



Council

Mon 21 Sep
2026
7.00 pm

Oakenshaw Community Centre,
Castleditch Lane,
Redditch B98 7YB

If you have any queries on this Agenda please contact
Jess Bayley-Hill

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GUIDANCE ON FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

Please note that this is a public meeting and will be live streamed for general access via the Council's YouTube channel.

You are able to see and hear the livestream of the meeting from the Committee Pages of the website, alongside the agenda for the meeting.

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

PUBLIC ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings of the Council to observe proceedings.

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 and for any such items the live stream will be suspended and that part of the meeting will not be recorded.

Council

Monday, 21st September, 2026

7.00 pm

Oakenshaw Community Centre

Agenda

Membership:

Cllrs:

Susan Eacock
(Mayor)
James Aston
(Deputy Mayor)
Joe Baker
Juliet Barker Smith
Roger Bennett
William Boyd
Brandon Clayton
Matthew Dormer
James Fardoe
Simon Farmer
Andrew Fry
Bill Hartnett
Sharon Harvey
Joanna Kane

Wanda King
Nicola Lloyd
David Meredith
Gemma Monaco
Ashley Monk
Nic Pioli
Rita Rogers
Gary Slim
Jen Snape
Jane Spilsbury
Monica Stringfellow
Craig Warhurst
Ian Woodall

- 1. Welcome**
- 2. Apologies for Absence**
- 3. Declarations of Interest**

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

- 4. Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of Council held on 10th August 2026 and of the Special Meeting of Council held on 26th August 2026 (Pages 5 - 18)**

- 5. Announcements**

To consider Announcements under Procedure Rule 10:

- a) Mayor's Announcements
- b) The Leader's Announcements
- c) Chief Executive's Announcements.

- 6. Questions on Notice (Procedure Rule 9) (Pages 19 - 20)**

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- 7. Motions on Notice** (Procedure Rule 11) (to follow)
- 8. Introduction of the National Scheme of Delegations of Planning Functions**
(Pages 21 - 90)
- 9. Audit, Governance and Standards Committee Annual Report 2025/26** (Pages 91 - 114)
- 10. Borough of Redditch Local Plan - Gateway 1 Self-Assessment and Summary of Scoping Consultation** (Pages 115 - 172)
- 11. RBC Equality Strategy (including Engagement Policy)** (Pages 173 - 202)
- 12. Executive Committee**

Recommendation from the Executive Committee meeting held on 17th March 2026

Consideration of the Empty Homes Strategy was deferred from the previous meeting of Council and is due to be considered at this meeting. The relevant extract from the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 17th March when this item was considered has also been attached.

12 .1 Empty Homes Policy (Pages 207 - 228)

Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 28th July 2026

12 .2 Food Waste Collections Implementation (Pages 243 - 258)

12 .3 Treasury Management Outturn Report 2025/26 (Pages 259 - 274)

12 .4 Quarter 4 Financial Monitoring and Outturn Report 2025/26 (Pages 275 - 304)

Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting held on 8th September 2026

12 .5 RBC Equality Strategy 2026-2028 (Including Engagement Policy) (Pages 317 - 346)

13. Urgent Business - Record of Decisions

(None to date).

14. Urgent Business - General (if any)

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To consider any additional items exceptionally agreed by the Mayor as Urgent Business in accordance with the powers vested in him by virtue of Section 100(B)(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972.

(This power should be exercised only in cases where there are genuinely special circumstances which require consideration of an item which has not previously been published on the Order of Business for the meeting.)

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Council

Monday, 10th August, 2026

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Susan Eacock (Mayor), Councillor James Aston (Deputy Mayor), and Councillors Juliet Barker Smith, Roger Bennett, William Boyd, Brandon Clayton, Matthew Dormer, James Fardoe, Simon Farmer, Andrew Fry, Joanna Kane, Wanda King, Nicola Lloyd, David Meredith, Gemma Monaco, Ashley Monk, Nic Pioli, Rita Rogers, Gary Slim, Jane Spilsbury, Monica Stringfellow and Ian Woodall

Officers:

Melissa Bassett, Nicola Cummings, Claire Felton, John Leach, Becky Talbot and Darren Whitney

Principal Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley-Hill

31. WELCOME

The Mayor welcomed all those present to the meeting.

At the start of the meeting, the Mayor led Members in paying tribute to former MP and former MEP, Ann Widdecombe, who had sadly been murdered since the previous Council meeting, by observing a minute's silence.

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Joe Baker, Bill Hartnett, Sharon Harvey, Jen Snape and Craig Warhurst.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

34. MINUTES

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 29th June 2026 were submitted. Clarification was provided that the minutes were considered for accuracy only.

Chair

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Monday, 10th August, 2026

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 29th June 2026 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Mayor.

35. FUTURE WARDS WITHIN THE REDDITCH ELECTORAL AREA

The Leader presented a report on the subject of future wards within the Redditch electoral area for Members' consideration.

Council was advised that the report had been prepared in order to meet a timescale set by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), which required a response in respect of Redditch ward patterning by 17th August 2026. A report on this subject had previously been prepared and considered at a meeting of the Electoral Matters Committee held on 30th July 2026, which had been chaired by the Leader.

Members were reminded that Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) would result in Redditch Borough Council becoming a part of a new unitary Council for North Worcestershire. Subject to legislation, this was expected to be an authority made up of 54 members, including 16 Councillors representing the current electoral area of Redditch.

In the original LGR submission, it had been put forward that the numbers of Councillors should be doubled in each county division to create the new unitary wards. The arrangement worked in most of Worcestershire but in Redditch it would mean four-member wards across the area. This would cause problems both electorally and in terms of representation. There would be a dilution of accountability and reduced representational clarity for residents. In addition, this would generate difficulties in terms of holding a principal election.

Officers had asked the opinion of both MHCLG and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) about this matter. Whilst the Commission had explained that it could not formally comment on authorities until they were operational, they did confirm that the LGBCE would not create four-member wards under normal circumstances. MHCLG had responded to explain that they were content to allow Redditch Borough Council to review ward patterning using existing Borough ward boundaries rather than county divisions. The number of seats for the Redditch electoral area were to remain at 16.

In reviewing arrangements, it was concluded that the only viable ward patterning for Redditch would be to have seven wards. Five

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wards would remain as they were but represented by two rather than three Members. The other four existing wards would be combined to make two new wards, each represented by three Members. This approach had been endorsed by the Informal Working Group on LGR in Worcestershire and by Redditch Borough Council's Group Leaders. Group Leaders further agreed that elected Members should have a chance to comment on the matter. Consequently, the subject was scheduled for the consideration of the Electoral Matters Committee and then referred on to Council, for a decision on a submission to MHCLG.

Prior to the Electoral Matters Committee meeting, a questionnaire had been circulated to Members seeking their preferred ward combinations and the reasons for their preferences. Sixteen responses were received within the specified timeframe. Based on these responses, six viable scenarios, derived from the four most favoured ward combinations, were developed and presented to the Electoral Matters Committee. Following discussions, the Committee had agreed to recommend to Council scenario one.

In addition to considering a scenario to recommend to MHCLG, Council was being asked to consider delegating authority to the Chief Executive to finalise the submission to Government. However, Members were asked to note that a decision taken by Council would not guarantee that those ward arrangements would be used for the May 2027 shadow elections, as the final decision rested with Ministerial agreement at MHCLG, not with the Council. The final ward patterning would be published as part of the Structural Changes Order.

Members were also asked to note that these ward arrangements were intended to be interim. Once the new unitary authority was established and operational, the LGBCE would undertake a full electoral review of the entire unitary area, which might result in further changes to ward boundaries and representation.

On the basis of the discussions held at the Electoral Matters Committee meeting and the content of the report on the subject, the following resolutions were proposed by Councillor Matthew Dormer:

- 1) "An updated ward pattern for Redditch be submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to be included in the unitary authority's Structural Changes Order based on two three-member wards and five two-member wards. The three-member wards constructed from the Borough Wards of
 - Astwood Bank and Feckenham and Webheath and Callow Hill - suggested name of Redditch South
 - North and Winyates - suggested name of Redditch North

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The five two-member wards to keep the current Borough Ward names.

- 2) Authority be delegated to the Chief Executive to finalise the submission to the Government to consider as part of the Structural Changes Order for North Worcestershire in respect of the ward pattern for Redditch.”

The resolutions were proposed by Councillor Dormer and seconded by Councillor Brandon Clayton.

Following the presentation of the report and resolutions, an amendment was proposed by Councillor Nic Pioli to the wording of the first resolution. This amended the resolutions as follows:

- 1) “An updated ward pattern for Redditch be submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to be included in the unitary authority’s Structural Changes Order based on two three-member wards and five two-member wards. The three-member wards constructed from the Borough Wards of
 - *Batchley and Brockhill with Central – suggested name of Redditch Central West*
 - *Greenlands and Lakeside with Matchborough and Woodrow – suggested name of Redditch Central East*

The five two-member wards to keep the current Borough Ward names.

- 2) Authority be delegated to the Chief Executive to finalise the submission to the Government to consider as part of the Structural Changes Order for North Worcestershire in respect of the ward pattern for Redditch.”

The amendment was proposed by Councillor Pioli and seconded by Councillor Roger Bennett.

In proposing the amendment, Councillor Pioli explained that he was largely supportive of the resolutions. However, he suggested that the combination of wards proposed in scenario six would be more appropriate for Redditch than the ward combinations that had been recommended by the Electoral Matters Committee based on scenario one. This was due to a range of factors including:

- The suggestion that scenario six would be more beneficial from a climate change perspective than Scenario one, as the ward combinations would not cover such a wide geographic

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area as the combined Astwood Bank and Feckenham and Webheath and Callow Hill wards.

- The need to take into account the practical ability of residents and Councillors to travel around a ward. Members were asked to note that there were presently dual carriageways and other urban design features that created tangible pedestrian barriers between the current North and Winyates wards.
- The existing transport and pedestrian links between Batchley and Brockhill and Central wards.
- Social and economic characteristics in the different wards and the impact that this could have on the suitability of different permutations of combined wards. The suggestion was made that there were greater similarities between the local demographic characteristics of residents living in Batchley and Brockhill and Central wards than between residents living in Astwood Bank and Feckenham and Webheath and Callow Hill wards. In addition, the suggestion was made that there were similarly enhanced links between Greenlands and Lakeside and Matchborough and Woodrow wards as a result of the Pride in Place initiative.
- Housing development considerations. Whilst future development in Brockhill had been highlighted in the report, other forthcoming housing developments in impacted wards, including North, Winyates and Webheath and Callow Hill, were not referenced. It was suggested that this should have been considered as the developments would impact on infrastructure requirements and residential demand within local communities.

In seconding the amendment, Councillor Bennett commented that he was in support of scenario six because he felt it would result in less carbon emissions than scenario one and would help to address increasing demand arising from planned housing development. Members were advised that as a local Councillor representing the current Astwood Bank and Feckenham ward, Councillor Bennett regularly attended Feckenham Parish Council meetings which also generated demand for support. He expressed concerns that combining the Astwood Bank and Feckenham ward with the Webheath and Callow Hill ward would raise demand further to an unsustainable level, particularly given the planned development in Webheath. Members were also asked to note that residents living in Astwood Bank and Feckenham respectively already regarded their communities as being distinct from one another and the addition of Webheath and Callow Hill would potentially further impact on community cohesion at the local level.

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

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- The locations of various housing developments and the extent to which new houses would be situated outside the current boundaries of Redditch Borough, in Bromsgrove District and Stratford-on-Avon District respectively. Members highlighted that some properties would be built in the Borough and other houses would be built outside the Borough.
- The timescales for housing development under the Local Plan and the extent to which many of the local developments that were anticipated were likely to impact on local populations prior to the LGBCE undertaking a review of ward boundaries for the new unitary authority.
- The term 'variance' and what this referred to in the context of ward patterning. Officers clarified that this referred to the average number of electors per Councillor and the variance from that average number.
- The different variance levels for the wards proposed in scenarios one and six respectively. Members noted that the variances for scenario one were the lowest of those scenarios that had been identified whilst the variances for scenario six were the highest.
- The extent to which there would be a rise in carbon emissions arising from travel over longer distances if the current Astwood Bank and Feckenham and Webheath and Callow Hill wards were combined. Some Members commented that residents would not be impacted as they would be able to continue to use polling stations in the same locations as at present during elections and only the three Councillors would need to travel across longer distances, which it was suggested would have a negligible impact on carbon emissions.
- The physical barriers between North and Winyates wards and the existence of arrangements whereby dual carriageways already cut through existing wards.
- The higher levels of deprivation in Batchley and Brockhill and Central wards, compared to Astwood Bank and Feckenham and Webheath and Callow Hill wards, and the demand that this could create for support from Members. Concerns were raised by some Members that combining the Batchley and Brockhill and Central wards could generate a significant level of demand from the three Councillors representing the ward which could be difficult to manage.
- The geographic distance covered by a combined ward for Astwood Bank and Feckenham and Webheath and Callow Hill, should this be introduced, and the difficulties that Councillors representing such a ward might experience when seeking to travel around the ward.
- The geographic distance that would be covered by a combined Greenlands and Lakeside and Matchborough and Woodrow ward and the similar difficulties that would be

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experienced by Councillors representing the ward when travelling around the ward.

- The existing community and public transport links between the current Batchley and Brockhill and Central wards.
- The extent to which Redditch Members might be able to influence the LGBCE's considerations in respect of any future boundary review for the North Worcestershire Council through proposals on ward patterning put forward at this stage.
- The likely levels of population growth in the current Astwood Bank and Feckenham, Batchley and Brockhill, Central and Webhealth and Callow Hill wards respectively and the potential value in comparing projected figures when identifying the most appropriate scenario moving forward.
- The levels of casework received by Members and the extent to which a choice of preferred scenario could be made based on the distribution of casework.
- The increase in casework that would be experienced by all Councillors serving on the North Worcestershire Council, compared to Members serving on the current District and County Councils.
- The extent to which the Greenlands and Lakeside and Matchborough and Woodrow wards might work well together as a combined ward due to the physical design and urban composition of these wards.
- The need to achieve community cohesion in final ward patterning arrangements.
- The number of Councillors who had responded to the questionnaire that had been circulated by officers and the reasons why some Members had not responded.

Clarification was provided that the only change proposed to the resolutions detailed in the papers was in respect of the appropriate scenario to adopt in order to combine four existing Borough wards into two wards under the new unitary authority that would be represented by three Members. This provided Members with two options:

- Ward patterning arrangements based on scenario one.
- Ward patterning arrangements based on scenario six.

On being put to the vote 12 Members voted in favour of scenario six and 10 Members voted in favour of scenario one. The vote in respect of scenario six was therefore carried.

RESOLVED that

- 1) An updated ward pattern for Redditch be submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to be included in the unitary authority's Structural**

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Changes Order based on two three-member wards and five two-member wards. The three-member wards constructed from the Borough Wards of

- **Batchley and Brockhill with Central – suggested name of Redditch Central West**
- **Greenlands and Lakeside with Matchborough and Woodrow – suggested name of Redditch Central East**

The five two-member wards to keep the current Borough Ward names.

- 2) Authority be delegated to the Chief Executive to finalise the submission to the Government to consider as part of the Structural Changes Order for North Worcestershire in respect of the ward pattern for Redditch.**

36. DESIGNATION OF THE MONITORING OFFICER FUNCTION

The Leader presented a report concerning the designation of the Monitoring Officer function at the Council.

Members were informed that the Council was required by law to designate an officer to undertake the statutory role of Monitoring Officer. The Assistant Director of Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services was currently designated as the Monitoring Officer of the Council. However, Members were asked to note that following consideration of senior leadership arrangements through the appropriate governance process, the title of the role was changing to Executive Director of Governance and Assurance. Council was therefore asked to consider transferring the statutory designation of Monitoring Officer to that new post title, to come into effect once the revised structure was implemented.

The purpose of the proposal was to ensure continuity, clarity and compliance with the Council's statutory obligations and to ensure that the Monitoring Officer designation remained attached to a role that existed within the Council's structure.

Members were asked to note that the decision had no direct financial implications in itself, as any financial considerations were addressed through the separate restructuring process. Instead, Council was invited to consider the proposal to ensure that the authority achieved good governance and statutory compliance.

Following the presentation of the report, reference was made to the meeting of the Joint Appointments Committee that had been held on 3rd August 2026 at which a report on this subject had been

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considered. At that meeting, Members had been advised that the position of the Assistant Director of Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services had been reassessed as an Executive Director role by both independent employment specialists and independent legal consultants respectively. As part of this review process, a job evaluation exercise had been completed by independent experts.

It was noted that the realignment of the Monitoring Officer post to Director level would enhance governance arrangements at the Council. The Monitoring Officer would also be employed at a more equivalent level to the other statutory officers: the Chief Finance Officer and the Head of Paid Service. As a consequence, the Monitoring Officer would be in a stronger position to hold the organisation to account and to ensure that governance considerations shaped Council performance and service delivery.

During consideration of this item, questions were raised as to why the role of Executive Director of Governance and Assurance had not been advertised for recruitment and whether the process that had been followed had been transparent. Clarification was provided that the focus of the report was on the assignment of the Monitoring Officer, as a statutory post, to the position of Executive Director. The Joint Appointments Committee had already considered a report on the proposals in respect of the Executive Director post. This meeting had been held in public and the decision-making process had been fully transparent. The report to Council was not designed to review the decision taken by the Joint Appointments Committee and Members were asked to note that Council had not been asked to recruit new staff.

Consideration was given to the remuneration that would be received by the postholder in the position of Executive Director of Governance and Assurance and questions were raised as to whether this would have additional financial implications for the Council. Members were informed that the post holder would receive financial remuneration as a member of staff but there were relatively limited financial implications due to the deletion of the Assistant Director of Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services role.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Matthew Dormer and seconded by Councillor Brandon Clayton.

RESOLVED that

the post of Executive Director of Governance and Assurance be designated as the Council's Monitoring Officer pursuant to Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, with

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effect from the date the revised structure would be implemented.

(Prior to consideration of this item the Assistant Director of Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services left the meeting. She was therefore not present during the debate nor the vote on this item.)

37. 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 8.11 pm



Special Meeting of Council

Wednesday, 26th August,
2026

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Susan Eacock, James Aston, Juliet Barker Smith, Roger Bennett, Brandon Clayton, Matthew Dormer, Simon Farmer, Sharon Harvey, Joanna Kane, Nicola Lloyd, David Meredith, Gemma Monaco, Ashley Monk, Nic Pioli, Rita Rogers, Gary Slim, Jen Snape, Jane Spilsbury, Monica Stringfellow, Craig Warhurst and Ian Woodall

Also Present:

Mr Jordan Adams
Mr Cian Adams

Officers:

Ruth Bamford, John Leach, Claire Felton, Guy Revans, James Walton and Judith Willis

Principal Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley-Hill

38. WELCOME

The Mayor welcomed all those present to the meeting and led Members, Officers and members of the public present in being upstanding for the entrance of Jordan and Cian Adams at the meeting.

39. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors William Boyd, James Fardoe, Andrew Fry and Bill Hartnett.

40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

Chair

Special Meeting of Council

Wednesday, 26th August, 2026

**41. AWARD OF HONORARY TITLE OF FREEMEN OF THE
BOROUGH TO JORDAN AND CIAN ADAMS**

The Mayor opened the item by commenting that it was a great privilege to welcome Jordan and Cian Adams to the Special Meeting of Council at which they would be conferred the civic honour of Freeman of the Borough. Jordan and Cian Adams were praised for their endurance and for raising awareness of and funding for frontotemporal dementia. It was highlighted that through their actions, they had acted as positive representatives of Redditch and the community was proud of their achievements.

The conferring of the Freeman of the Borough honour on Jordan and Cian Adams was proposed by Councillor Matthew Dormer. In moving the resolutions, Councillor Dormer noted that the original proposal to grant Freeman of the Borough status had been agreed in a Motion on Notice considered at a meeting of Council in June 2026, which had received cross-party support.

Jordan and Cian Adams had sadly suffered bereavement following the death of their mother from frontotemporal dementia. Their participation in 32 marathons in 32 consecutive days, as well as participation in the London Marathon with Jordan carrying a fridge on his back, had raised funding for The Alzheimer's Association of Ireland and the FTD Brothers' Foundation. In addition, it had received widespread attention which had helped to raise awareness of this rare form of dementia. Redditch residents were proud of their achievements and this had been highlighted in the public's reception on their return home to Redditch in May 2026.

Reference was made to Local Government Reorganisation and it was acknowledged that Redditch Borough Council would cease to exist on 1st April 2028. However, civic honours would endure. It was notable that this was only the fourth occasion in the history of the Borough on which this honour had been bestowed. The suggestion was made that this demonstrated the level of support for and pride in Jordan and Cian Adams's achievements within Redditch.

