's understanding of its communities.
- Supporting an inclusive and representative workforce.

The importance of the Engagement Policy was also highlighted, as it established a more consistent approach to involving residents in decision-making. This included being clear about what residents could influence, using both digital and face-to-face engagement methods where appropriate, and ensuring that feedback received was used to inform decision-making. Members were advised that this would be particularly relevant as the Council progressed through the Local Government Reorganisation process, helping to ensure that the voices, needs and experiences of Redditch residents continued to be understood throughout the transition. It was noted that no additional resources were required to implement the strategy or policy.

During the debate, Members welcomed the introduction of the strategy and recognised the work that had been undertaken in its development. Reference was made to the demographic information contained within the strategy, which highlighted the diverse nature of the Borough's population and reinforced the importance of maintaining a clear approach to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Members also referred to recent Members' equalities training that had been delivered and encouraged wider participation in future sessions, noting that the training had helped to improve understanding of the issues addressed within the strategy.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Matthew Dormer and seconded by Councillor Gemma Monaco.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The Redditch Borough Council Empty Homes Strategy 2026 – 29, as amended, be adopted.**

- 2) The minutes of the Executive Committee meetings held on 28th July and 8th September 2026 be approved and all recommendations adopted.

53. URGENT BUSINESS - RECORD OF DECISIONS

The Mayor advised that no urgent decisions had been taken since the previous Council meeting.

54. URGENT BUSINESS - GENERAL (IF ANY)

There was no urgent business for consideration on this occasion.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.41 pm