In seconding the resolutions, Councillor Sharon Harvey commented that dementia was an illness that would unfortunately impact on many people during their lifetimes. Symptoms of frontotemporal dementia unfortunately developed in relatively young adults, aged in their forties and fifties and Jordan and Cian had both tested positive for the gene associated with the illness. In response, they had raised over £2 million in funding and significant awareness of

Special Meeting of Council

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frontotemporal dementia. Members, like all Redditch residents, were proud of Jordan and Cian's achievements and keen to recognise this through the bestowal of this civic honour.

Following the speeches from the proposer and seconder, group leaders were invited to address Council. In doing so, Councillor Nic Pioli highlighted the stamina and mental agility required to compete in a single marathon and noted that this would have been significantly more difficult to achieve in the context of participating 32 marathons in 32 days. Jordan and Cian's achievements were compared to that of superheroes and because they were such positive role models, the suggestion was made that young people in Redditch would seek to emulate their achievements in the future.

The Council subsequently took a vote on the admission of Jordan and Cian Adams to be honorary Freeman of the Borough and the Council approved the proposition unanimously.

Jordan Adams spoke in response to the conferring of this civic honour by the Council on himself and his brother and in doing so thanked the Council and local community. Members were advised that Jordan and Cian's family valued Redditch, recognising the support that they had received from local residents and businesses based in the community. Furthermore, Jordan welcomed the support that his family had received when his mother had been unwell and when he and his brother had tested positive for the gene associated with frontotemporal dementia. Jordan and Cian Adams had been proud to represent Redditch and they recognised the Freeman of the Borough award as an honour received from their home town.

RESOLVED

- 1) to award the title of Honorary Freeman of the Borough of Redditch to Jordan Adams and to Cian Adams in recognition of their eminent service; and**
- 2) that the Common Seal of the Council be affixed to an Honorary Freedom Scroll to be presented to Jordan Adams and Cian Adams.**

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 7.26 pm

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Redditch Borough Council

21st September 2026

Questions on Notice

1) Question for the Leader from Councillor Sharon Harvey

“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?”

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Introduction of the National Scheme of Delegations of Planning Functions

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Jane Spilsbury - Chair of Constitutional Reform Working Party
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Assistant Director	Ruth Bamford
Report Author	Job Title: Assistant Director – Planning Leisure & Culture Services
Ruth Bamford	Contact email: r.bamford@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel:
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Council Priority	Supported Governance
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to NOTE:

- 1.1 The matters set out in this report relating to the introduction of the National Scheme of Delegation of Planning Functions; and**
- 1.2 that there is a 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.**

Members are asked to RESOLVE:

- 1.3 That the arrangements set out in this report be adopted with effect from 31 October 2026; and**
- 1.4 That the Constitution be updated by adopting the following documents attached to this report: -**
 - Scheme of Delegations for Development Management Appendix 1**
 - Scheme of Delegations for Trees Appendix 2**
 - Planning Committee Procedure Rules Appendix 3**
 - Planning Code of Conduct Appendix 4**

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- 1.5 That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director for Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services to make any further consequential amendments required to the Constitution; and
- 1.6 That 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.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to explain to Members the changes which are being implemented by the national government in relation to the making of decisions on planning applications by local councils. The previous system of each individual council having it's own Scheme of Delegations for planning decisions is being replaced by a National Scheme of Delegation. Adoption of the new arrangements is mandatory and applies to all Local Planning Authorities in England and Wales.
- 2.2 The local arrangements for decision making operated at the Council will have to be amended to comply with the Regulations. The result will be a greater emphasis on the use of delegated powers, stricter rules about what applications can be decided by officers and what matters can be referred to Planning Committee, and the ending of the practice of members being able to "call in" planning applications in their ward.
- 2.3 The new arrangements need to be adopted by no later than 31st October 2026.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUESIntroduction

- 3.1 Schemes of Delegations consists of written rules in local authority constitutions through which planning decisions can be delegated to officers. Each authority currently will have their own individual scheme. Although there will be similarities, the detail will vary considerably from authority to authority.
- 3.2 Introducing a "National Scheme of Delegation" was proposed by the Labour government in December 2024 as part of its planning reform programme. Following a period of formal consultation the final versions of the regulations and the guidance have now been issued by the government as follows: -

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- The Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 (“the regulations”) – made on 15th July 2026 - in force from 31st October 2026.
- The Planning Committees and the National Scheme of Delegations of Planning Functions: Guidance for Local Planning Authorities in England (“the guidance”) – issued on 1st June 2026

Local authorities will need to make changes to their constitutions to ensure they can implement the National Scheme of Delegation from the start date of 31st October 2026.

3.3 The government has identified the following reasons for making the changes: -

- to address inconsistent decision making by planning committees.
- to provide greater consistency and certainty about what decisions go to committee.
- to allow committees to focus on the key issues of the area, enabling other often more minor and technical decisions to be made by planning officers.

3.4 Members will already be familiar with the practice of most minor applications being delegated to officers. This is achieved under the current scheme of delegations for planning, the main exception to this rule being where applications may be “called in” by Members. The scheme of delegations also provides for other more significant applications to be decided by Planning Committee.

3.5 According to government data for the year to December 2025, local authorities already delegate more than 96% of planning decisions to officers, although the rate varies between different authorities. In Redditch there is already a significant number of officer delegated decisions being made.

Regulations to establish a two-tier National Delegation Scheme

3.6 The regulations and the guidance form the framework for local authorities to implement the National Scheme of Delegations. It is mandatory that the Council adopt and comply the new scheme; failure to comply may give rise to legal challenges being brought against the Council by way of judicial review.

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- 3.7 Under the Regulations planning applications are to be divided into Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 depending on type, scale and complexity of the application.

Schedule 1 applications	Schedule 2 applications
Must be delegated to officers	Presumption of delegation to officers unless certain conditions are met by applying what is known as the Gateway Test.
<i>Examples: householder, minor residential, minor commercial, discharge of conditions, lawful development certificates, prior approval</i>	<i>Examples: major applications, listed building consent matters, reserved matters applications for large outline permissions.</i>

For context, a minor residential application relates to a development of between 1 and 9 dwellings that is to be carried out on a site with an area smaller than 0.5 hectares.

- 3.8 Under the new scheme, the ability of Members to “call-in” planning applications in their wards will cease to apply. The new arrangements will also abolish any other previous trigger points for referral to Planning Committee such as the number of objections received.
- 3.9 The replacement trigger test for a planning application being referred to Planning Committee is set out in Regulation 5 (3) and is known as the Gateway Test. The test can best be described as filtering process to decide which Schedule 2 applications should be decided by members at Planning Committee, and which are suitable to be decided by officers under delegated powers.

Nominated Officers and Nominated Member

- 3.10 Under Regulation 3 the Council must appoint a “nominated officer” and a “nominated member”. These are new positions created under the regulations. The holders of these positions will carry out the function of assessing whether or not Schedule 2 planning applications meet the conditions set out in the Gateway Test. Where the conditions are met

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the application will be referred to Planning Committee to be determined. Where the test is not met the application will be decided by officers under delegated powers.

- 3.11 The Guidance recommends that the role of nominated officer should be taken on by the person in the organisation who acts as the Chief Planning Officer. For Redditch this is Ruth Bamford - Assistant Director of Planning Leisure and Culture Services. The role of nominated officer should be held by the Chair of Planning Committee.
- 3.12 Provision needs to be made for the two roles to have deputies in case of absence. The amended Scheme of Delegation therefore provides that the nominated officer will be the Assistant Director of Planning Leisure and Culture Services, and in her absence a nominated deputy will act; the nominated member will be the Chair of the Planning Committee, and in his or her absence the deputy will be the Vice Chair of Planning.

Schedule 1 applications

- 3.11 Regulation 4 provides that Schedule 1 applications must be decided by officers under delegated powers. The Council has made arrangements for this in the Scheme of Delegations for Development Management at which cross refers to the list of application types set out in Schedule 1.

Schedule 2 applications

- 3.12 Under Regulation 5, Schedule 2 applications may be determined either by officers under delegated powers or by committee. There is a presumption in favour of all Schedule 2 applications being delegated to officers. However, if certain conditions apply there may be cases where it is appropriate for applications to be decided by Planning Committee.
- 3.13. Under regulation 5 (3) a planning application should only be referred to planning committee if the proposal raises:
- Ground A - one or more issues of economic, social or environmental significance to the local area, or
 - Ground B - one of more significant planning matters having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations.

This is known as the Gateway Test.

- 3.14 As noted at paragraph 3.10, the task of assessing which Schedule 2 applications should be referred to Planning Committee, or in other words applying the Gateway Test, falls to the nominated member and the nominated officer.

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- 3.15 The aim would be to reach consensus on which cases are referred to committee. However, where agreement is not possible the case must be delegated to officers under Regulation 5 (3).

Exceptions to Schedule 2 process for matters previously decided under delegated powers

- 3.16. The regulations and guidance recognise that some local planning authorities already operate under well thought out Schemes of Delegation that provide for a large percentage of routine matters to be decided by officers under delegated powers. This is regarded as good practice as it allows Planning Committee to concentrate on deciding the most complex and high profile planning applications.
- 3.17 To enable authorities already exercising good levels of delegation to continue to do so, the new scheme recognises that not all planning applications included in Schedule 2 need to be referred to the Gateway Test. This is particularly the case for types of applications that the government has placed into Category 2 that were traditionally decided by officers under delegated powers such as advertisement consents and applications to carry out works to trees protected by TPOs.
- 3.18 The guidance document itself, along with supplementary guidance issued by the Planning Advisory Service, provide that Councils can through their constitutions Council filter out some Schedule 2 matters that need not be referred to the Gateway Test. Officers are recommending this approach so as to maintain the previous levels of delegation and ensure that the Gateway Test is not overwhelmed.
- 3.18 The version of the Scheme of Delegations proposed to be adopted by the Council for Schedule 2 applications has been modelled to enable similar levels of delegation as existed under the old scheme to continue. This will enable applications previously decided by officers under the old scheme of delegations to continue to be decided by officers without the need for referral to the Gateway Test. In circumstances where the applications would previously have been referred to Planning Committee under the old scheme of delegations, then the Gateway Test will be applied to assess whether grounds exist for those matters to be referred to Planning Committee or whether they are suitable to be decided by officers under delegated powers.
- 3.19. Members are referred to the wording of the Schedule 2 matters set out in the amended Schemes of Delegation at Appendices 3 and 4 for specific wording for each subject area. The style of wording of the old scheme of delegations has been difficult to replicate under the new regulations. The language may therefore seem unfamiliar or different to

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Members. A table showing the old format of the scheme and an explanation of the changes can be found at Appendix 5.

Regulation 6 – Own-interest Applications

- 3.20. Separate provision is made in the Regulations for the determination of planning applications made by either the Council or by officers or members. These are referred to as “own-interest” applications.
- 3.21. The definition in regulation 6(1) covers applications of a type specified in Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 made by the local authority, by members of the local authority and by officers of the local authority.
- 3.22. Additionally, under Regulation 6 (1)(b) the nominated officer and nominated member may take the view that where the authority, or any of its members or officers “otherwise” has an interest in an application, then that application must also be treated as an own-interest application. For example, this may cover an application made by a close relative of an officer or a member.
- 3.23. Under Regulation 6 (4) the nominated officer and nominated member may decide to refer an own-interest applications to committee. In any situation where a referral to committee is not made then by default the application will be determined by officers.
- 3.24. Whilst the guidance indicates that there is discretion for own-interest applications to be decided by officers under delegated powers, officers are proposing that for reasons of openness and transparency own-interest applications should in the majority of cases be decided by committee. This will represent a continuation of the existing practice and be in compliance with the Planning Code of Conduct.
- 3.25. For reference the Planning Code of Conduct states as follows: -

10.6 Applications of currently serving Members should not be dealt with under delegated powers and should be decided by the Planning Committee.

10.9 Applications for Planning Consents made to Redditch Borough Council by Officers currently working for either Bromsgrove District Council or Redditch Borough Council or their family members, whether or not directly employed by them, should not be dealt with under delegated powers and should be decided by the Planning Committee.

10.10 Planning applications made by Council Service Areasshall be considered by the Planning Committee and not determined under delegated powers.

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- 3.26. The arrangements made by the Council for own interest applications are set out in the Scheme of Delegations for Development Management and in the Planning Code of Practice.

Practical arrangements to implement the regulations

- 3.27. Upon receipt new applications will be categorised by officers upon validation into one of the following categories: -

- Schedule 1 applications - for delegated decision
- Schedule 2 applications – identified in the Constitution for delegated decision
- Schedule 2 applications – for referral to the Gateway Test
- Own-interest applications

- 3.28. The nominated officer and the nominated member will meet no less than once a month to review Schedule 2 applications for referral to the Gateway Test. This will be known as the Gateway Meeting.

- 3.29. Officers will prepare a case summary for any applications being considered at the Gateway Meeting to indicate whether in their view the application raises issues under either Ground A or Ground B.

- 3.30. The decision of the nominated officer and nominated member on allocation of a Schedule 2 application under the Gateway Test will be final. The aim will be for a consensus to be reached but in any cases where this is not possible the application must be determined by an officer of the authority.

- 3.31. Officers will keep a written record of decisions made under the Gateway Test. A schedule of decisions made will be available to view online and be reported back to members of Planning Committee on a regular basis.

- 3.32. The Gateway Meeting will also consider any new own-interest applications that have been made, regardless of whether these fall into Schedule 1 or Schedule 2. The nominated officer and the nominated member may agree to refer such applications to committee. As noted in paragraphs 3.24 and 3.25, for reasons of openness and transparency, there will be a presumption in favour of referral to committee.

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Conclusion

3.33. To summarise, under the new arrangements, planning applications will be determined as follows: -

By Planning Committee

- Schedule 2 applications which meet the Gateway Test
- Own-interest applications

By officers under delegated powers

- All Schedule 1 applications
- Schedule 2 applications which do not meet the Gateway Test

3.32 Officers are of the view that there would be benefit in monitoring how the New Scheme of Delegations is working given that the changes will be a significant departure from previous practices. Accordingly, Members are referred to recommendation 1.6 which sets out that there be a review of the operation of the new arrangements by the Constitution Review Working Party after 6 months.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report that have been identified.

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5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 In accordance with powers conferred under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the Secretary of State has issued the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026. The purpose of the regulations is to set up a National Scheme of Delegation for planning functions. The requirement to comply with the regulations is mandatory and the Council has no choice but to adopt them and up date its planning processes and practices accordingly.
- 5.2 The amended scheme of delegations must mirror the contents of Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 of the Regulations. The government has further advised that “Where a planning function is not listed in either Schedule 1 or 2, it is for the local planning authority to decide whether it should be delegated to an officer or referred to a committee or sub-committee for a decision”.
- 5.3 The government has advised that “Where a planning function is not listed in either Schedule 1 or 2, it is for the local planning authority to decide whether it should be delegated to an officer or referred to a committee or sub-committee for a decision”.
- 5.4 Nominated officers and nominated members should make every effort to reach agreement on which cases should be referred to committee. However, where agreement is not possible, the case must be delegated to officers under regulation 5(3).
- 5.5 There are no transition arrangements included in the regulations. This means that the allocation of planning applications into the categories of Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 will be applicable as from 31st October 2026. This may have the effect that planning applications previously on course for determination by officers under delegated powers, or by planning committee under the old scheme of delegations will be subject to a change of decision maker. The guidance is clear that the Council must comply with the new rules or risk legal challenge.

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

- 6.1 There are no immediate implications for Local Government Reorganisation; in the longer term work will have to be done by officers to ensure that from vesting day the new authority is acting in accordance with one uniform scheme of delegations for planning applications; the

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introduction of the regulations should assist with this by already aligning parts of the decision making framework for planning matters..

Relevant Council Priority

- 6.2 This report links to the following Council Organisational Priorities: -
- Supported Governance

Climate Change Implications

- 6.3 There are no relevant climate change implications.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.4 It is not considered that there are any implications for equalities and diversity.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The following risks have been identified: -

Risk	Mitigation
Failure to implement the new regulations leading to risk of legal challenge by way of judicial review of planning decisions made after 31 st October 2026	Regulations and guidance will be adopted to come into effect on 31 st October 2026.
Risk that the number of applications being referred to the Gateway Test would be overwhelming, leading to delay and reputational damage.	This risk is being mitigated by adopting a scheme that provides for previous levels of delegation to continue.
Risk of disruption caused by introduction of changes set out in the regulations, and potential impact on Members, staff and service users	This is being mitigated by: - • Training and support to Chair and Vice Chair of Planning Committee • Briefing of all Members as to the changes • Training for Members who sit on Planning Committee • Training and briefing of staff • Update to information on website

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Risk of own interest applications being delegated to officers	This is being mitigated by the provisions for own-interest applications to continue to be decided in an open and transparent way through decisions being taken at Planning Committee.
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8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS**Background Papers**

The Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026

[The Town and Country Planning \(Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions\) \(England\) Regulations 2026](#)

The Planning Committees and the National Scheme of Delegations of Planning Functions: Guidance for Local Planning Authorities in England

[Planning Committees and the National Scheme of Delegation of Planning Functions: Guidance for local planning authorities in England - GOV.UK](#)

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Scheme of Delegations for Development Management

Appendix 2 - Scheme of Delegations for Trees

Appendix 3 - Planning Committee Procedure Rules

Appendix 4 - Planning Code of Conduct

Appendix 5 - Table showing amendments and alterations to previous scheme of delegation

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Jane Spilsbury - Chair of Constitutional Reform Working Party	10 th September 2026

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Lead Director / Assistant Director	Ruth Bamford – Assistant Director – Planning Leisure and Culture Services	10 th September 2026
Financial Services	James Walton - Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer	10 th September 2026
Legal Services	Sarah Sellers – Solicitor Governance and Regulatory	10 th September 2026

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3. Development Management

NEW National Scheme of Delegations

Subject	Detail	Delegated by	Delegated to
National Scheme of Delegations – Regulation 3 – nominated members and officers	1. To act as the nominated officer under the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026	Council	Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Service or their nominated deputy
	2. To act as the nominated member under the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026	Council	Chair of Planning Committee or in his/her absence Vice Chair of Planning Committee
National Scheme of Delegations – Regulation 4 – applications that must be determined by an officer (Schedule 1)	To determine planning applications set out in Schedule 1 of the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 [See list of Schedule 1 delegations at Appendix 1.]	Council	Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Service or their nominated deputy
National Scheme of Delegations –	1. To carry out the function of agreeing whether a	Council	Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and

Regulation 5 – Applications that may be determined by a committee or by an officer – The Gateway Test	Schedule 2 application referred to the Gateway Test should be determined by officers under delegated powers or determined by Planning Committee based on the test in set out on grounds a. and b. of regulation 5(3) 2. To determine any application referred to the Gateway Test where agreement cannot be reached between the nominated officer and the nominated member	Council	Culture Service or their nominated deputy (acting as the nominated officer) following consultation with Chair of Planning Committee or in his/ her absence Vice Chair (acting as the nominated member) Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Service
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NEW Schedule 2 applications * from Schedule 2

Par a no *	Subject	Detail	Delegated by	Delegated to
1, 2 and 3	Applications for listed building consent (under section 10(1) of the Listed Buildings Act Applications for variation or discharge of listed building consent under section 19(1) of the Listed Buildings Act Applications for planning	1. To determine applications described in paras 1, 2 and 3 of Schedule 2 which do not involve any of the following features: - a. Complete or significant demolition of a listed building. b. That are linked to planning application for dwelling houses where the number of houses to be provided is 10 or more. c. That are linked to a planning application for the provision of a building or buildings	Council	Assistant Director of Planning Leisure and Culture Services

	permission connected to an application made under section 10(1) or 19(1) of the Listed Buildings Act	with a floor space of 1000 square metres or more. 2. Any applications of the type identified in a., b. or c. above will be referred to the nominated officer and nominated member for consideration under the Gateway Test and shall be determined as follows: a. Where outcome of Gateway Test is referral for determination by Members at Planning Committee b. Where outcome of Gateway Test is for determination by officers	Council Council	Planning Committee Assistant Director Planning Leisure and Culture Services
4	Applications made under paragraph 4 of Schedule 2 (and not identified separately under any other provisions of Schedule 2)	To determine an application for planning permission that is not: a. A householder application b. A minor commercial application c. A minor residential application	Council	Planning Committee following agreement by the nominated officer and nominated member that the application meets either ground A or ground B in the Gateway Test. In all other cases, Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services
5	An application made under section 73 (1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 -	1. To determine applications made under Section 73 (1).	Council	Planning Committee following agreement by the nominated officer and nominated member that the application meets

[illegible]

	discharge a planning obligation under (a) section 106A(1) or (b) section 106A(3)	Country Planning Act 1990 to modify or discharge a planning obligation under section 106A(1) or section 106A(3) where the application is connected to a Schedule 2 approval.		by the nominated officer and nominated member that the application meets either ground a or ground b in the Gateway Test. In all other cases, Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services.
8	Large outline permission – reserved matter approval application	To determine applications for reserved matters approvals in relation to a large outline permissions [involving the provision of 500 or more dwellings or the provision of a building or buildings where the floorspace to be created by the development is 50,000 square metres or more]	Council	Planning Committee following agreement by the nominated officer and nominated member that the application meets either ground a or ground b in the Gateway Test. In all other cases, Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services.
9	Applications for advertisement consent made under section 9 (1) of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007	1. To determine applications made under Section 9 (1) which do not involve any of the following features: - • Public safety objection from the Highway authority • Objection from a statutory consultee (including Conservation Officer)		Assistant Director Planning Leisure and Culture Services

		2. Any applications not falling under paragraph (1) will be referred to the nominated officer and nominated member for consideration under the Gateway Test and shall be determined as follows: a. Where outcome of Gateway Test is referral for determination by Members at Planning Committee b. Where outcome of Gateway Test is for determination by officers		Planning Committee Assistant Director Planning Leisure and Culture Services
10	Applications for consent to carry out works on or remove trees protected by TPOs (under regulation 16.1 of the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012	SEE SEPARATE DELEGATIONS UNDER ENVIRONMENT SERVICES FOR TREES		

NEW Own-Interest Applications

Subject	Detail	Delegated by	Delegated to
Own Interest Applications as defined by Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning	To carry out the function of agreeing whether an own-interest application should be determined by Planning Committee or referred for an officer delegated decision	Council	Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Service or their nominated deputy (acting as the nominated officer)

Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026			following consultation with Chair of Planning Committee or in his/ her absence Vice Chair (acting as the nominated member)
National Scheme of Delegations – Regulation 6 – additional classes of own interest under Regulation 6 (1) (b)	To discharge the function of identifying whether the authority, a member of the authority, or an officer of the authority “otherwise” has an interest in an application under Regulation 6 (1) of the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) 2026	Council	Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Service or their nominated deputy following consultation with Chair of Planning Committee or in his/ her absence Vice Chair

NEW Relating to functions not listed in Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 or in other parts of Scheme of Delegations

Subject	Detail	Delegated by	Delegated to
Decisions in relation to planning applications / functions for matters not listed in Schedule 1 or 2, or specifically identified in the Scheme of Delegations	1. To make decisions relating to planning applications / planning functions not listed in Schedule 1 or 2, or specifically identified in the Scheme of Delegations	Council	Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services following consultation with the Chair or Vice Chair of Planning Committee.
For the avoidance of doubt this section applies only to planning functions which are not listed in	2. To determine applications which in the opinion of the Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure	Council	Planning Committee

either Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 or not specifically mentioned elsewhere in the Scheme of Delegations	and Culture Services following consultation with the Chair or Vice Chair of Planning Committee should considered by Planning Committee		
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**NEW CLAUSES BEING ADDED FOR CLARITY FOLLOWING REMOVAL OF BALNKET WORDING FOR
"ALL PLANNING APPLICATIONS" UNDER THE OLD SCHEME OF DELEGATIONS**

Development Proposals by other Public Authorities.	To comment on proposals for development submitted by Worcestershire County Council and other public authorities.	Council.	Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services.
Entry of Premises - Proper Officer.	To be designated as the Proper Officer for the purposes of authorising persons to enter onto land in connections with the exercise of functions under sections, 324 and 325 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990.	Planning Committee.	Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services.
Inspection Notices.	To serve notices of intended inspection under sections, 324 and 325 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.	Planning Committee.	Principal Solicitor.
Landscaping Schemes.	To approve landscaping/tree planting schemes submitted as a result of planning permissions subject to such conditions as may be appropriate.	Planning Committee.	Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services.
Planning Agreements and Unilateral Undertakings.	To negotiate with developers and to approve the amounts to be received by the Council as financial contributions in lieu of on-site provision of affordable housing or recreational facilities/open space and as contributions towards the costs of highways works, educational provision or any other kind of provision by the Council or County Council.	Planning Committee.	Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services.

Planning Agreements and Unilateral Undertakings.	To negotiate the legal, drafting and all terms of the agreements and undertaking, except for those which involve planning gain, restriction of the development or use of the land, obligations relating to the land and financial contributions. To execute and complete planning agreements.	Planning Committee. Planning Committee.	Principal Solicitor. Principal Solicitor.
Planning Agreements and Unilateral Undertakings.	To approve the enforcement of a planning obligation.	Planning Committee.	Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services.
Use of conditions	To impose conditions on applications which have been approved by the Planning Committee contrary to the Planning Officer's recommendation where such conditions are: a. Necessary. b. Relevant to planning. c. Relevant to the development which has been applied for. d. Enforceable. e. precise and f. Reasonable in all other aspects.	Planning Committee.	Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services.
Appeals.	To take all action to defend the Council where there has been an appeal against a refusal to grant planning permission, listed building consent, conservation area consent or any appeal arising out of the taking of enforcement action	Planning Committee.	Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services in consultation with the Principal Solicitor.

Revocation and modification of certain applications	- To revoke or modify planning permissions under section 97 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (planning applications and permissions in principle) - To revoke or modify listed building consent under section 23 of Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Area Acts) 1990	Planning Committee.	Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services.
Completion Notice.	To authorise and serve a completion notices under section 93H of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990	Planning Committee.	Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services.
Declining Planning Applications.	To decide to decline to determine application on the grounds set out in sections 70A and 70B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and sections 81A and 81B of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Area Acts) 1990.	Planning Committee.	Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services.

APPENDIX 1

Schedule 1

Applications that must be determined by an officer

1. An application made under section 17(1) of the Land Compensation Act 1961 (certificates of appropriate alternative development)(**12**).

2. An application made under section 26H(1) of the Listed Buildings Act (certificate of lawfulness of proposed works)(**13**).

3. A householder application.

4. A minor commercial application.

5. A minor residential application.

6. An application for permission in principle(**14**).

7.—(1) An application made under section 73(1) of TCPA 1990 (application to develop land without compliance with conditions previously attached) in respect of which the original planning permission was a Schedule 1 planning permission.

(2) In this paragraph—

“original planning permission” means a planning permission which is the first in a sequence of two or more planning permissions, where the second and any subsequent planning permissions were granted under section 73(1) of TCPA 1990;

“Schedule 1 planning permission” means a planning permission granted pursuant to an application which is of a kind specified in this Schedule.

8. An application made under section 96A(4) of TCPA 1990 (non-material changes to planning permission or permission in principle)(**15**).

9.(1) In respect of a planning obligation that the authority concerned considers is connected with a Schedule 1 approval—

(a) a request to agree to modify or discharge that obligation under section 106A(1)(a) of TCPA 1990 (modification and discharge of planning obligations)(**16**);

(b) an application to modify or discharge that obligation under section 106A(3) of TCPA 1990 (modification and discharge of planning obligations)(**17**).

(2) In this paragraph, “Schedule 1 approval” means any permission, agreement, consent or approval (other than a planning obligation) pursuant to an application which is of a kind specified in this Schedule.

10. An application made under section 191(1) of TCPA 1990 (certificate of lawfulness of existing use or development)(**18**).

11. An application made under section 192(1) of TCPA 1990 (certificate of lawfulness of proposed use or development)(**19**).

12. The submission of a biodiversity gain plan under paragraph 13(2)(a) of Schedule 7A to TCPA 1990(**20**).

13. A reserved matters approval application in respect of an outline planning permission other than a large outline permission.

14. An application made under article 27(1) of DMPO (applications made under a planning condition).

15. An application pursuant to provision in Schedule 2 to the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015(**21**) for—

(a) prior approval, or

(b) a determination as to whether prior approval is required.

Footnotes

12. 1961 c. 33. Section 17 was substituted by section 232(3) of the Localism Act 2011 (c. 20) and was amended by section 189(3) of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (c. 55).

13. Section 26H(1) was inserted by section 61 of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013 (c. 24).

14. For the definition of “permission in principle”, see section 336(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (c. 8).

15. Section 96A was inserted by section 190(2) of the Planning Act 2008 (c. 29). Subsection (4) was amended by regulation 3(4)(c) of S.I. 2017/276.

16. Section 106A was inserted by section 12(1) of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 (c. 34); section 106A(1)(a) was amended by section 34(2) of the Greater London Authority Act 2007 (c. 24).

17. Section 106A(3) was amended by section 34(3) of the Greater London Authority Act 2007 (c. 24).
18. Section 191 was substituted by section 10(1) of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 (c. 34).
19. Section 192 was substituted by section 10(1) of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 (c. 34).
20. Schedule 7A was inserted by paragraph 2 of Schedule 14 to the Environment Act 2021 (c. 30).
21. S.I. 2015/596

	<u>Orders in all other cases.</u>		<u>Housing Property Services</u>
<u>Tree Preservation Orders - Applications for consent to carry out works - Regulation 16 Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012</u> <u>NOTE: applications in this category fall under the National Scheme of Delegations - Schedule 2 - para 10</u>	<u>1. To determine applications for consent to the cutting down, topping, lopping or uprooting of any tree which do not involve any of the following features:</u> <u>-</u> <u>a. The tree(s) to be felled/removed have been deemed by officers to have a CAVAT value of £150,000 or more and officers are minded to refuse the application;</u> <u>b. Permission is sought for major works consisting of a full crown reduction of greater than 20% and officers are minded to refuse the application.</u> <u>2. Any applications not falling under paragraph (1) will be referred to the nominated officer and nominated member for</u>	<u>Council</u>	<u>Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services.</u>

	<u>consideration under the Gateway Test and shall be determined as follows:</u> <u>a. Where outcome of Gateway Test is referral for determination by Members at Planning Committee</u> <u>b. Where outcome of Gateway Test is for determination by officers</u>	<u>Council</u> <u>Council</u>	<u>Planning Committee</u> <u>[Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services]</u>
Tree Preservation Orders – <u>All other matters</u>	<u>4. – To determine all applications/ make all decisions/ take all steps All planning decisions, actions or advice/responses on behalf of the Local Planning Authority that relate to the protection of trees <u>not identified separately in this Scheme of Delegation and falls within the list of Planning and Associated legislation/regulations are considered to fall within the delegation scheme and will be determined by officers, unless:</u></u>	<u>Council</u>	<u>[Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services]</u>

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	<u>1.</u> a.-Objections have been received where it is proposed that a tree preservation order protects a tree/trees previously unprotected; or b.-It is proposed that a tree be protected which is located on Council-owned land. In all cases relating to trees, decisions made using delegated powers shall be reported to members at Planning Committee within six months of the decision being made, for information purposes. 2.-To initiate Tree Preservation Orders.	Council	[Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services]
Trees - Dangerous.	1. Where notice is received under s23(2) of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 that trees are in such condition that they are likely to cause damage to persons or	Planning Committee.	[Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services].

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	property on the land of the person giving notice: a. To take any steps necessary to make the trees safe (whether by felling or otherwise) where the owner of the land is not known. b. to serve a notice under s23 (3) of the Act on the owner or occupier of the land on which the trees are growing where the name and address of such or occupier is known requiring the taking of steps to make the trees safe and if the Notice is not complied with to take the steps specified therein and recover such expenses. 2. To take any necessary action under s23 – 26 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 to secure the removal of dangerous trees and to deal with dangerous excavations.	Planning Committee.	[Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services].
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High Hedges.	1. To determine High Hedge applications submitted in accordance with Part 8 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 and to issue a remedial notice where appropriate when: a. such applications are submitted by or on behalf of any officer of the Council or any Parish Council within the Borough of Redditch. b. such applications are submitted by or on behalf of any County, District or Parish Councillor whose ward is within the Borough of Redditch. c. any County, District or Parish Councillor whose ward is within the Borough of Redditch is affected by such an application. 2. In all other circumstances to	1. Council.	Planning Committee
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	determine all High Hedge applications submitted in accordance with Part 8 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 and to issue a remedial notice where appropriate.	2. Planning Committee	[Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services].
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PLANNING COMMITTEE PROCEDURE RULES**1. Terms of Reference of Planning Committee**

- 1.1 The Council will appoint a Planning Committee.
- 1.2 The Terms of Reference of the Planning Committee are as set out in Part 4 of the Constitution.

2. Time and Place of Meetings

- 1.1 The Planning Committee shall normally meet on a monthly cycle on dates to be set by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Committee Chair.

3. Composition of the Planning Committee

- 3.1 The Planning Committee will comprise such number of Councillors as may be determined annually at the Council's Annual Meeting provided that the total number does not exceed 13.¹

Article 8.4 of the Articles at Part 2 of this Constitution applies to the Planning Committee.

- 3.2 Members of the Planning Committee who cannot attend a particular meeting may arrange for an appropriately trained substitute to attend in his or her place in accordance with Article 8.4 of the Articles at Part 2 of this Constitution.

4. Chair

- 4.1 The Planning Committee Chair and Vice-Chair will conventionally be appointed at the Council's Annual Meeting. Failing this, the Committee will appoint one of its members as Chair at its first meeting following the Annual Council Meeting.
- 4.2 Neither the Chair nor the Vice-Chair, if a member of the Controlling Party Group, will be a member of the Executive Committee.

5. Quorum

The quorum for a meeting of the Planning Committee is 3 Members.

6. Application of Council Procedure Rules

Deleted: <#>Meetings will normally commence at 7.00 pm at the Town Hall, Redditch.

¶

<#>The time and place of Planning Committee meetings may be varied by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Committee Chair, and any such change will be notified in the agenda.¶

¹ Regulation 7 of the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions)(England) Regulations 2026

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The Council Procedure Rules (as specified in Council Procedure Rule 24) will apply to all meetings of the Planning Committee, except as modified by these Rules.

7. Procedure for Determining Applications for Planning Permission

- 7.1 A Planning Officer will present the Officers' report.
- 7.2 Members of the public who have registered to speak may then address the meeting in accordance with the agreed procedure for public speaking.
- 7.3 Ward Members who have registered to speak may address the meeting in accordance with the agreed procedure for public speaking.
- 7.4 The Applicant's / Supporters' side shall always speak last.
- 7.5 Committee Members will be invited to ask each Speaker questions of clarification, only to ascertain that they have understood their representations.
- 7.6 Officers shall respond to the representations, advising the Committee on their material relevance, or otherwise.
- 7.7 Committee Members will then be invited to ask Planning Officers questions of clarification.
- 7.8 The Chair will then open the debate. With the consent of the Chair, members of the Committee will be entitled to address the meeting more than once.
- 7.9 Before taking the vote the Chair will ascertain whether the motion before the Committee is clearly understood.
- 7.10 If no alternative recommendation is put forward the Chair will proceed to the vote.
- 7.11 If one or more alternative recommendations are put forward the Chair will deal with these one by one in accordance with the approved constitutional rules of debate (Council Procedural Rule 13);
- 7.12 At each stage, the Chair shall :
 - a) invite Planning Officers to advise the Committee on the extent to which the alternative recommendation and the reasons given for it fall within or outside planning policy; and/or
 - b) consider whether an adjournment is required to enable the Member proposing the alternative recommendation to take advice from Officers;

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and only then proceed to the vote.

8. Public Speaking

- 8.1 Members of the public, and other interested parties, shall be entitled to participate in Planning Committee meetings and may address the Planning Committee in support of or against any application for planning permission
- 8.2 Public Speaking / participation shall be permitted in accordance with the approved Procedure (the current version is attached at Appendix 1 to these Procedure Rules).

9. Members of the Planning Committee with Dislosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) or Other Disclosable Interests and Public Speaking

Any Member who considers that they have a DPI or Other Disclosable Interest in any planning matter, whether or not as a Planning Committee Member, should seek advice from the Monitoring Officer, Deputy Monitoring Officer or a member of the Democratic Services Team at an early stage.

10. Ward Members

- 10.1 Ward Members shall be entitled to participate in Planning Committee meetings to the extent set out under paragraph 8 of these Procedure Rules (Public Speaking) and may address the Planning Committee in support of or against any application.
- 10.2 A Ward Member wishing to address the Planning Committee must give notice to the Committee Services Team of his or her intention to do so by the same deadline set for Public Speakers, as detailed in the attached Procedure.
- 10.3 Time limits shall be the same for (Ward) Members who wish to speak in relation to a planning application as for any other Public Speaker.

11. Site Visits

Formal Site Visits shall routinely be arranged for Committee Members before consideration of any significant applications (such need to be determined by Senior Planning Officers, in consultation with the Chair).

12. Limit to length of Meetings

Meetings shall not proceed beyond 10.00 pm, without the consent of the Committee by majority vote.

Any business remaining shall be deferred to the next available meeting

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of the Committee, or to an earlier additional meeting, as considered most appropriate by the Committee, further to Officer advice.

13. Introduction of the National Scheme of Delegations

The Town and Country (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 ("the regulations") which come into force on 31st October 2026 impose new rules regarding the allocation of planning applications as between delegated officer decisions and decisions taken by Members sitting on Planning Committee. The rules apply to all local planning authorities in England.

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The regulations bring to an end the ability of ward members to ask for planning applications in their ward to be "called in" to be determined by Planning Committee as opposed to being decided by officers.

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Under the regulations certain applications can only be decided by officers under delegated powers. These are generally Schedule 1 applications. There is a separate list of applications, known as Schedule 2 applications, which may be decided either by officers under delegated powers or by Planning Committee. The regulations and guidance make clear that for Schedule 2 applications there is a presumption that decisions will be made under delegated powers by officers unless certain tests are met.

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The tests are known as the "Gateway Test" and the regulations state that a Schedule 2 application should only be referred to Planning Committee if the application raises: -

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- One or more issues of economic, social or environmental significance to the local area (Ground A); or
- One or more significant planning matters having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations (Ground B).

It is for individual Local Planning Authorities to make arrangements to ensure that Schedule 2 applications are filtered into those applications that will be decided under delegated powers and those that will be referred to Planning Committee. The arrangements that will apply for Redditch Borough Council are set out in Appendix 2 to these committee procedure rules and in the relevant sections of the Scheme of Delegations.

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14. Appendices

Appendix 1. Procedure for Public Speaking.

Appendix 2. Arrangements for the National Scheme of Delegations

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PLANNING COMMITTEE - PROCEDURE FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING

1. A person wishing to address either in person or in writing the Planning Committee must give notice to the Democratic Services Team of his or her intention to do so by 12.00 noon two working days prior to the Planning Committee meeting in question. Members of the public registering to submit comments in writing must submit the written statement by the same deadline.
2. Members of the public who register to address a meeting of the Planning Committee under the rules set out in this Appendix can do so using one of the three options below:-
 - By attending in person and addressing the committee verbally;
 - By joining the meeting virtually by video link and addressing the committee verbally; or
 - By providing a written statement in advance of the meeting to be read out by an officer.
3. Agenda running orders will be reviewed by the Chair before the start of the meeting to enable the Committee to consider the most controversial items first. This will normally take into account the number of Public Speakers and written statements registered per item and/or the size of the public attendance in respect of any given application.
4. The order of speakers will follow the principles of natural justice to enable the applicant a fair right of reply to those opposing a development.

The order of speaking will therefore be:

- a) **Objectors**
- b) Ward Member(s) objecting to application
Members' questions to each objector (through Chair)*
(Officer comment at each stage as appropriate.)
- c) **Supporters**
- d) Ward Member(s) supporting application
Members' questions to each supporter (through Chair)*
(Officer comment at each stage as appropriate.)
- e) Applicant(s)/ agent
Members' questions to applicant/agent (through Chair)*
(Officer comment at each stage as appropriate.)

Note * Members' questions at this stage must only be *to clarify* the representations made by Public Speakers.

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5. Subject as mentioned at paragraphs 5 and/or 6 below, an applicant (or agent) and/or an individual objector or supporter will each be allowed to speak for no more than 3 minutes.
6. Subject as mentioned at paragraph 6 below, where there is a group of supporters or objectors with a common interest, the group will be allowed no more than 10 minutes within which to address the Committee.
7. The Committee Chair shall have the discretion:
 - (i) in exceptional circumstances, to allow late additions to the list of public Speakers;
 - (ii) to decide not to allow speeches, which merely repeat representations made in earlier speeches, which are inaccurate, or which are irrelevant to material Planning considerations; and
 - (ii) depending upon circumstances, to vary the periods of time referred to in paragraphs 4 and/or 5 above where s/he deems it appropriate.

For example, the Chair may wish to allow an individual applicant, agent, objector or supporter or a spokesperson for a group of objectors or supporters extra time within which to address the Committee, where the issues are numerous or particularly complex.
8. Members' questions will clearly extend this time but will enable issues to be fully understood.
9. For the purpose of ensuring a fair hearing, the Chair will offer the Supporters'/ Applicant's side an equivalent time to Objectors, or vice versa, where there is an imbalance between the two.
10. If several individual speakers register, it may be necessary, for the efficient conduct of the meeting, for the Chair to encourage a spokesperson to be identified. Where this is not possible, each speaker will be allowed, at the Chair's discretion, to speak separately and with suitable prompting where issues are being repeated that have been raised by a previous speaker.
11. Direct or open questioning and discussion / debate between Public Speakers and either Members or Officers will not be allowed during Public Speaking. Any such matters raised may be answered by Members / Officers only after the close of Public Speaking, or will be addressed during the subsequent debate. At no time will direct discussion between Members or Officers with a Public Speaker be permitted.

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12. After the close of Public Speaking, no other inputs will be permitted from the 'public gallery', other than at the discretion of the Chair, and subject to relevant Officer advice, if exceptional circumstances warrant this.

END.

Planning Committee Procedure Rules – Appendix 2**The Town and Country (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026****Arrangements for the National Scheme of Delegations****Background**

1. This Appendix sets out the arrangements that the Council has adopted in order to implement the provisions of the new National Scheme of Delegations (“the new scheme”). The relevant regulations are the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 (“the regulations”). Guidance for Local Authorities is set out in the Planning Committees and the National Scheme of Delegations of Planning Functions: Guidance for Local Planning Authorities in England (“the guidance”).
2. The provisions relating to the introduction of the National Scheme of Delegations are set out in the constitution in the following sections: -

Constitution location	Document	Detail
Part 4 - document ref 04.9 – Planning Delegations	Scheme of Delegations for Planning - section for Development Management	Changes for development management decisions
Part 4 – document ref 04.5 Environmental Delegations	Scheme of Delegations - Environment – section on Grounds Maintenance and Landscaping	Changes for decisions for works to trees under regulation 16.1 of the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012
Part 12	Planning Committee Procedure Rules	Updated for new scheme of delegations
Part 21	Planning Code of Practice	Updated for new scheme of delegations and own-interest applications

3. Under the Regulations planning applications are divided into Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 depending on type, scale and complexity of the application.

Schedule 1 applications	Schedule 2 applications
Must be delegated to officers	Presumption of delegation to officers unless certain conditions are met by applying what is known as the Gateway Test.
<i>Examples: householder, minor residential, minor commercial, discharge of conditions, prior approval</i>	<i>Examples: major applications, listed building consent matters, reserved matters applications.</i>

4. From 31st October 2026 the two categories will form the basis of the Scheme of Delegations for planning applications for all Local Planning Authorities in England. It is mandatory that the Council adopt and comply the new scheme; failure to comply may give rise to legal challenges being brought against the Council by way of judicial review.
5. Under the new scheme, the ability of Members to “call-in” planning applications in their wards will cease to apply. The new arrangements will also abolish any other previous trigger points for referral to Planning Committee such as the number of objections received.
6. Applications will be determined as follows: -

By Planning Committee

- Schedule 2 applications which meet the Gateway Test
- Own-interest applications

By officers under delegated powers

- All Schedule 1 applications
- Schedule 2 applications which do not meet the Gateway Test

Regulation 3 – Nominated Members and Nominated Officers

7. The Council has made arrangements for the position of “nominated member” to be held by the Chairman of Planning Committee or in his/her absence the Vice Chairman. See Scheme of Delegations part 0.49.

8. The Council has made arrangements for the position of “nominated officer” to be held by the Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services or in her absence a nominated deputy. See Scheme of Delegations part xx
9. The nominated member and the nominated officer are new positions created under the regulations. The holders of these positions will carry out the function of assessing whether or not Schedule 2 planning applications meet the conditions set out in the Gateway Test. Where the conditions are met the application will be referred to Planning Committee to be determined. Where the test is not met the application will be decided by officers under delegated powers.

Regulation 4 – Applications that must be determined by an officer

10. Schedule 1 applications must be decided by officers under delegated powers. The Council has made arrangements for this in the Scheme of Delegations part 0.49 and a copy of Schedule 1 is included as an Appendix.

Regulation 5 - Applications that may be determined by a committee or by an officer

11. Schedule 2 applications may be determined either by officers under delegated powers or by committee.
12. There is a presumption in favour of all Schedule 2 applications being delegated to officers. However, if certain conditions apply there may be cases where it is appropriate for applications to be decided by Planning Committee.
13. Under regulation 5 (3) a planning application should only be referred to planning committee if the proposal raises:
 - Ground A - one or more issues of economic, social or environmental significance to the local area, or
 - Ground B - one of more significant planning matters having regard to the development plan and any other material considerations.

This is known as the Gateway Test.

14. As noted at paragraph 9, the task of assessing which Schedule 2 applications should be referred to Planning Committee, or in other words applying the Gateway Test, falls to the nominated member and the nominated officer.

Exceptions to Schedule 2 process for matters previously decided under delegated powers

15. The regulations and guidance recognise that some local planning authorities already operate under well thought out Schemes of Delegation that provide for a large percentage of routine matters to be decided by officers under delegated powers. This is regarded as good practice as it allows Planning Committee to concentrate on deciding the most complex and high profile planning applications.
16. To enable authorities already exercising good levels of delegation to continue to do so, the new scheme recognises that not all planning applications included in Schedule 2 need to be referred to the Gateway Test. This is particularly the case for types of applications that the government has placed into Category 2 that were traditionally decided by officers under delegated powers.¹
17. The version of the Scheme of Delegations adopted by the Council for Schedule 2 applications therefore directs that applications previously decided by officers under the old scheme of delegations may continue to be decided by officers without the need for referral to the Gateway Test. In circumstances where the applications would previously have been referred to Planning Committee under the old scheme of delegations, then the Gateway Test will be applied to assess whether grounds exist for those matters to be referred to Planning Committee or whether they are suitable to be decided by officers under delegated powers.

Regulation 6 – Own-interest Applications

18. Separate provision is made in the Regulations for the determination of planning applications made by either the Council or by officers or members. These are referred to as “own-interest” applications.
19. The definition in regulation 6(1) covers applications of a type specified in Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 made by the local authority, by members of the local authority and by officers of the local authority.
20. Additionally, under Regulation 6 (1)(b) the nominated officer and nominated member may take the view that where the authority, or any of its members or officers “otherwise” has an interest in an application, then that application must also be treated as an own-interest application. For example, this may cover an application made by a close relative of an officer or a member.

¹ Guidance for Local Authorities is set out in the Planning Committees and the National Scheme of Delegations of Planning Functions: Guidance for Local Planning Authorities in England – para 13

21. Under Regulation 6 (4) the nominated officer and nominated member may decide to refer an own-interest applications to committee. In any situation where a referral to committee is not made then by default the application will be determined by officers.
22. Whilst the guidance indicates that there is discretion for own-interest applications to be decided by officers for reasons of openness and transparency own-interest applications should in the majority of cases be decided by committee. This will represent a continuation of the existing practice and be in compliance with the Planning Code of Practice. The specific parts of the Planning Code of Practice that link to own-interest applications are paragraphs 10.6 (applications by serving members), 10.9 (applications by serving officers) and 10.10 (applications made by the Council).

Practical arrangements to implement the regulations

23. The following process will apply: -
- 23.1 Applications will be categorised by officers upon validation into one of the following categories: -
- Schedule 1 applications - for delegated decision
 - Schedule 2 applications – identified in the Constitution for delegated decision
 - Schedule 2 applications – for referral to the Gateway Test
 - Own-interest applications
- 23.2 The nominated officer and the nominated member will meet no less than once a month to review Schedule 2 applications for referral to the Gateway Test. This will be known as the Gateway Meeting.
- 23.3 Officers will prepare a case summary for applications being considered at the Gateway Meeting to indicate whether in their view the application raises issues under either Ground A or Ground B.
- 23.4 The decision of the nominated officer and nominated member on allocation of a Schedule 2 application under the Gateway Test will be final. The aim will be for a consensus to be reached but in any cases where this is not possible the application must be determined by an officer of the authority.²
- 23.5 Officers will keep a written record of decisions made under the Gateway Test. A schedule of decisions made will be available to view online and be reported back to members of Planning Committee on a regular basis.
- 23.6 The Gateway Meeting will also consider any new own-interest applications that have been made, regardless of whether these fall into Schedule 1 or Schedule 2. The nominated officer and the nominated member may agree to refer such applications to committee.

² Regulation 5 (2)

23.7 As noted in paragraphs 22 above, and for reasons of openness and transparency, there will be a presumption in favour of referral to committee for own-interest applications.

24. There are no transition arrangements included in the regulations. This means that the allocation of planning applications into the categories of Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 will be applicable as from 31st October 2026. This may have the effect that planning applications previously on course for determination by officers under delegated powers, or by planning committee under the old scheme of delegations will be subject to a change of decision maker. The guidance is clear that the Council must comply with the new rules or risk legal challenge.³

³ Guidance for Local Authorities is set out in the Planning Committees and the National Scheme of Delegations of Planning Functions: Guidance for Local Planning Authorities in England – para 4

PART 21**CODE OF PRACTICE - PLANNING SERVICES****1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The role of a Member serving on the Planning Committee involves balancing the representation of the needs and interests of individual constituents and the community, with the need to maintain an ethic of impartial decision-making on what can be highly controversial proposals.
- 1.2 This document has been prepared to guide Members and Officers in dealing with planning matters in a manner consistent with good practice, including the conduct of Members in its processes and procedures and should be read alongside the Councillors' Code of Conduct.
- 1.3 Failure to follow the recommendations set out in this Code of Practice, without good reason, may be regarded as being incompatible with good administration by the Local Government Ombudsman and affect how the Council, its Officers or Members may be perceived by others.
- 1.4 By setting out clearly what is expected of both Members and Officers, it is anticipated that this Code will engender greater mutual understanding and support between all those involved in the planning process. The Code has been produced in the spirit of looking for continuous improvements in the delivery of services, discharging duties responsibly in an open, professional and consistent way compatible with the Councillors' Code of Conduct and its Protocol for Members/Officer relations.
- 1.5 Both Members and Officers dealing with planning matters and advising Committees will be required to observe all the provisions of this Code.
- 1.6 The Code is set out in the form of a series of headings followed by a brief discussion of the issues involved and best practice advice.

2. THE ROLE OF COUNCILLORS

- 2.1 The role of Members is central to the planning system, which operates within a political arena. It is well recognised that planning is not an exact science and, provided that Members are properly briefed by Officers, they are well placed to make decisions.

Ward Interests

- 2.2 Members have a special duty to their ward constituents but their overriding responsibility is to the whole community. In terms of the planning process, this can produce a conflict of interest between Members legitimately and effectively giving vent to local, sometimes individual, concerns and the need to reflect the interests of the wider

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community in decisions reached on planning merits alone. Much is often at stake in this process, and opposing views are often strongly held by those involved. Whilst Members should take account of these views, they should not favour any person, company, group or locality above the wider community interest, nor put themselves in a position where they appear to do so. Members should be mindful of the need to carefully weigh up all of the arguments before deciding what view to take. Where a Member of Planning Committee takes the view that they would wish to speak in relation to an application affecting their ward they may do so as Ward Councillor under the procedure for Public Speaking at Planning Committee. However, they will have to remain in the public gallery after they have spoken and take no part in the debate or vote on the application.

- 2.3 Members should also be very cautious about accepting gifts and hospitality. Members should abide by the Council's Code of Conduct for Gifts and Hospitality, including recording offers and/or acceptance of these in the register as required.

Interests arising from the Code of Conduct

- 2.4 Under the Council's Member Code of Conduct, Members will need to make sure they are clear whether they have a discloseable pecuniary interest or other discloseable interest when involving themselves in planning matters.
- 2.5 Members who are unsure as to whether an interest should be declared should seek the advice of the Council's Monitoring Officer **at an early stage**.

Lobbying

- 2.6 It is a fact of public life that Members will be subject to varying degrees of lobbying. This is part of the democratic process. However, when individuals or groups seek to influence the outcome of a planning decision, which should be treated upon its individual planning merits in the wider public interest, the impartiality of the decision may be questioned. Such problems might arise if Members indicate their voting intention or support for a particular cause in advance of all the relevant information and Officer advice. However, section 25 the Localism Act states that a member is not to be regarded as having a closed mind about a decision simply because they have previously expressed a view on it.
- 2.7 When being lobbied, Members should take care about expressing an opinion that may be taken as indicating that they have already made up their mind on the likely outcome of a planning application before they have heard all the evidence and arguments. If they do express an opinion, they should make it clear that they will only be in a position to make a final decision when all the facts are known and they have heard both sides of the argument at Committee. On occasion, the Member may

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respond to lobbying by deciding to go public in support of a particular outcome, or even campaigning actively for it.

- 2.8 However, Members must not have a closed mind when they make a decision. Decisions taken by those with pre-determined views are vulnerable to successful legal challenge. At the point of making a decision, members must carefully consider all the evidence that is put before them and be prepared to modify or change their initial view in the light of the arguments and evidence presented. Then they must make their final decision at the meeting with an open mind based on all the evidence.
- 2.9 Where a Member has campaigned for or come to a final view prior to a meeting, the member should not take part in the decision making process. Depending on the circumstance and to preserve the appearance of propriety, the member should also consider whether or not to withdraw from the public gallery, after making his or her representations to the planning committee.
- 2.8 Members should not represent an applicant or individual objector and should not organise support or opposition for a planning application or other planning decision. In particular, they should avoid representing applicants or objectors in discussions with Planning Officers which may take place before an application is considered by the Planning Committee. Instead they should suggest to those who are lobbying, that they should speak or write to the relevant Planning Officer, in order that their opinions can be included in the officer's report to committee. Any letters referred to and relied upon by Councillors in speaking on an application should be given to the Assistant Director Planning Leisure and Culture Services to be placed on the respective planning file immediately after the meeting.
- 2.9 Members should not lobby other Members in relation to planning applications. The process is apolitical and no political group meeting must take place prior to the committee meeting to discuss the planning applications. Members must not put pressure on Officers to make a particular recommendation or to exercise a delegation in a particular way. Following the introduction of the National Scheme of Delegation, Members should not place pressure on officers, or attempt to influence them in relation to their assessment of Schedule 2 applications for the purposes of the Gateway Test. Likewise, Members should not lobby the Chair and Vice Chair of Planning in relation to decision making regarding the Gateway Test.
- 2.10 Members of the Planning Committee need to take account of the general public's expectation that a planning application will be processed and determined in an open and fair manner. There is the possibility that an aggrieved party may seek judicial review on the way in which a decision has been arrived at, or complain to the Local Government Ombudsman on the grounds of maladministration.

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PART 21**3. MEMBERSHIP OF PARISH COUNCILS**

- 3.1 Parish Councils are consulted and asked to comment on planning applications prior to their being considered by the Borough Council's Planning Committee. Sometimes, a member of the Planning Committee will also be a member of a Parish Council and such a situation could give rise to a perception that there is a conflict between these two roles.
- 3.2 Members of the Planning Committee may participate in the formulation of their Parish Council's comments on a planning application and may vote on motions put forward in connection with the making of such comments. However, in doing so, they must recognise that they have not yet received full information about the application e.g. the planning history, comments by other consultees and officer recommendation. They should therefore declare, at the Parish Council's meeting, that in assisting in the formulation of the Parish Council's comments, that they are only forming a preliminary view on the application, that they recognise that there is further information about the application which they have not yet received, and that they reserve the right to change their preliminary view, in the light of such further information, when the application is considered by the Borough Council's Planning Committee.
- 3.3 In this way, members of the Planning Committee, who are also members of Parish Councils, will avoid any perception that they have fettered their judgment on an application before knowing the full facts about it.
- 3.4 Members are advised to let the planning committee know any ward interest, participation in parish council responses to applications or any significant lobbying at the meeting, whether or not they decide that it is appropriate to participate in the debate and determination regarding an application.

4. PLANNING SITE VISITS PROCEDURE

- 4.1 Members of Planning Committee will have the opportunity to attend site visits for some of the planning applications which are decided by the Planning Committee.
- 4.2 The purpose of site visits is to allow Members to consider the general setting of the application site so that they will be in the best position to decide whether or not planning permission should be granted. In particular Members will be able to:-
- Observe the geography of the site including the boundaries and its relationship to adjoining properties;

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- Consider the scale and impact of the proposed development in relation to the site;
- Use the visit to assess whether any planning conditions might need to be considered.

- 4.3 Site visits will not be arranged for sites that have been the subject of a site visit within the preceding 6 months.
- 4.4 The site visit does not constitute a meeting of the Planning Committee. Accordingly, Members should not form a collective view on the issue.
- 4.5 Since Members are attending a site merely to “see what is to be seen”; it is inappropriate to hear from either the applicant or his representative during the site visit. Similarly, it is inappropriate to hear from anybody else who wishes to make representations. This includes the Ward councillor for the area in which the site is located. The occasion is not a local hearing. Members should leave each site with no collective view – the occasion is simply to assist them individually to form a view.
- 4.6 When the application is next considered by the Planning Committee, the Chair of the Committee should remind Members that the application was the subject of a site visit, and then let the debate proceed normally.

5. THE ROLE OF OFFICERS

- 5.1 Officers, as the paid employees of the Council, have the principal responsibility for carrying out the Council’s work. They should provide professional and impartial advice to Members to assist them in reaching their decisions and to the public at large on all planning matters. It is very important that such advice is consistent with the provisions of the prevailing planning policies and guidance so that the planning system is seen to be fair whatever the outcome.
- 5.2 The Planning Committee has given delegated authority to the Assistant Director Planning Leisure and Culture Services to approve certain categories of planning application as set out in the Council’s Scheme of Delegation.

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- 5.3 Any decisions delegated to Officers should be clearly recorded.

6. OFFICER REPORTS TO COMMITTEE

- 6.1 All reports shall provide a clear technical appraisal of the application including site location and description, planning history, consultations received and the policy contents for the recommendation, which should be justified in the Officers’ written comments.
- 6.2 Reports should have a written recommendation of action; oral reporting (except to update a report) should be avoided and carefully minuted.

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- 6.3 Reports should contain technical appraisals, which clearly justify a recommendation.
- 6.4 If the report's recommendation is contrary to the provisions of the development plan or Local Development Framework, the material considerations, which justify the departure, must be clearly stated.
- 6.5 Terms for Planning Obligations (Section 106 Agreements) must be clearly set out, discussed openly and recorded in the minutes.
- 6.6 The Monitoring Officer or his or her representative shall attend all Planning Committee meetings and provide advice, together with legal advice as required.

7. PRE-APPLICATION DISCUSSIONS

- 7.1 Officers are often asked informally during meetings whether planning permission is required for changes of use and/or for new development.
- 7.2 Officers will always endeavour to be as helpful as they can in this matter but can only offer an informal opinion as to whether or not planning permission is required for the development someone wishes to undertake, whether it is a new building, an extension to a home, or a change of use of land or building. Any advice that they offer in this respect is an individual opinion based on the information the enquirer has provided at the time. It is not binding on the Council.
- 7.3 For an official decision, enquirers should be invited to apply for a Certificate of Lawfulness of Proposed Use or Development, under Section 192 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. A fee is payable for the processing of such an application but the enquirer will be presented with a legally binding determination, in other words, an official decision of the Council telling him/her whether or not planning permission is required.
- 7.4 The fee varies according to the type of development proposed and staff will be able to advise on the amount payable. It is in the interests of the enquirer to have an official written determination relating to development should he/she want to sell his/her land/property or should any legal challenge arise relating to the work which has been undertaken.
- 7.5 The following guidelines have been adopted to ensure that all parties involved are treated fairly and that the Planning Officers' role is clearly understood:
- Planning Officers will give informal advice in the spirit of helpfulness. It is however only informal advice which is not binding on the Local Planning Authority;

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- Planning Officers will negotiate and offer advice to overcome problems at application stage where a solution is apparent and the proposal can be determined within the statutory time limit as a consequence;
- The onus to negotiate falls upon the applicant/agent to offer alternatives to the original submission;
- Planning Officers cannot advise what a potential recommendation will be should an application be made.

8. DECISIONS CONTRARY TO THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN/ LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

- 8.1 The law requires that where the development plan/Local Development Framework is relevant, decisions should be taken in accordance with it, unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. Members will receive training and guidance from officers as to what constitutes material planning considerations. In certain situations, legislation requires the Council to notify the relevant Secretary of State before granting permission contrary to the development plan. Officers will advise members if this process is necessary and will carry out the process.

9. DECISIONS CONTRARY TO OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 Members are perfectly entitled to reach different decisions to those recommended to them by Officers by attaching different weight to the various relevant planning criteria. That this happens from time to time is inevitable but it is essential that the public be left in no doubt as to how the decision was reached. Officer reports must be well structured and the public should not be given the impression that decisions reached contrary to advice are made hastily or new conditions imposed on the spur of the moment. A full detailed minute of the Committee's reasons should be made. The Officer should also be given an opportunity to explain the implications of the contrary decision.

- 9.2 Where a Member is minded to raise new issues, information or questions, they are advised to contact the respective Planning Officer or Assistant Director Planning Leisure and Culture Services before the meeting wherever possible.

- 9.3 Where a Member is minded to make a recommendation, which is contrary to the Officer recommendation, then the reasons should be clearly set out, particularly in the case of a refusal and in the case of an approval, the type of conditions proposed should be indicated.

- 9.4 If an imminent decision is thought to be perverse, the Assistant Director Planning Leisure and Culture Services or the Monitoring Officer should

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so advise the Committee, but it remains the role of the Chair to decide whether or not it would be preferable to defer consideration to allow for a period of reflection on the advice given before proceeding.

- 9.5 Where an application is refused or conditions imposed contrary to an officer recommendation, it may not be in the Council's best interests for the Case Officer to give evidence at any subsequent public inquiry or hearing resulting from an appeal. In such circumstances it will be a matter for the Assistant Director Planning Leisure and Culture Services in consultation with the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services to establish whether a suitably experienced and qualified Officer exists within his establishment who is able to concur professionally with the decision taken. If so, then they will act as the Council's professional witness. If not, then the use of planning consultants will be explored. It is rarely in the Council's best interests for individual Members to represent the Council but this may be appropriate where factual evidence is in dispute particularly in enforcement appeals.
- 9.6 All planning approvals and refusals shall be fully minuted. Unless otherwise stated, these should accord with those set out in the Agenda subject to the incorporation of any further conditions or reasons (or variations) thought to be necessary by the Head of Planning & Regeneration to give full effect to the Council's wishes about any particular application.

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10. DEALING WITH APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS AND COUNCIL SERVICE AREAS

General principles

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- 10.1 The submission of planning applications and/or development plan proposals by serving Members, Officers, or their close friends and relatives can easily give rise to suspicions of impropriety, including proposals for the Council's own development. The following points should be taken into account:

Members

- 10.2 Serving Members of the Council who act as agents for people pursuing planning matters shall not be Members of the Planning Committee.
- 10.3 Members should take no part in the processing of their own applications or those of their immediate family or close friends or anyone with whom the Member has a close personal association.
- 10.4 As soon as a planning application is received from a Member, the Assistant Director Planning Leisure and Culture Services must inform the Council's Monitoring Officer, who will take such steps as are necessary to ensure that applications for dispensations from other

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Members of the Planning Committee are considered as soon as possible.

- 10.5 Members who are members of the Planning Committee should declare an interest in respect of applications prepared by them or on their behalf and leave the meeting while such applications are under consideration.
- 10.6 Applications of currently serving Members should not be dealt with under delegated powers and should be decided by the Planning Committee.

Officers

- 10.7 Serving Officers in the planning department should never act as agents for people pursuing a planning matter. If an officer in another department acts as such agent for people pursuing a planning matter, the matter cannot be dealt with under delegated powers and should be decided by the Planning Committee.
- 10.8 Officers should take no part in the processing of their own planning applications or those of their immediate family or close friends.
- 10.9 Applications for Planning Consents made to Redditch Borough Council by Officers currently working for either Bromsgrove District Council or Redditch Borough Council or their family members, whether or not directly employed by them and should be decided by the Planning Committee.

Developments by the Council

- 10.10 Planning applications made by Council Service Areas must be processed in accordance with existing policy and treated in the same way as a private application except that all such applications shall be considered by the Planning Committee and not determined under delegated powers.

Applications submitted by former Members and former employees

- 10.11 There has been some considerable concern about former employees setting up their own consultancies and providing planning advice in the Redditch Borough area and about the consideration of applications by or on behalf of former Members. Both circumstances occur from time to time and the guiding principles should be that:-
- (i) applications by former Members will be treated in the same way as any other application;
 - (ii) applications by former employees whether they are acting for themselves or an agent for others will be treated in exactly the same way as any other application.

Applications by Members of Political Associations

- 10.12 Where a planning application is made by someone who is not a Member, but is known to be a member of the same Political Association as some

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of the members of the Planning Committee, those Members will need to give consideration as to whether they should declare an interest when the application is considered.

- 10.13 In some cases, no declaration will be necessary, but in other cases the relationship between the parties may be close enough to warrant a declaration of interest. Councillors should have regard to the Councillors' Code of Conduct and should err on the side of safety.

Implications of Introduction of National Scheme of Delegations

- 10.14 Since this Code was originally written the government has introduced the National Scheme of Delegations of Planning Functions. The relevant documents are: -

- The Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 ("the regulations") – made on 15th July 2026 - in force from 31st October 2026.
- The Planning Committees and the National Scheme of Delegations of Planning Functions: Guidance for Local Planning Authorities in England ("the guidance") – issued on 1st June 2026

- 10.15 The main effect of the regulations is to impose a mandatory scheme of delegation for the making of planning decisions on Councils in England. In summary applications are divided into Schedule 1 matters which must be decided by officers, and Schedule 2 matters which may be decided by officers or by Planning Committee. A test has been introduced ("the Gateway Test") to enable those Schedule 2 applications that might need to go to Planning Committee to be assessed against set criteria.

- 10.16 The Council has made arrangements to implement the provisions of the regulations. The changes are set out in the following updated parts of the constitution: -

- Scheme of Delegations for Development Management Part 0.49
- Scheme of Delegation for Trees (in relation to the carrying out of work on/ felling of TPO protected trees) Part 0.45
- Planning Committee Procedure Rules Part 12

- 10.17 Regulation 6 relates to planning applications made by serving Members, Officers or the Council itself. It introduces the term of "own-interest application" which is defined as an application to a relevant planning authority of a kind specified in Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 made by or on behalf of that authority, a member of that authority or an officer of that authority.

- 10.18 For ease of reference, the new term of own-interest applications encompasses the applications described in this code in the following paragraphs: -

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- 10.6 - applications made by currently serving members or immediate family or close friends of members
- 10.9 – applications made by currently serving officers or immediate family or close friend of officers
- 10.10 – applications made by the Council

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10.19 Whilst the regulations and guidance indicate that there is discretion for own-interest applications to be decided by officers under delegated powers, for reasons of openness and transparency own-interest applications should continue to be decided by committee in accordance with the practice that was in place prior to the introduction of the regulations.

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2. <u>Development Management / Plans</u>				
Subject	Detail	Delegated by:	Delegated to:	Comment
▼	▼			Ability of ward members to call in application will no longer exist under the new regulations. This section to be deleted.
▼	▼	▼	▼	The current format of scheme of delegations is based on the principle that officers can decide all matters in the listed legislation unless an exception applies in which case the application will be decided by planning committee. Under the new regulations the ability to have specific exception criteria is removed. The only case where this will still apply is “own-interest” applications - see more below – which are applications made by the council itself, serving members and serving officers. The existing triggers such as number of objections, being outside policy, size of site, objection by a statutory consultee etc all need to be deleted from the scheme. The new categories will be based on Schedule 1 applications which must be decided by officers, and Schedule 2 applications which are presumed to be determined by officers, but which may in certain cases be decided by planning committee.

Deleted: When a ward member wishes to call in an application to Planning Committee for consideration, they will, within 21 days of receipt of the notification of that application, contact the case officer and set out their reasons for wanting the application to be considered at committee rather than by officer delegation. The Case Officer will, in writing, record the request and reasons and send a written record to the Portfolio Holder, Planning Committee Chair and any other ward member(s) for the area in which the application site is situated, of the request and reasons.¶

¶ If a request is made after the deadline set out above, the Planning Committee Chair shall make the final decision, taking into account all relevant matters, and whether the application is considered by the Planning Committee, and will inform the Case Officer of his/her decision within 2 working days of receiving the request from the Case Officer. The ward member who made the request will also be informed of the Chair's decision.¶

Deleted: Calling in procedure for Ward Members for Planning Committee¶

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Deleted: Planning Applications

Deleted: All planning decisions, actions or advice / responses on behalf of the Local Planning Authority within the list of Planning and Associated legislation / regulations, are considered to fall within the delegation scheme and will be determined by Officers,

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				(1) Call in procedure - no longer permitted (2) No longer a permitted trigger to send matters to committee (3) Departure from policy no longer a permitted ground to refer to planning committee. It will still be a factor in assessing whether Schedule 2 applications should be decided under delegated powers or be decided by Committee – see wording of the Gateway Test Ground B. (4) } See new section on
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Deleted: 1. A Member makes a written request within 21 days of the application receipt for the application to be considered by the Planning Committee.¶
(see procedure set out above)¶

- ¶
2. The Planning Officer considers that the application should be considered by Committee.¶
3. The approval of the application would represent a departure from the policies of the statutory development plan.¶
4. The proposal involves the Borough or County Council either as applicant or landowner.¶
5. The applicant is a Councillor or known to be an employee of either Redditch Borough Council or Bromsgrove District Council, or employed by other local authorities who provide services for or on behalf of Redditch Borough Council under shared service arrangements.¶
6. There is a known involvement by a Council employee or other employee as in 5 above in any capacity - ¶
e.g. as agent or adviser¶
7. The application is for major development (as defined in the BV109 returns i.e. more than 10 dwellings - more than 1000 sq m new industrial / commercial floor space) where the recommendation is for approval or where five or more letters of support have been received.¶
8. The Council will be required to become party to a Planning Legal Agreement under Section 106 (applies only to those agreements where RBC would be a signatory and bear an obligation under the agreement – not to Unilateral Undertakings)¶
9. a) The application is a Householder application and between 11 and 20 individual letters of objection from separate addresses and raising material planning considerations are received from separate members of the public and the Officer recommendation is for approval, in which case, the application will be determined by the Assistant Director of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services/Planning Officers in conjunction with the Chair of Planning Committee (or in their absence the Vice Chair) ¶

				(5) } own-interest (6) } applications (7) Size of scheme alone no longer acts as a trigger. Refer instead to Schedule 2 which will include a scheme that is not a householder application, not a minor commercial application and not a minor residential application. (8) Existence of 106 agreements no longer permitted as a trigger for referral to Planning Committee. If there is a planning obligation linked to a Schedule 1
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				application this will be officer delegated. For a planning obligation linked to a Schedule 2 application it will be referred to the gateway test. (9) Referral to committee based on number of objections for householder or non- householder applications no longer permitted.
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				(10) Referral to committee based on an objection from a statutory consultee no longer permitted. (11) Referral to committee based on type of change of use application no longer permitted.
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				(12) Ability to respond to consultations still required – see new re-worded section below.
Development Proposals by other Public Authorities.	To comment on proposals for development submitted by Worcestershire County Council and other public authorities.	Council	Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services.	To replace para 12 – ability to respond to consultations from other local authorities.
▼	▼	▼	▼	To be deleted - the circumstances for planning committee consideration of variation/ discharge of 106 contributions are now set out in Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 of the regulations.

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Deleted: Planning Obligations¶

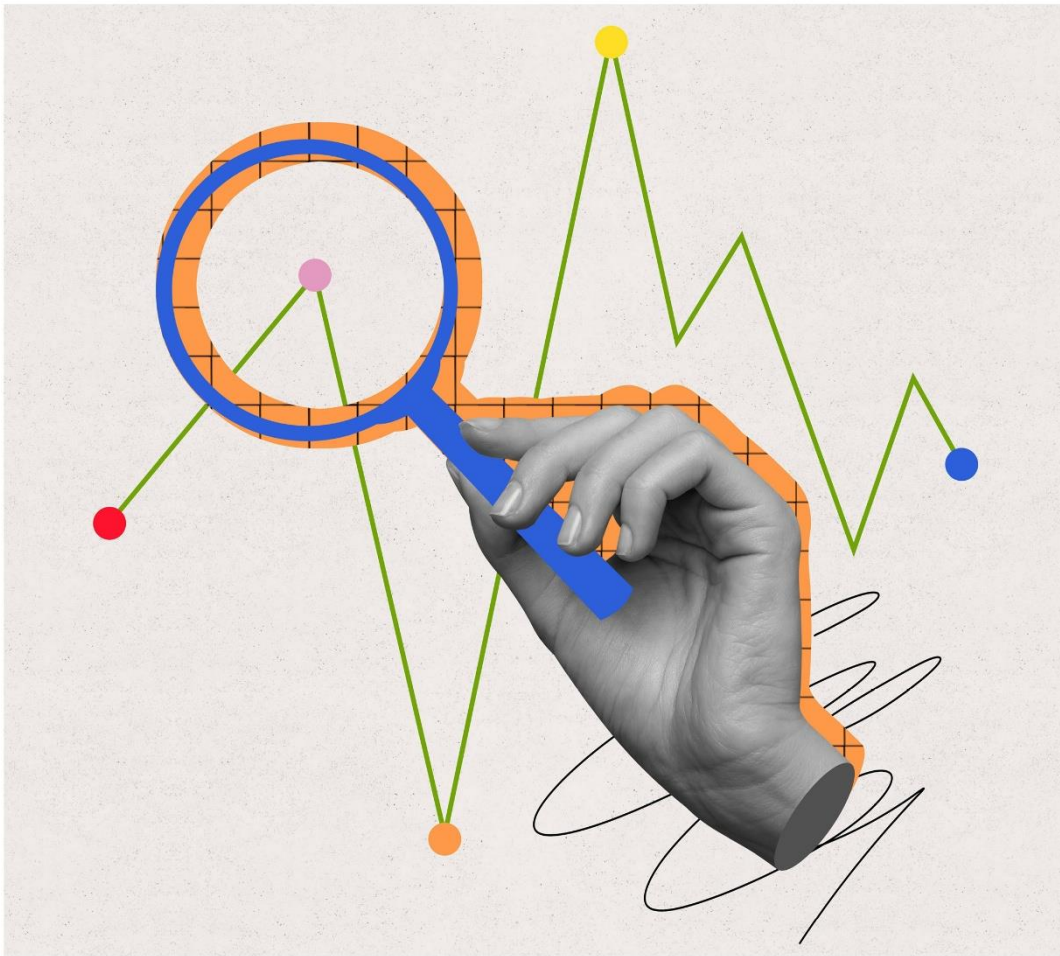
Deleted: All planning obligation variations and discharges, other actions or advice / responses on behalf of the Local Planning Authority within the list of Planning and Associated legislation / regulations, are considered to fall within the delegation scheme and will be enacted by Officers unless any of the following apply:-¶
Deletion or addition of one or more of the heads of terms. ¶
Significant change in overall area of land to be transferred to Redditch Borough Council.¶
Significant change in financial contributions to be provided to Redditch Borough Council [except where this is a result of (an) other Member decision(s)]¶
A Member makes a written request for a case to be considered by the Planning Committee, as set out above in the Calling in Procedure.¶

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Redditch Borough Council



Audit, Governance and Standards Committee

ANNUAL REPORT

2025 - 2026

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Chair's Foreword

It is with pleasure that I present this annual report, covering the work undertaken by the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee in the 2025/26 municipal year.

Following on from progress made in 2024/25 municipal year, 2025/26 has seen further work being undertaken to resolve the issues highlighted by the previous Auditors in their Interim Auditors Annual Reports for financial years 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23. This includes assurance to the Committee on the significant work undertaken to rectify the outstanding issues with, and improve the capabilities of, the Council's financial system.

There had been some further delays experienced with the audits of Council's accounts for the financial year 2023/24, exacerbated by the impact of changes to the Council's external auditor arrangements for financial years 2023/24 onwards with an interim period in the 2024/25 municipal year when the Council had no appointed auditor. The positive step forward was that the Council's new auditors had been onboarded and were working on the audits of the Council's 2023/24 and 2024/25 Statements of Accounts, with the audit completion report expected to be reported to the Committee in June 2026.

The Committee had been gaining assurance over the financial statements through continued audit procedures reported to the Committee, including Value for Money reporting by the External Auditor and Internal Audit reports.

Throughout the 2025/26 municipal year, the Committee also closely monitored corporate and departmental risks and on occasions identified risk areas that require further review or recommended adding risks to the corporate risk register. The risks identified for a more in-depth review include cyber security, cash flow and treasury management, and a risk relating to the backlog of outstanding fire remedial actions across the Council's Housing stock. These risk areas are being followed up by the Committee in the 2026/27 municipal year.

I hope that the positive work of rebuilding assurance in the Council's financial statements and position, as well as managing risks, will continue over the next municipal year.

Councillor Gemma Monaco

Chair of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee (2025-26)

Membership



Cllr Gemma Monaco (Chair)



Cllr Chris Holz (Vice-Chair)



Cllr William Boyd



Cllr Andrew Fry



Cllr James Fardoe



Cllr Wanda King



Cllr Gary Slim



Cllr Rita Rogers



Cllr Paul Wren

,

Feckenham Parish Council Representative: Alan Smith (Chair of Feckenham Parish Council)

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee's activities during the 2025/26 municipal year.

During the year the Committee had considered reports and updates on the following subjects:

- Monitoring Officer's Report – details Members complaints and training that had taken place during the period between meetings.
- Standards updates regarding Feckenham Parish Council – the only parished area in the Borough of Redditch.
- Updates from the Internal Auditor – including internal audit opinion for 2024/25 and the internal audit plan for 2025/26
- Updates from the External Auditors (including update on 2023/24 Accounts audit and the Value for Money audit for 2023/24).
- Annual Governance Statement
- General and Individual Dispensations Report (granting of dispensations)
- Annual Update Report on Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) Report.
- Financial Compliance Report (including updates on Statements of Accounts).
- Financial Savings Monitoring Report (July 2025 meeting)
- Risk Management Report/Quarterly Risk Update.
- Risk Champion Updates.
- Annual Review from the Local Government Ombudsman.
- Review of Accounting Policies (January 2026 meeting)
- Capital Strategy 2026/27 including Treasury Management Strategy
- Cyber Security Updates (including WhatsApp and Artificial Intelligence Policies)

Further information about some of the key responsibilities of the Committee are detailed within this report.

Meeting dates and minutes of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee meetings can be found on the Redditch Borough Council website, link included below:

[Audit, Governance and Standards Committee](#)

The Role of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee

Scope and Responsibility

The Audit, Governance and Standards Committee provides independent assurance to the Council in respect of:

- The effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements
- The adequacy of the Council's system of internal control by ensuring that an adequate and effective system of internal financial controls is maintained, that financial procedures are regularly reviewed.
- The effectiveness of the Council's financial (and non-financial) management through reviewing the Council's Statements of Accounts, Annual Governance Statements, Financial Regulations and to ensure good stewardship of the Council's resources by assisting the Council to achieve value for money in the provision of its services.
- The effectiveness of the Council's Risk Management Framework and risk strategies and policies and monitor actions to address risk related issues.
- The promotion of transparency through monitoring of the Council's Anti-Fraud arrangements, Whistle-blowing and anti-bribery strategies among others.

The Committee is also responsible for the Council's Standards Regime which covers both the Borough Council and the Parish Council. Areas encompassed within the Standards Regime include:

- Promoting high standards of conduct by Councillors and co-opted members of Council bodies.
- Assisting Councillors and co-opted members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct.
- Advising and training Members and co-opted members in respect of the Code of Conduct.
- Formulating advice to members and officers in declarations of gifts and hospitality.
- Granting dispensations to Councillors and co-opted members from requirements relating to interests as set out in the Code of Conduct.
- Considering reports from the Monitoring Officer following investigation into complaints about elected Members.

Standards Regime

The standards regime is monitored by the Committee mainly through regular Monitoring Officer's reports. There are other annual reports in relation to standards (covered in individual meeting summaries) such as the annual review of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman complaints data and the update on report on the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

Monitoring Officer's Report

This covers Member Training, Member Complaints, and Council's Constitutional matters.

If the elected Member was found to have breached the Authority's Code of Conduct, the powers available to the Authority include a formal letter of warning to the Member and formal censure by motion, of a committee, for the removal of the Member from a Committee (which does not legally prevent the Councillor in question from attending), in addition to adverse publicity.

The Council's Code of Conduct is designed primarily with the view of maintaining standards through a conciliatory approach and there is a high reliance on the Monitoring Officer working in cooperation with political Group Leaders when finding resolutions to Member complaints.

It was reported through the Monitoring Officer's report on the training that Members received throughout the 2025/26 municipal year. A small number of Member training sessions had been arranged for 2025/26. In line with the approach agreed, some of this training was delivered jointly with Bromsgrove District Council, whilst other sessions were bespoke and being delivered to Redditch Members only.

The Monitoring Officer's report also covers updates on the Constitution Review Working Party (CRWP). which is a cross-party group where any potential changes to the Council's constitution are discussed.

Member Complaints

An update on Member complaints had been provided at all Monitoring Officer's reports. It was noted that a number of complaints against Members had been received in 2025-26, most of which had been resolved locally. There had been no investigations about Members which required a Hearings Sub-Committee to be convened.

Dispensation Report

The Audit, Governance and Standards Committee considered a dispensations report at its meeting on 24th July 2025. The individual member and outside body appointment dispensations were granted at that meeting, in addition to the general dispensations for all councillors in respect of allowing members to vote at council meetings on budget matters. The dispensations agreed at these meetings remain valid until the first meeting of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee following the next Borough Council Elections in May 2026 unless amended by the Committee prior to that date.

Parish Council Involvement

The Feckenham Parish Council's representative provided updates on Feckenham Parish Council standards matters on a quarterly basis and can request an item on the agenda as required (in line with the Committee's Terms of Reference). The Feckenham Parish Council's Representative for the municipal year 2025-26 was Mr Alan Smith.

Internal Audit Reports

During the year the Committee had continued to receive updates on the work of the Internal Audit team including the Internal Audit Plan 2025-26, Internal Audit Annual Report 2024-25, and the Internal Audit - Progress Report (presented at every meeting).

External Auditors

On the 3rd of October 2024, the Council appointed Bishop Fleming as the Auditors for the Council for the financial year 2023/24 onwards (i.e. for auditing the Council's financial statements for the years 2023/24 onwards). Subsequently, Bishop Fleming notified the Council that they were unable to take up the appointment. The Council, following liaison with Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA) for the appointment of alternative Auditors, confirmed that Ernst & Young (EY) would officially become the Council's External Auditors.

The onboarding of the new auditors had been concluded by the start of 2025/26 municipal year. During the year the Committee received regular updates from Ernst & Young on the audit work for the Council and more specific updates such as on the audit of 2023/24 Accounts and Value for Money work.

Section 24 Notice

One of the legislative reporting requirements the Council had not achieved was the delivery of the 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 Statements of Accounts by the required statutory deadlines, due to the implementation of a new financial ledger and the delays and inherent financial risks that had been associated with that process.

The Section 24 Statutory Recommendation was first issued on 31st October 2022 (by the Council's External Auditors at the time, Grant Thornton) as a result of the non-delivery of the 2020-21 financial statements at that time. Grant Thornton issued an updated Section 24 Statutory Recommendation on 23rd November 2023 as the Council remained unable to publish the draft 2020-21 Accounts (and therefore had also not achieved the delivery of 2021/22 and 2022/23 Accounts).

Backstop Report

On 30th July 2024, the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution provided a written statement to Parliament confirming the Government's intention to introduce a backstop date for English local authority audits up to 2022/23 of 13th December 2024. A backstop date for 2023/24 was proposed of 28th February 2025 and a date for 2024/25 audits of 27th February 2026.

The Council's External Auditors at the time, Grant Thornton considered that there would be insufficient time to conclude their work in advance of the 13th December 2024 backstop deadline. On that basis, subsequently the backstop for the 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 years was applied. Given that several key audit areas remained outstanding, the Council's Statements of Accounts for these years received a disclaimer of opinion, effectively meaning Grant Thornton had been unable to gain the assurance necessary to give an audit opinion by the statutory backstop dates for these sets of accounts.

The Section 24 Recommendation around the delivery of the 2020/21 to 2022/23 accounts is still in place and has been extended to the subsequent accounting periods (extension to 2023/24 and 2024/25 accounts).

The Committee commented on the significant progress that had been undertaken by the Council's finance team, over the last two financial years, to rectify the outstanding issues and improve the capabilities of the Council's financial system, TechnologyOne. The amount of work over 2024/25, when the Council's finance team had effectively undertaken work on preparation of three sets of accounts within one year was also noted, and through the year 2025/26 the bulk of the work in catching up on outstanding accounts from previous years had been completed.

It was expected that in the 2026/27 financial year the Council would be back on track in the audit cycle. At the meeting on 11th June 2026, the Committee received the External Audit Completion Report for financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25, these accounts having received a 'disclaimer opinion'. A detailed Recovery Plan has been prepared to address the recommendations within that Completion Report.

The Committee was expected to receive the final (audited) Statements of Accounts for financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25, as well as draft Statement of Accounts for 2025/26 financial year, at its meeting on 23rd July 2026.

Risk Champion Updates

Councillor Rita Rogers was appointed as the member risk champion for 2025/26. She provided updates on any pertinent risk from a member perspective, when applicable.

Summary of Committee meetings 2025/26

Below is a summary of the main matters discussed at Audit, Governance and Standards Committee meetings in 2025/26:

24th July 2025

Feckenham Parish Council Representative's Report – Standards Regime

The Chairman of Feckenham Parish Council provided an update on Feckenham Parish Council standards matters and stated that there were no specific standards matters to update on. However, he provided a brief overview of matters of general concern for Feckenham Parish Council including local planning applications and house-building targets for the Parish area. Also, raised was the uncertainty with regard to the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and what this would mean for parish areas like Feckenham.

Standards Regime – Monitoring Officer's Report

The Committee considered the Monitoring Officer's report which updated on Member Complaints, Constitution Review and Member training as follows:

- Since the last report to the Committee in January 2025, there had been two complaints submitted by members of the public against a Borough Councillor and one complaint

submitted by a County Councillor against a Borough Councillor. After initial investigation, all three complaints were found not to be standards matters.

- It was confirmed there were no outstanding members' standards complaints awaiting decision.
- Concerns were raised about low Member attendance at some of the recent training sessions.
- Cyber security training had been mandated for all Members by the Executive Committee due to this being a high-risk area for the Council
- It was noted that member briefings and member engagement sessions on local government reorganisation (LGR) would continue in the run up to November 2025 when the LGR proposal for Worcestershire was due to be submitted to the Government.

Annual Update Report on Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA)

During this meeting Members were asked to consider the annual update report on the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA). It was explained that the Council had not used RIPA powers in recent years. The policy document that the Council had been recently reviewed by inspectors with the document deemed to be of high standard nationally and only minor updates were required. The latest version of the Council's RIPA Policy was endorsed by the Committee.

Localism Act 2011 – Standards Regime – Dispensations

During consideration of this report the Committee considered the approval of Member dispensations with the following points discussed:

- Dispensations fell into four categories: general, council tax arrears, individual member and outside body appointment dispensations.
- The Committee approved the individual and outside body appointment dispensations requested by Members (detailed under paragraph 4.10 of the report) to participate in discussions where they might otherwise have a conflict of interest.
- The Committee also approved General dispensations.
- Members were reminded to update their dispensations as roles changed.

External Audit On Boarding Discussion Update

The External Auditor from Ernst and Young provided an update and explained that Ernst and Young onboarding procedures with the Council had now been completed. It was explained that the Council would receive a disclaimer opinion on its 2023/24 Accounts due to the backstop date requirement but that the Value for Money opinion for 2023/24 remained to be completed. It was anticipated that this work would be completed and reported to Members in September 2025. The External Auditor stated that the backstop date for the auditing of 2024/25 Accounts was in February 2026.

Annual Report of Internal Audit for 2024/25

This report provided the Annual Internal Audit Opinion for the financial year 2024/25, as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2018 and the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. It supported the Council's Annual Governance Statement by offering independent assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and internal control processes.

The overall audit opinion of the Council's system of internal control was Reasonable Assurance (the second highest grading). This meant a reasonable level of independent assurance that the Council's internal controls and risk management processes were effective and supported the achievement of its strategic objectives.

There were 13 graded internal audit assignments in 2024-25 of which three received substantial assurance, seven reasonable assurance, three limited assurance. There were no assignments that were graded as no assurance.

Of the three assignments that received limited assurance, the Accounts Payable received this level of assurance due to the internal auditors being unable to complete full review of this area as the finance team focused their efforts in 2024-25 on the work of completing the statements of accounts in line with statutory backstop dates.

Procurement and Contract Management received limited assurance due to the Council not yet being fully compliant with the new procurement regulations. Procurement team was supporting services to achieve full compliance with the rules, and a follow up review would be performed by Internal Audit in 2025-26. This would include comprehensive monitoring of compliance with the new regulations across departments.

The review of Corporate Credit / Procurement Cards found limited assurance owing to the current issues with authorisation controls and accountability for the overall process. To address this, the senior management team had vested authority and provided support to the Procurement Manager to monitor service-level compliance and challenge those officers who were not following the procurement procedure correctly.

It was noted that a review of council tax arrears in respect of single person discounts had not been undertaken for eight years, and this review would now be undertaken in 2025-26. It was highlighted that regular checks were undertaken by officers in this area but a review was now due and it needed to be fully assessed whether it was economic for the Council to undertake a full-scale approach to chasing arrears in this area.

Members raised concern about the Statutory Inspections internal audit review finding missing details and inconsistent approach in respect of fire safety controls and commented that this was a significant risk for the Council. Officers explained that internal audit reviews contained some mandatory actions for the Council to carry out in this area and relevant service managers had been tasked with rectifying the issues found in this review.

Internal Audit Plan 2025/26

The Internal Audit Plan for 2025/26 was presented to Members. It was noted that this Internal Audit Plan prioritised areas where there was high risk to the Council and areas where failings could have serious financial and/or reputational repercussions for the Council.

The Internal Audit Plan had a basic resource allocation of 261 chargeable days for undertaking specific audits. It was explained that there was a contingency within the overall Plan to enable the Council's Chief Finance Officer to call on the Internal Auditors to undertake reviews to respond to emerging risks identified during the year, should the need arise.

The Internal Audit Plan for 2025/26 was approved by the Committee.

Financial Compliance Report including Update on Statement of Accounts

The report updated on the submission status of key legislative reporting requirements to central Government and the Council's position with regard to auditing of its Statements of Accounts.

In reference to Government reporting requirements, the Council continued to provide the majority of key legislative deliverables within timeframes and was compliant with national requirements. The key outstanding issue was the Council's VAT returns. It was highlighted that since December 2024 the Council had been submitting VAT returns to HMRC on a monthly basis, but discussions were ongoing with HMRC regarding the prior three years of VAT returns.

It was noted the Council had published and made their draft 2023-24 Accounts available for public inspection from 17 January 2025 to 3 March 2025. The Council was listed by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) as one of the local authorities that had not met the statutory backstop deadline of 28 February 2025 for having the audited 2023-24 Accounts available, but a note was included to explain that the Council had no appointed auditor for 2023-24 at the time of the backstop deadline when the Accounts were being submitted.

It was noted that the new External Auditor, Ernst & Young, have now finished their onboarding checks and had begun the audit of 2023-24 Accounts with the expectation that these would receive a 'disclaimer opinion'. The backstop date for publishing the audited statements of accounts for 2024-25 was 27 February 2026 with Ernst & Young being the Council's auditors for that set of accounts.

Financial Savings Monitoring Report

The Committee received a report which set out the outturn (final) position on the financial savings for 2024/25:

- The Council ended the year with a £4k underspend on a full year revenue budget of £10.8 million. This was a marked improvement to quarter 3 at which point a revenue overspend of £138k for the year was predicted.
- The position at year 2023/24 in terms of departmental savings: two departmental savings items remained amber (indicating risk to delivery). This related to establishment (service) reviews, where it was found that the spending on establishment salaries and Agency was above budgeted figures and as such there remained a significant risk. The second item related to the Capacity Grid project, recouping old Council Tax and Business Rates debt, which was nearing the end of its allocated time.
- There was a surplus in the collection fund of £1.004m, of which £0.125m related to
- The 2024-25 savings position was presented in Appendix A. It was highlighted that the vast majority of savings items linked to increases in grant, agreed increases in tax or items no longer to be delivered until future financial years. The largest savings in recent years was on pension cost which linked to the 2023 triennial revaluation with revised figures applicable until the end of this financial year. Initial advice from actuaries indicated that these figures would not change in the next revaluation.
- Queries were raised on the additional spending on items including contract with Wychavon District Council to deliver parking civil enforcement service.
- It was reported that although one of the public sector tenants had not been secured as previously planned, the Town Hall hub project was overall progressing as planned and was at the RIBA 4 technical design stage at present. A question was asked with regard

to what contingency was in place if tenants could not be secured. It was responded that the hub redevelopment would allow the Council's customer service centre to move back to the Town Hall, and the additional office space capacity would in any case allow other Council assets such as the Greenlands Business Centre and the Oakenshaw Community Centre to be released for other purposes.

- It was noted that going forward, savings monitoring would be reported through the quarterly finance and performance monitoring reports, to be considered by the Executive Committee and scrutinised by the Budget Scrutiny Working Group rather than through the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee.

Risk Management Report/Quarterly Risk Update (Q1 2025-26)

The Committee considered an update report about corporate and departmental risks with the following key points discussed:

- A new, simplified risk report format was introduced.
- There were 13 Corporate risks with a number of those risks RAG-rated red (being high risk).
- There were 47 departmental risks of which 1 risk relating to revenues was red.
- The Council's insurance team was commended for their successful effort to insure the Council for the right assets, including appropriate premiums and excesses. It was highlighted that through this work £250,000 saving was delivered across shared service councils (Redditch and Bromsgrove Councils).

23rd October 2025

Feckenham Parish Council Representative's Report – Standards Regime

The Chairman of Feckenham Parish Council provided an update on Feckenham Parish Council standards matters and in doing so explained that although there were no specific standards matters to report in relation to the Parish Council, he wished to update on matters of concern in the Feckenham Parish, as this Committee was the main forum where Feckenham Parish Council matters could be raised with Borough Councillors. The Committee was updated on these issues.

Standards Regime – Monitoring Officer's Report

During this meeting the committee considered the Monitoring Officer's report which provided updates on Member Complaints, Constitution Review and Member training as follows:

- Since the last report to the Committee (24th July 2025) there had been one complaint submitted from a member of the public against three Borough Councillors, which was currently at the initial assessment stage.
- One other complaint submitted by a member of the public against a Borough Councillor, which, following assessment, was found not to be a code of conduct matter.

Annual Review Letter of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

During this meeting Members considered a report on the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter, which set out the statistics for complaints made against the Council covering the year ending 31st March 2025.

Members were informed that the Local Government Ombudsman had changed its reporting approach. Annual letters would only be issued in cases of exceptional practice or concerns about complaint handling. Redditch Borough Council (RBC) was one of the authorities that had not received such a letter for the period ending 31st March 2025.

During the reporting period, the Ombudsman received 14 complaints relating to the Council, of which all 14 were decided within that year. Of these cases, there was one case where the LGSCO upheld the complaint and found the Council to be at fault. This related to a decision made under the Council's housing allocations policy. It was noted that this was a complex case and whilst the Ombudsman did not criticise the Council's decision making, the Council was found to be at fault for not having offered the complainant the right to appeal when the original homelessness decision was reversed in that case. The remedy was for the Council to offer the complainant the option to appeal.

Of the remaining 13 complaints, in two cases the complaint was closed by the Ombudsman after initial inquiries, in seven cases early advice was given by LGSCO to customer, three cases were referred back to Council for local resolution and in one case the complaint was deemed incomplete by Ombudsman as there was insufficient information to proceed.

External Audit Update Report 2023/24

The External Auditor (Ernst & Young) provided an update on the audit status of the Council's Statements of Accounts, including the audit of 2023/24 Accounts.

Context was provided regarding the Government's legislation aimed at clearing the backlog of local audits and establishing a sustainable audit system. The backstop legislation was an approach to address the audit backlog in three phases.

The first phase involved clearing the backlog of historic audit opinions up to and including financial year 2022/23 by 13 December 2024. The second phase involved recovery starting from 2023/24 financial statements to ensure that audit assurance across the sector was rebuilt across multiple audit cycles.

The External Auditor reported that the Council did not meet the deadline for phase 1 and phase 2 of the recovery plan due to delays in the preparation of the financial statements for 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23, and the challenges with changes to the Council's auditor arrangements for financial years 2023/24 onwards, respectively.

The Committee was reminded that the Council had produced draft statement of accounts for 2023/24 in mid-January 2025 with the inspection period ending on 28 February 2025. Due to Ernst & Young's confirmation as auditor to the Council by PSAA only after the 2024/25 financial year started, and due to the necessary time needed to complete acceptance and onboarding procedures, the audit of 2023/24 Accounts did not commence until June 2025.

The External Auditor highlighted that challenges had been experienced following the commencement of their audit of the Council's 2023/24 Accounts. This included the Council's resources being initially focused on meeting the 30 June 2025 deadline for publishing the 2024/25 draft statement of accounts. External Audit resource was reallocated to July and August; however, further challenges were met, including matters requiring further investigation

being identified including VAT, capital budgeting, compliance with laws and regulations and Value for Money which had led to further information requests.

It was reported that it was now highly unlikely the External Auditor would have available resource to recommence the audit of the 2023/24 financial statements until the 2024/25 planned audit period. As such, there would be an impact on the delivery of the 2024/25 audit.

Despite the disclaimer of opinion on the 2023/24 financial statements, EY confirmed that auditing standards required certain procedures to be performed, which were underway. The local regulations also required Value For Money (VFM) work to be completed, which was also in progress.

Internal Audit Progress Report

The Committee received the internal audit progress report. It was noted that at the time of this report being written, of the internal audit assignments planned for 2025-26, one audit assignment had been fully completed, two assignments were at the draft report stage, one assignment was at the fieldwork completion stage with report to be issued shortly, six assignments were in progress, three assignments were at the planning stage, and five assignments had not yet been started.

It was highlighted that this year's plan remained on track to achieve the targets set out in the Annual Plan. It was noted that the internal audit service was now fully resourced.

Progress against the key performance indicators for internal audit service was provided, including that at the current stage the target of 90 per cent delivery of audit days against the full year plan target was on track to be achieved.

It was reported that there were no emerging issues to report arising in relation to Council's internal controls. There were 23 outstanding internal audit recommendations which remained to be fully actioned by the Council, 1 of which was high-risk overdue recommendation in relation to the provision of assurance that cyber security awareness training had been completed by all Members.

In view of the cyber security risk, the Committee requested that presentation be provided at the next meeting of the Committee from the Council's Emergency Planning / Resilience team regarding the ramifications that a cyber-attack would have on the Council and the response and recovery processes that the Council had in place to respond in the event of a cyber security breach.

Annual Governance Statement

The Committee received the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for the financial year ending 31st March 2025 (2024/25). It was explained that the AGS was a statutory requirement under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and provided a corporate overview of governance arrangements. Although it formed part of the Statement of Accounts process, it was not a financial report.

The AGS set out the Council's key governance components were set out which included internal controls, such as corporate risk register, performance monitoring, constitutional arrangements, overview and scrutiny function, audit functions, including internal audit control,

external audit arrangements and decision-making governance of Council, including the council-owned company, Rubicon Leisure.

It was noted that the AGS identified significant governance issues. The main governance challenge was in relation to the Council in November 2023 having received a Section 24 Statement from its External Auditor at the time for non-delivery of the 2020/21 to 2022/23 Accounts within the required timescales due to the challenges with the implementation of a new financial ledger. Other governance issues were also highlighted including the disclaimer audit opinions being received on the 2020/21 to 2022/23 Statements of Accounts, as well as disclaimer opinion being expected for 2023/24 Accounts, and a C3 Regulatory Judgment following a comprehensive inspection by the Regulator of Social Housing, with failings identified in key service areas of social housing including repairs, fire safety, tenant engagement, and data management.

The Committee was informed that although disclaimer opinions were expected for 2023/24 and 2024/25, each audit cycle would be leading to improvements in the levels of assurance that could be provided. The Council was working towards achieving a full audit opinion in future years.

The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2024/25 was approved by the Committee.

Financial Compliance Report

The report updated on the submission status of key legislative reporting requirements to central Government, it was noted that the Council continued to provide the majority of key legislative deliverables within timeframes. The key outstanding returns were the VAT returns and Whole of Government accounts.

It was recapped that although the Council's VAT returns were now up to date, and, from December 2024 onwards, monthly VAT returns were being submitted to HMRC. Work continued to provide assurance to HMRC regarding VAT return that had been submitted in December 2024, which covered the previous three years. In order to provide additional assurance, the Council had employed an experienced VAT accountant to work alongside the existing VAT consultants, PS Tax. The Council had also arranged mandatory VAT training for all finance department staff and budget managers.

It was reported that the Whole of Government Accounts (WOGA) returns had not been submitted by the Council for a number of years due to delays in producing the Statement of Accounts for years 2020/21 onwards, which followed the introduction of the TechOne system in February 2021. These were no longer required for previous years but remained outstanding for cycle 1 2024/25. It was unlikely that the Council would submit that return by the required deadline as its Accounts for 2023/24 and 2024/25 remained unaudited.

Members were reminded that the Council had closed their Accounts for the financial years 2020/21 to 2022/23, receiving a 'disclaimer' audit opinion for these three sets of accounts. For 2023/24 Accounts, the draft accounts had been presented for public inspection, and this ended on 27 February 2025. The draft 2024/25 Accounts had been prepared and had been ready for public consultation by 20 June 2025 in line with timescales set out in the existing Government legislation. The public inspection period end date for this set of accounts was 11 August 2025. The backstop date for having the 2024/25 Accounts audited was 27 February 2026.

The key recent deliverables being achieved by the Council were set out in the report. This included the drafting of the Financial Stability Plan following the successful completion of the Financial Improvement Plan, the health check on the TechOne system being undertaken in collaboration with the system provider following the successful remedy of the miscodings on the system, and the staff arrangements put in place in the finance department team including the recruitment of a chief accountant and interim staffing arrangements around the senior business partner posts.

Cyber Security Update (including WhatsApp and AI Policy)

The report concerning the proposed staff policies on Artificial Intelligence (AI) Acceptable Use and WhatsApp Use was presented to the Committee.

It was explained that the purpose of developing the AI Acceptable Use Policy was to ensure the ethical, transparent, and responsible use of AI technologies across the Council. The draft Policy as set out in Appendix 2 to the report covered key principles that the Council and its employees would need to adhere to when utilising AI technologies.

Officers explained that the use of AI tools by the Council was currently limited to basic processes such as to assist with presentations and document summaries. It was reiterated that the Council exercised caution with the phasing out of AI and the AI Acceptable Use policy was designed to provide guidelines for the use of this technology across the Council.

The WhatsApp Policy at Appendix 3 was developed to guide Council staff as to appropriate use of WhatsApp for Council-related communication. The main aspects of this policy included:

- Permitted Use – If utilised, WhatsApp may only be used by staff for non-sensitive, logistical communication (e.g. meeting times, location changes chats).
- Prohibited Use – WhatsApp must not be used for customer communication or sharing of personal/confidential data (e.g. personal data, internal decisions).
- Security and Compliance – WhatsApp was not deemed secure for handling any sensitive data by the Council. It was reiterated that any use of WhatsApp by staff on personal devices may be subject to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.
- Photos and Media – Images of people required consent and staff must exercise caution when sharing photos to ensure photos did not contain sensitive information in the background.

Members requested that consideration be given to producing specific AI Acceptable Use and WhatsApp policies for Councillors, alternatively to expand the scope of these policy documents to cover both the Council's Elected Members and Officers.

Members expressed the view that training on AI was essential requirement for Councillors. As such it was requested that arrangements for provision of AI training for elected members be considered at the next meeting of Member Support Steering Group.

The Audit, Governance and Standards Committee recommended that the Executive approve the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Acceptable Use Policy, and the WhatsApp Policy as formal policy documents for the Council.

20th January 2026

Feckenham Parish Council Representative's Report – Standards Regime

The Parish Council Representative provided an update on the Parish Council's standards matters. It was reported that Feckenham Parish Council now had a full representation of councillors with no vacancies. All Parish Councillors had recently undertaken a course on data protection / GDPR. In addition, the Parish Council had recently updated its documentation relating to conduct matters.

Request was made for more regular information on the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) to be passed to the Parish Council whenever there was new information. It was clarified that in Worcestershire two LGR proposals had been submitted to the Government – one for the creation of two unitary authorities, the other advocating for a single unitary authority. The Government was expected to make a decision on the proposals in summer 2026. The unitary arrangement decided on would then come into force on 1st April 2028 according to the Government's timetable.

Standards Regime – Monitoring Officer's Report

During this meeting the committee considered the Monitoring Officer's report which provided updates on Member Complaints, Constitution Review and Member training as follows:

- Since the last report to the Committee (23rd October 2025) there had been one complaint submitted from a member of the public against a Borough councillor, which did not pass the initial assessment stage.
- Several complaints against Borough councillors were received from County councillors and a member of the public. It was expected these complaints would be resolved informally.
- The complaint which was reported at the last Committee meeting (23rd October 2025), submitted by a member of the public against three Borough councillors, was still at the initial stage awaiting further information from the complainant.
- The complaint received after this meeting's agenda publication, relating to the Council meeting on 13th January 2026, was currently being assessed.
- The meeting of Constitutional Review Working Group (CRWG) took place on 6th January 2026, relating to the taxi licensing scheme of delegations and the recommendation to permanently delegate authority to officers to determine hackney carriage and private hire vehicle renewal applications that fell outside of the Council's age criteria policy. The recommendations from the CRWG would be reported to full Council.

External Audit Progress Report and Sector Update

An update was provided on behalf of the External Auditors, Ernst & Young, the following key updates being raised:

- External Auditors were currently undertaking the work to audit the Council's 2023/24 Statement of Accounts concurrently with work on the Council's 2024/25 Accounts in order to meet the backstop deadline of 27th February 2026 for publishing the audited Accounts for the 2024/25 financial year.
- Meetings continued to take place between Council officers and the External Auditor in relation to outstanding queries, including with regard to whistleblowing cases and how these cases were being actioned by the Council.

- The 2023/24 Value for Money (VfM) part of the audit had been completed by the External Auditors. The two main issues identified related to the outstanding VAT returns for the period prior to December 2024 as well as the write-off value for the Town Hall Hub project as a result of the change to the project remit (i.e. the existing library in Redditch no longer being relocated to the Town Hall).

Internal Audit – Progress Report

During this item the Committee received the routine internal audit progress report with the following key points raised:

- 186 productive days of internal audit work for the Council had been delivered against the full year plan of 308. It was anticipated that the objective of delivering 90 per cent of the full year plan would be achieved by year end (31st March 2026).
- As of end of December 2025, four audit assignments had been fully completed, one assignment was at the draft report stage, seven assignments were in progress, two assignments were at the planning stage, and one assignment had been put on hold until February due to a request from management.
- Of the four fully completed audit assignments, three had been finalised since the last meeting of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee. These were Payroll, General Ledger, and Corporate Health and Safety.
- Payroll had received 'substantial assurance' following internal audit with only minor issues identified.
- The General Ledger was given 'limited assurance', although it was recognised that considerable progress had been achieved since the last internal audit review. However, at the time of the audit control suspense account reconciliations had not yet been completed for 2024/25 and completion of bank reconciliations was behind schedule for both authorities (i.e. Redditch and Bromsgrove). It was noted that this was mainly due to the legacy issues following implementation of the new finance system after February 2021 and the subsequent focus on managing the issues with the system and bringing statutory accounts up to date. Internal Audit was due to revisit this area in 2026/27.
- The audit of Corporate Health and Safety resulted in 'limited assurance' being provided. This audit was requested by the Council's senior management and resulted in a number of major issues being identified including 59 per cent of new starters since September 2023 not having received Health and Safety Induction training and no standardised means of ensuring role specific health and safety training was being provided. Furthermore, a significant number of service areas did not provide health and safety risk assessments when requested by the auditor.
- There were 29 outstanding internal audit recommendations and 1 high priority overdue action in relation to assurance that cyber security awareness training had been completed by all elected Members. It was stated that five Members were yet to start this training, and one Member had an outstanding module to complete.
- It was requested that the deadline be set for the remaining Members to complete this training and that political Group Leaders be notified of those members of their Groups who had not completed the training. In addition, it was asked that the Internal Auditor contact these Members directly with a reminder to complete the training and that an in-person 'mop up' session be organised to provide opportunity for Members to receive help if they struggled with completing the training due to IT barriers.

Capital Strategy 2026/27 including Treasury Management Strategy

Details of the Capital, Treasury Management and Investment Strategies were presented to the Committee. The following was discussed in more detail:

- Capital Strategy provided an overarching framework of how the Council planned, financed, and managed capital expenditure to deliver services and maintain financial sustainability. The planned capital expenditure for 2026/27 was £15.5 million of which £3.3 million was for General Fund projects, £11.5 million Housing Revenue Account, and £0.7 million for Towns Fund schemes. Funding sources to cover this capital expenditure were borrowing (£12 million), Council resources (£2.8 million), and external grants (£0.7 million).
- As of 31 March 2026, the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) was forecast at £159.8 million, reducing to £158.2 million by March 2027. This included £10.5 million General Fund and Regeneration and £147.7 million for Housing Revenue Account.
- The Treasury Management Strategy detailed how the Council managed its cash flows, borrowing and investments, and the associated risks. The current long-term borrowing by the Council was at £103.9 million related to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). £6.2 million was invested by the Council with an average return rate of 4.2 per cent. The Council's investment priorities were security and liquidity over yield with environmental, social and governance principles embedded.
- The associated Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) statement showed, for areas where the Authority finances capital expenditure by debt, the amount charged to the revenue budget for the repayment of debt. It was noted that the purpose of the policy was to ensure borrowing for capital projects was repaid over the life of the asset. It was stated that the Council typically used the annuity method for depreciation, which apportioned depreciation in regular and equal amounts over the life of the asset.
- The Investment Strategy covered investments made by the Council. It was noted that the Council only invested for service and regeneration purposes and did not invest for profit. It was highlighted that there were no commercial investments planned by the Council for 2026/27.

The Committee recommended that the Capital Strategy, the Treasury Management Strategy (and the associated MRP policy), and the Investment Strategy all be approved by full Council.

Review of Accounting Policies

During this meeting Members were updated on the Council's accounting policies. The policies were designed to ensure that the accounts presented a true and fair view of the Council's financial position. The Interim Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer reassured Members that the policies presented continued to comply with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) code and International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

Financial Compliance Report

The Financial Compliance Report was presented which detailed the position regarding legislative reporting requirements and the position on submission of the Council's Statements of Accounts.

In reference to the key legislative reporting requirements to central Government, it was noted that the Council continued to provide the majority of these legislative deliverables within timeframes. The key outstanding returns remained the Value Added Tax (VAT) returns and Whole of Government Accounts (WOGA).

As reported at previous meetings, although from December 2024 the Council returned to monthly VAT returns, work had continued to provide assurance to HMRC regarding VAT return

that had been submitted in December 2024, which covered the previous three years. Additional resources had been added to strengthen the finance team in relation to VAT including a VAT Accountant and mandatory VAT training for all finance staff.

The Whole of Government Accounts (WOGA) had not been produced by the Council for a number of years and required a substantial mapping exercise in order to be undertaken. It was unlikely that the Council would be able to achieve this before the Cycle 2 deadline of 3 October 2026. However, the Council was working to achieve a submission for the 2026/27 financial year.

In relation to the Council's Statements of Accounts, Members were reminded that the Council's External Auditor, Ernst & Young, had started its audit work on the 2023/24 Accounts and it was expected this set of accounts would be disclaimed. The 2024/25 Accounts had been completed by the Government's deadline of 30 June 2025 and the public consultation period for inspection of draft accounts finished on 11 August 2025. These Accounts were expected to be audited close to the Government backstop date of 27 February 2026.

The key recent deliverables achieved since the last meeting were set out which included upgrading the Council's finance system, TechOne to the latest version and setting up a project team to reinstall the cash receipting functionality within the system. A question was raised by a Member whether this was the most appropriate option given the issues experienced by the Council with the TechOne cash receipting module following implementation of the TechOne system.

It was explained that the Council had three options in relation to its financial system which were: to fix its current system which was tried and did not work successfully, to purchase a new and different system altogether which would involve a substantial cost, or to reinstall the functionality that is already available as part of the TechOne package. It was highlighted that more local authorities in the UK were now using the TechOne cash receipting module than when the Council first tried to implement it, including Worcestershire County Council. In addition, Officers were in discussion with TechOne around specific resource requirements and exact mechanism which would be in place to operate the cash receipting module. Therefore, the Council was proceeding with the option to reinstall the functionality that is already available as part of the TechOne system in order to strengthen the system's capabilities.

Cyber Security Update

An update was considered in exempt (closed) session on the current position with regards to cyber security within the Council. The position statement discussed outlined the Council's ongoing cyber security initiatives, current threats and achievements, and future planned improvements.

24th February 2026

External Audit – Accounts Backstop Report

This item had been withdrawn. It was clarified that the External Auditors would submit a backstop accounts report for 2023/24 financial year to a future meeting of the Committee (most likely in June 2026).

Risk Management Report/Quarterly Risk Update (Q3 2025/26)

The corporate risk register as well as departmental risks were reviewed by Members. In particular, Members requested the addition of two risks to the Corporate Risk Register: Cash Flow and Treasury Management and Backlog of Fire Remedial Actions.

Cash Flow and Treasury Management:

The Interim Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer explained that this was not a risk from a single event but has arisen out of a combination of related factors. This included:

- Uncertainty around council tax collection rates - There was a risk highlighted that if Worcestershire County Council's (WCC) went ahead with increasing their element of council tax by 8.98%, there could be an increased number of residents who were unable to pay council tax, which would significantly affect the Borough Council's (as the council tax billing authority) cash flow in the short term.
- VAT Recovery – It was noted that the Council had been unable to submit periodic VAT returns for period from April 2021 to October 2024 as a result of issues with the TechnologyOne ERP (ledger) system and was in the process of working out a resolution with HMRC. Whilst the Council hoped to be credited by HMRC in VAT refund in the near future, there remained a cash flow risk to the Council as long as the funding was not in the Council's account as there remained a reliance on the council tax income to sustain the revenue budget at a time of year when council tax income was unstable due to the end of old billing period in February and March, and before regular collection was resumed from April – start of new financial year.

It was agreed by Members that the combination of the factors above necessitated adding this item to the Corporate Risk Register.

Backlog of Fire Remedial Actions:

This risk related to overdue fire remedial actions in social housing properties in the Borough. The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Performance, Engagement and Governance (present at the meeting) explained that she attended the Housing Improvement Board meeting and noted that insufficient detail was available with regard to mitigations to address these overdue fire remedial actions. The Committee agreed with the seriousness of the risk and requested that it be added to the Corporate Risk Register. It was noted that progress had been slow in the Council clearing the backlog, especially of high-risk fire remedial actions, with 695 outstanding actions at Q2 2025/26, this only reducing by 18 to 677 as of end of Q3 2025/26.

The Interim Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer explained that the resolution of this risk required a review of capital financing for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) which was scheduled to take place at Quarter 1 of 2026/27. It was noted that the Council was legally required not to run a deficit on its HRA account and therefore the review of financing would seek to identify headroom for borrowing to enhance the Council's ability to grow and invest in existing housing stock more quickly, including investment in expediting fire remedial actions works. Members commented that there needed to be a detailed plan produced that set out how the works would be undertaken. It was requested that an update on this area be reported back to Members.

It was explained that in addressing the backlog of fire remedial actions, in addition to a requirement for additional funds from the HRA being freed up, there were also issues with capacity of the housing team and contractors to deliver the works. It was noted that most of the outstanding fire remedial actions were in relation to fire doors. It was clarified that most of fire risks in this area were now classed as a fire risk due to a recent tightening of regulations in regard to the fire doors safety, rather than because there were no fire doors in place.

Response and Recovery to a Possible Cyber Attack on the Council - Presentation

A bespoke update on the Council's cyber security arrangements and procedures in case of a serious cyber attack was provided. Members considered this update in private (exempt) session.

Legal, Democratic and Property Services

Redditch Borough Council

Town Hall

Walter Stranz Square

Redditch B98 8AH

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REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Council**
202621st September**Borough of Redditch Local Plan – Gateway 1 Self-Assessment and Summary of Scoping Consultation.**

Relevant Cabinet Member	Councillor Matt Dormer
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Assistant Director	Ruth Bamford
Report Author Mike Dunphy	Job Title: Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager email: m.dunphy@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 81325
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	Via PAP
Relevant Council Priority	1. Economy, Regeneration & Prosperity 2. Green, Clean & Safe 3. Community & Housing
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS**Council is asked to RESOLVE that**

1.The Local Plan Gateway 1 Self-Assessment at Appendix A, 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 at Appendix B, is approved and published alongside the Gateway 1 Self-Assessment.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Nationally there has been a change and there is a new system for plan-making in the UK. For Redditch Borough Council (the Council) this means that a new local plan needs to be prepared under the new system. The previous progress made on the Borough of Redditch Local Plan (that was being prepared under the old system), most notably the information obtained from consultation on the Issues and Options over the Summer of 2025, will be rolled forward into the new plan-making system. This work will be used to help inform the decisions taken as the Council prepares a new draft local plan.

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- 2.2 Towards the end of last year, work with respect to the above national changes in the planning regulations progressed, and in March 2026 the Government formally introduced the new 30+4 month plan-making system. This system, in conjunction with changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026) (NPPF), are intended to streamline plan-making to allow for quicker adoption of Local Plans, therefore increasing the delivery of housing and economic development across the country.
- 2.3 The purpose of this report is to outline the next stage required to continue plan preparation under the new system, allowing the progression of the new Borough of Redditch Local Plan to adoption as quickly as possible.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1 In June 2026 the Council considered a report detailing the first three elements of the new plan-making system, those being, the Notice of Intention to Commence plan making, the Local Plan Timetable and the Local Plan scoping consultation. The notice of intention to commence plan making and the Local Plan timetable were both published as per the relevant regulations. The scoping consultation was undertaken between 3rd July – 14th August 2026.

Scoping Consultation

- 3.2 Regulation 22 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 requires that *'A local planning authority must prepare, in connection with the preparation of their local plan, a document to be known as their "summary of scoping consultation"'*. The Summary of Scoping Consultation can be found at Appendix B.
- 3.3 The full details of the consultation are provided in the Summary of Scoping Consultation, including details of who was consulted and whether they responded, individual summaries of each question asked, and also details of out-of-scope comments received. In brief there were 33 respondents to the scoping consultation, 8 from the public, 18 from consultation bodies and other stakeholders, and 7 on behalf of developers and landowners. The responses were submitted via an online survey and via email.

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- 3.4 Officers consider that there were no issues raised as part of the scoping consultation which would prevent the Council progressing to the next stages of plan-making.

Gateway 1 Self-Assessment

- 3.5 The next stage of the plan-making process is to pass through 'Gateway 1'. In order to progress through Gateway 1, the Council is required to undertake a self-assessment to demonstrate that it is ready to progress at speed, and meet the 30 month timetable that has been published.
- 3.6 Appendix A is the self-assessment undertaken by officers and takes into account the preparation work undertaken, including the scoping consultation. The self-assessment is based on the template provided by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The accompanying guidance states when completing the self-assessment '*Aim to write in plain English and keep your summaries brief - somewhere between 150 and 250 words per section is what we recommend.*'
- 3.7 Under the overall title of 'How we got ready to prepare a new local plan' there are five sections to the self-assessment.
- We have published a timetable for preparing the plan
 - We have established project management and governance arrangements
 - We planned how we will consult on the plan
 - We began scoping out the content of the plan
 - We began a Strategic Environmental Assessment

As can be seen at Appendix B and as explained at the recent Planning Advisory Panel (PAP) meeting, officers are comfortable that the resources and processes are in place to pass through Gateway 1. This allows the Council to continue preparing the plan in line with the published timetable. For clarity that timetable is repeated below.

<u>Local plan event</u>	<u>Start date</u>	<u>End date</u>
1) Publish local plan timetable under regulation 8	29 th June 2026	
2) Publish notice of intention to commence local plan preparation under regulation 19(1)	29 th June 2026	

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3) Publish notice of scoping consultation under regulation 20(1)(b)	3 rd July 2026	
4) Scoping consultation under regulation 20	3 rd July – 14 th August 2026	
5) Gateway 1: Publish Gateway 1 self-assessment summary under regulation 21(3)	October 2026	
6) Publish summary of scoping consultation under regulation 22	October 2026	
7) Publish notice of local plan content and evidence consultation under regulation 23(1)(a)	June 2027	
8) Consultation on the proposed local plan content and evidence (not less than six weeks) under regulation 23	June 2027	July/August 2027
9) Publish summary of consultation on the proposed local plan content and evidence under regulation 24	October 2027	
10) Gateway 2: observations and advice will be sought under section 15CA(3) of the Act in accordance with regulation 26	October 2027	
11) Publish Gateway 2 observations and advice in accordance with section 15CA(5) of the Act and regulation 26(5)	November/December 2027	
12) Publish notice of proposed local plan consultation under regulation 27(1)(a)	March 2028	
13) Consultation on the proposed local plan (not less than eight weeks) under regulation 27	March 2028	April/May 2028
14) Publish summary of consultation on the proposed local plan under regulation 30	August/September 2028	
15) Gateway 3: observations and advice will be sought under section 15CA(3) of the Act in accordance with regulation 31	August/September 2028	
16) Publish Gateway 3 observations and advice in accordance with section 15CA(5) of the Act and regulation 31(5)	September/October 2028	

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17) Submit the proposed local plan for independent examination under section 15D(1) of the Act	October 2028
18) Publish the examiner's recommendations and reasons in accordance with section 15D(13) of the Act and regulation 37.	TBC
19) Adoption of the local plan under section 15EA of the Act	April 2029

- 3.8 In order to formally pass through Gateway 1, the Council must publish the Gateway 1 Self-Assessment summary. This has to be done at least the first day after the period of 4 months after which the notice of intention to commence plan making was published, therefore should members confirm the recommendations above, the Gateway 1 Self-Assessment will be formally published on the Council's website and placed in the Council's Customer Service Centre and libraries in the Borough (Redditch and Woodrow) on the 30th October 2026.
- 3.9 The Summary of Scoping Consultation cannot be published until at least the day after the date on which the Council make its Gateway 1 Self-Assessment summary available. Therefore, should members confirm the recommendations above, the Summary of Scoping Consultation will be formally published on the Council's website and placed in the Council's Customer Service Centre and libraries in the Borough (Redditch and Woodrow) on the 2nd November 2026.

Future Local Plan Stages

- 3.10 The 'local plan content and evidence' stage (local plan event number 8 in the table above) is where the Council will publish for consultation the first draft of the new Local Plan. The timetable indicates that the Council will consult on the draft plan in the summer of 2027. This will allow for all the responses from the previous Issues and Options consultation, the Scoping consultation, the additional evidence such as the revised Green Belt review to be fed into this draft plan and help develop a draft infrastructure plan to be published alongside it as part of the consultation. Following this consultation there will be a gateway assessment carried out by an assessor appointed by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS), which will consider issues the plan may be facing at this stage, and if necessary, suggest ways in which any issues may be overcome.
- 3.11 The 'proposed local plan' stage (event 13 in the table above) is in effect the submission plan which the Council would like to present to the appointed Planning Inspector. This stage has been timetabled for

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Spring 2028. This is to allow for enough time to respond to the previous stages, and also for a third gateway check on the plan to be carried out by PINS prior to formal submission for independent examination.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Local Plan process has a budget of £1,063,000, financed as follows:
- 4.2 An initial £885,000 has been identified in Council reserves from 2026/27 onwards to fund the evidence base development, Examination in Public costs and any associated legal fees.
- 4.3 Funding of £70,000 has been awarded by MHCLG to progress the Green Belt Assessment. An additional £108,000.00 has been awarded by MHCLG to help progress the Local Plan. To release the £108,000.00 the following requirements must be met by the Council:
- Publish a Notice of Intention to commence Local Plan preparation by 30th June 2026; and
 - Publish Gateway 1 Self-Assessment by 31st October 2026.
- 4.4 The table below shows the breakdown of the budget.

Evidence base costs RBC	£660,000
Legal Fees	£125,000
Examination costs	£100,000
MHCLG Green Belt Review	£70,000
MHCLG Plan Making	£108,000
Total Local Plan Spend	£1,063,000

- 4.5 Staffing resource comes from existing posts within the establishment supplemented by three additional posts. There is currently one vacancy within the establishment, and additional posts, are currently in the process being recruited to.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The new plan-making system is set out in the following regulations The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.

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6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

Local Government Reorganisation

- 6.1 In June 2025, MHCLG wrote to Chief Executives of the Worcestershire Councils with an update on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Included within that letter is the following statement:

'The Government also recognises that developing proposals could distract councils from their essential day-to-day activities. However, residents and businesses depend on councils to deliver crucial services and to continue the efforts needed to establish successful new unitary councils. This is particularly important for advancing local plans to allocate land for new homes. As mentioned in the invitation letters, the Government expects local planning councils to work towards adopting an up-to-date local plan as soon as possible. Local Government Reorganisation should not hinder this vital work, nor should the introduction of the new legal framework for local plan-making later this year or our strategic planning reforms. Significant financial support has already been provided to eligible councils to aid in plan-making, and we encourage councils to utilise additional support available through the Local Government Association's Planning Advisory Service.'

- 6.2 The position expressed above remains unchanged, plan-making must continue irrespective of the LGR work. The recent announcement about the review into LGR is still being considered as this report is being drafted. As per the statement above LGR is not seen as reason to delay plan-making so irrespective of the outcome of the LGR review, officer advice remains as above, and plan-making must continue.

Relevant Council Priority

- 6.3 The Borough of Redditch Local Plan is relevant to the following Council priorities:

1. Economy, Regeneration & Prosperity
2. Green, Clean & Safe
3. Community & Housing

Climate Change Implications

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- 6.4 The Borough of Redditch Local Plan will have significant implications for climate change, shaping the location and nature of new housing, employment, and infrastructure development.

Community Impact Implications

- 6.5 The approval of the Gateway 1 Self-Assessment and the Summary of Scoping Consultation provide the communities across Redditch Borough with a valuable update on how the Borough of Redditch Local Plan will be progressed. The final adopted local plan will have policies and allocations which address high-quality design, provide for safer communities and help to address wider health and wellbeing by providing communities with facilities and accessible open spaces.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.6 The consultation process is open to all to comment.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The risk of not progressing a new Local Plan has been discussed at length in many forums. Whilst the Council does not have to begin plan-making under the new system until December 2026, there is no need to delay the initial processes under the new system until then. MHCLG has made it very clear that it expects plan-making to continue at pace and will not be afraid to intervene if plan-making does not progress.
- 7.2 Plan-making is strongly encouraged without delay. It suggests that the Council is committed to plan-making. Whilst simply progressing the earlier stages of plan-making does not give the control an adopted Local Plan gives, progressing a Local Plan as identified by this report does help to provide evidence that the plan is progressing and shows a pathway to adopting a plan. This is useful information to use in other settings such as development management.
- 7.3 In addition, should the publication of the Gateway 1 self-assessment summary not take place as described in this report, then the additional funding secured will have to be returned to the Government.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix A Gateway 1 Self-Assessment
Appendix B Summary of Scoping Consultation

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9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Matt Dormer	20.8.26 via PAP
Lead Director / Assistant Director	Guy Revans /Ruth Bamford	10.09.26
Financial Services	James Walton	10.09.26
Legal Services	Claire Felton	10.06.26
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)		N/A

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Gateway 1 Self-Assessment Summary

How we got ready to prepare a new local plan

We formally started preparing a new local plan for Redditch Borough on 30th October 2026.

Government policy says we should adopt the new plan within 30 months of this date. This is to help ensure we have an up-to-date local plan that responds to the needs of the area and our communities.

This document explains what we did to get ready to meet the 30-month timeframe. It also has links to further information and where you can get updates.

We published a timetable for preparing the plan

The timetable shows when we expect to carry out the different stages and activities for preparing a plan. It helps us check if and how we can adopt the plan within the 30-month timeframe. We'll keep this updated as we make more progress.

Our timetable takes into account the statutory requirements as well as anticipated increase in engagement during public consultations as draft policies and potential site allocations are published.

We are in a strong position to deliver the plan within the 30 months due to work undertaken prior to the formal initiation of plan-making under the new system. This includes an Issues and Options style consultation and Call for Sites, the results of which we have already begun to assess. This has helped generate initial ideas and key criteria within the plan. It also ensured that stakeholders and residents had sight of the plan-making process as early as possible. We will continue to work with these groups through our consultation periods.

[View Redditch Borough's Emerging Local Plan Timetable here.](#)

We established project management and governance arrangements

Preparing a local plan is a complex process. It involves many people across the Council and from other organisations. Thinking early about how the work is planned, managed and signed off helps us monitor our progress and keep the work on track. It also helps us anticipate and manage any risks to us adopting the plan within 30 months.

Through engagement with councillors via an established Planning Advisory Panel, and clear identification of the decision making process we have effective governance of the Local Plan process. Engagement with relevant teams and other decision makers we have identified the potential risks to the progress of the local plan. We have put in place a clear and robust strategy to manage, govern and resource local plan preparation, to mitigate the potential risks. Our project plan helps us prepare the plan in line with our local plan timetable and we will meet regularly with our key decision makers to monitor how this is going.

Gateway 1 Self-Assessment Summary

We planned how we'll consult on the plan

Public consultation is essential for the local plan to represent the needs of our communities. It must be easy for people to have their say in a way that works for them, so they can influence the way the area develops. By planning this early, we can ensure people are aware in advance and can get involved from the start.

We have undertaken a scoping consultation to get people's views on what the plan could contain and how we propose to consult on the plan at key stages.

We have developed an engagement strategy which is informed by the feedback and experience gained from the scoping consultation as well as the preceding issues and options consultation. The strategy describes how we will consult and communicate updates to residents and other stakeholders as we continue to progress the local plan.

The new timeframe for plan preparation is challenging. We also expect levels of engagement to increase as the plan becomes more developed and specific site allocations are proposed. As such we will utilise a digital first approach to aid in analysing responses in a timely manner. Previous consultations supported this proposed strategy. Not only will this aid us in managing and analysing the level of response most effectively, but it should also allow respondents to engage more efficiently. However, we will continue to provide a wide range of engagement opportunities across more traditional means to ensure all residents and stakeholders can have their say.

Information about upcoming consultation activities will be published on our website and social media channels.

Gateway 1 Self-Assessment Summary

We began scoping the content of the plan

Scoping includes considering how well the existing plan is working and gathering baseline information about the area. This helps to identify our future needs and ambitions. Starting this early means we can begin preparing the new plan with a clear vision, making it quicker and easier to consult on the plan and make decisions about it.

Our understanding of the needs for Redditch Borough has been informed by our Scoping and Issues and Options consultations, the collection of baseline evidence, as well as engagement with members and other stakeholders. We will also review our current Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4 (adopted January 2017) and assess how well it delivered on its objectives to identify what needs changing for the emerging plan.

Using the information we have gathered along with the input from our decision makers, we have:

- begun to draft a vision for the area
- started to understand the development requirements for the area

We have also started:

- to identify where new developments could be located by assessing the available land identified through our Call for Sites and other sources
- looking at what new planning policies, information, or data we will need for decision making about new developments
- to commission supporting evidence base documents

[\[Link to summary of our early engagement.\]](#)

We began a Strategic Environmental Assessment

We're legally required to identify, describe and evaluate likely significant effects on the environment of:

- implementing the local plan
- reasonable alternatives, taking into account the plan's objectives and scope

This process will consider how community, national and international environmental protection objectives and any other environmental challenges are taken into account in the plan. It will help us to predict significant environmental effects and develop ways of preventing, reducing and mitigating these.

It is important we start this work early and are transparent about how we're doing the assessment when engaging stakeholders and communities.

Gateway 1 Self-Assessment Summary

We have contracted external consultants to start work on the SEA. We have started to develop SEA objectives by collecting baseline information and identifying relevant plans and programmes, to establish how the SEA will ensure we deliver a sound local plan. We will be working closely with the consultants to deliver the environmental report which will underpin the local plan.

Our site assessment methodology includes key environmental designations (such as SSSIs, ancient woodland and Nature Reserves) as major constraints to ensure those areas are safeguarded from inappropriate development.

How to stay up to date

You can find the latest updates on the emerging local plan on our website.

[Emerging Borough of Redditch Local Plan](#)

By responding to our consultations or by emailing redditchplan@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk you can sign up to get updates on progress and notifications on future consultations and events.

Major updates will also be published on our website front page and through the social media channels listed below.

**BOROUGH OF REDDITCH LOCAL
PLAN – SUMMARY OF SCOPING
CONSULTATION
OCTOBER 2026**

Borough of Redditch Local Plan – Summary of scoping consultation (October 2026)**Contents**

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Section 1 – Introduction

1.1 Overview of Borough of Redditch Local Plan Scoping Consultation

- 1.1.1 Redditch Borough Council ('RBC') is in the process of reviewing and replacing the adopted Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4 (2011–2030, adopted January 2017). The forthcoming Borough of Redditch Local Plan will be developed as a new style local plan in line with the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023. It will be prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026, which came into effect on 25th March 2026, and the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended).
- 1.1.2 The scoping consultation marks the first consultation in preparing the Local Plan under the new plan-making system. Redditch Borough Council undertook a six-week scoping consultation between 3rd July and 14th August 2026. The Council invited representations on matters relevant to the preparation of the Local Plan, including what the Local Plan should contain, and the methods by which stakeholders should be engaged in its development, in accordance with Regulation 20 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.
- 1.1.3 More specifically, the scoping consultation sought views on the key priorities and challenges facing the Borough; the vision and objectives for the Local Plan; the potential scope of locally specific topic-based policies; the evidence base needed to support the Local Plan; and the proposed consultation and engagement strategy. Questions were posed to help guide responses and to enable the Council to gather meaningful feedback as the Local Plan progresses.
- 1.1.4 The scoping consultation was concerned with establishing the scope and parameters of the Local Plan, rather than considering specific proposals such as the identification of development sites or the drafting of planning policies. Opportunities to comment on these matters will be provided through future consultation stages.
- 1.1.5 As Section 2 outlines, there were 33 individual respondents to the scoping consultation (8 from the public, 18 from consultation bodies and other stakeholders, and 7 on behalf of developers and landowners). Section 3 provides a summary of the main issues raised and RBC's response to representations received. Section 4 outlines the next steps.
- 1.1.6 This summary of scoping consultation should be read alongside the scoping document, available on the Council's website – <https://www.redditchbc.gov.uk/redditchplan-scoping>.
- 1.1.7 The scoping consultation followed the publication of the Local Plan timetable and the notice of intention to commence local plan preparation on 29th June 2026, which are available to view on the Council's website – <https://www.redditchbc.gov.uk/redditchplan>.

Section 2 – Consultation bodies and other stakeholders invited to make representations

2.1 General and specific consultation bodies invited to make representations

- 2.1.1 The table below sets out the general consultation bodies and specific consultation bodies, as defined under regulation 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026, who were invited by email to make representations under regulation 20 (scoping consultation) and whether they responded to the scoping consultation.

General / specific consultation body consulted	Responded to the scoping consultation
Active Travel England	
Ofcom	
Openreach	
BT	
EE	
NOW TV	
O2	
Plusnet	
Sky	
TalkTalk	
Three	
Virgin Media	
Vodafone	
CTIL	
MBNL	
Canal & River Trust	
Civil Aviation Authority	
Coal Authority/ Mining Remediation Authority	
Sport England	
Environment Agency	
Forestry Commission	
Worcestershire County Council	
Warwickshire County Council	
National Highways	
Historic England	
Homes England	
NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB	
National Grid Electricity Distribution (NGED)	
National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET)	
Cadent Gas	
Severn Trent Water	
Marine Management Organisation	
Natural England	
Network Rail Infrastructure Limited	
Office for Nuclear Regulation	
Office of Rail and Road	
Stratford-on-Avon District Council	

Wychavon District Council	
Bromsgrove District Council	
Worcestershire Regulatory Services	
Feckenham Parish Council	
Alvechurch Parish Council	
Tutnall and Cobley Parish Council	
Bentley Pauncefoot Parish Council	
Hanbury Parish Council	
Stock and Bradley Parish Council	
Inkberrow Parish Council	
Cookhill Parish Council	
Sambourne Parish Council	
Studley Parish Council	
Mappleborough Green Parish Council	
Beoley Parish Council	
West Mercia Police	
Warwickshire Police	
North Worcestershire Water Management	

2.2 Other stakeholders invited to make representations

- 2.2.1 Any person or other stakeholders were able to make representations to the scoping consultation. The table below lists the other consultation bodies (not general or specific consultation bodies, public or developers/landowners/planning agents) who were consulted by email as part of the Council's Local Plan consultation database. For clarity, everyone else on the Council's Local Plan consultation database were also notified by email, including members of the public, schools, GP surgeries & primary care networks, developers / landowners / planning agents and other stakeholders.

Other consultation bodies consulted	Responded to the scoping consultation
Cannock Chase District Council	
Lichfield District Council	
South Staffordshire District Council	
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council	
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	
Walsall Council	
Wolverhampton City Council	
Birmingham City Council	
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	
Tamworth Borough Council	
Wyre Forest District Council	
Staffordshire County Council	
Stoke Parish Council	
Tanworth in Arden Parish Council	
West Midlands Combined Authority	
Transport for West Midlands	
Worcestershire Wildlife Trust	
Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership	
Redditch BID	
Greater Birmingham & Solihull Growth Hub	
Kingfisher Shopping Centre	

NHS England	
NHS Birmingham and Solihull ICB	
Worcestershire Primary Care Trust	
Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service	
South Staffs Water	
Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies	
The Gardens Trust	
Twentieth Century Society	
Victorian Society	
Georgian Group	

Section 3 – Summary of the main issues raised and RBC's response

3.1 Overview

- 3.1.1 This section provides a summary of the main issues raised in the representations received by the questions asked in the scoping document and how RBC have had regard/response to those representations to date. Sub-section 3.7 provides an overview of the responses received that do not specifically relate to any of the scoping questions posed in the document. Please note, not all respondents answered all the questions set out in the scoping document/Smart Survey questionnaire which explains why the response rate by question does not tally with the number of respondents.

3.2 Key priorities and challenges – Questions 1a and 1b

- 3.2.1 The key priorities and challenges section of the scoping document (section 3) explored the priorities and challenges from the adopted Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 4 (2011-2030) and the priorities and challenges consulted on last summer (2025) during the Issues and Options consultation, under the legacy plan-making system. An updated list of priorities and challenges were consulted on during this scoping consultation covering housing; economy; town centre and local centres; infrastructure; design; environment; and health. The tables below provides a summary of matters raised and underneath RBC's response to questions 1a and 1b.

Question 1a: Are these priorities correct? Yes / No / Unsure
Responses: 22
• Yes: 64% • No: 23% • Unsure: 13%

Question 1b: Are there any priorities that you would change or add? Please explain your answer
Responses: 20
<u>Summary of matters raised</u>
Public responses
• Provide additional green space like Morton Stanley Park. • With reference to the adopted Local Plan challenges, RBC needs to explore what it can build and meet its own need before looking elsewhere. • Support for inward investment, economic growth, regenerating the town centre and protecting the environment. • Recognise importance of maintaining/ improving district centres as a hub for the local community.

Supporting local independent businesses and manufacturers by reducing planning restrictions and making it easier to invest and expand.
Some support for turning empty retail units in housing or regenerating empty town centre areas and local centres.
Good design will give people a feeling of space.
Place greater emphasis on protecting the Green Belt and open countryside, including from cross-border housing shortfalls
Some support for regenerating existing urban areas before considering releasing greenfield land.
Delivering higher quality housing rather than simply increasing housing numbers. Redditch should avoid becoming dominated by large, low-quality housing estates that place additional pressure on services.
Improving roads, parking and infrastructure before permitting significant new development.
With Local Government Reorganisation creating a new North Worcestershire Council, Redditch risks being isolated, vulnerable to regional housing targets and vulnerable to a Greater Birmingham expansion. A priority should be to protect the distinct, green identity of Redditch as a separate entity from the West Midlands.
Consultation bodies and other stakeholders responses
Community Campaigner – traditional architectural design codes for new developments and protection of existing historical buildings (including non-designated heritage assets and unclassified historic buildings).
Sport England – recommends strengthening the priorities by making more explicit reference to the provision, protection and enhancement of sport, recreation and physical activity infrastructure (including open spaces, playing fields, sports pitches and green infrastructure). Promoting multifunctional green infrastructure that supports recreation, biodiversity, climate resilience and community wellbeing.
Sport England – whilst health is identified as a priority, the current wording focuses primarily on access to green space and community facilities. The Local Plan should recognise the important role that sport and recreational facilities play in improving health outcomes, reducing inequalities, supporting social cohesion and creating sustainable communities.
Sport England – recommends additional priorities relating to access to sport, recreation and physical activity. Ensuring new development supports active lifestyles through access to formal and informal recreation.
Sport England – ensure sufficient indoor and outdoor sports facilities to meet needs arising from existing and future populations. Additionally, enhancing connectivity to sports facilities through active travel.
Sport England – include a standalone priority “Creating active, healthy and inclusive communities through the protection, enhancement and delivery of sport, recreation and physical activity infrastructure”.
Natural England – recommend amending some of the priorities to be more specific and naming Green Infrastructure specifically. Additionally, Nature Recovery Networks and the Worcestershire LNRS should feature as a key priority.
Natural England – plan should contain policies to mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts on the natural environment. Your plan should recognise that climate change mitigation and adaptation and biodiversity loss are interlinked. Many habitats provide essential ecosystem services to allow adaptation to climate change e.g. natural flood management, as well as mitigation e.g. through tree planting and retaining peat as a carbon store. Policies should set out appropriate nature-based solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation such as woodland or wetland creation or peatland restoration. Policies should

address water use, promoting the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and water sensitive design as part of a wider green infrastructure approach.
• Natural England – recommend that the Local Plan includes policies to reflect the 5 headline Green Infrastructure Standards (Green Infrastructure Strategy Standard; Accessible Greenspace Standards; Urban Nature Recovery Standard; Urban Greening Factor; and Urban Tree Canopy Cover) in Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework Principles and Standards for England.
• Natural England – embedding green infrastructure into walking and cycling routes can encourage the uptake of active travel, supporting increased physical activity, improved air quality and the reduction in vehicular traffic. Creating green corridors assists with urban cooling and increases people's opportunities to connect with nature.
• Natural England – note the importance that nature plays in supporting our health and wellbeing. Natural England advise increasing access to urban green space; ensure availability and access to a variety of green and blue spaces (parks, playgrounds, woodlands, community gardens, allotments, water features, etc.); improve the quality of existing green and blue spaces; and include community gardens and food growing spaces.
• Environment Agency – we agree with them, particularly reference to sustainable development location, brownfield sites, infrastructure, natural environment (flooding, wildlife), reduction of carbon emissions and adapting to climate change. ○ Brownfield development and contaminated land – redevelopment of brownfield sites, while they may be preferable for other reasons, are more likely to encounter issues with contaminated land. ○ The Borough is predominantly underlain by rocks of the Mercia Mudstone Group. The mudstone formation is classified as a secondary B aquifer and is generally of low permeability with groundwater here generally of lower sensitivity. Within the southern part of the borough, the formation is overlain by river terrace deposits and alluvium associated with surface watercourses. These superficial deposits are capable of supporting small scale groundwater abstractions and also support baseflow to rivers. Groundwater is considered to be of higher sensitivity where these superficial deposits are present. ○ There are no groundwater source protection zones designated within the area covered by the local plan and no groundwater public water supply abstractions are currently present within the area. ○ Reference to Environment Agency databases indicates the presence of several historic landfills within the Plan area. Parts of Redditch have an industrial legacy which may have resulted in the presence of historic contamination. Any identified sites upon brownfield land may need a level of risk assessment to ensure that the site is deliverable prior to allocation. ○ Green Infrastructure – encourage you to emphasise the importance of the water environment (ponds, rivers, streams, wetlands) as part of your nature-based strategy and to further highlight the benefits from integrating blue and green infrastructure (urban cooling, carbon sequestration, natural flood management, nature recovery) even at a small scale (green walls & roofs, SuDS). There could be a stronger focus on enhancing biodiversity along the River Arrow and its tributaries. Enhancements can include increasing in stream connectivity, improving riparian habitats, managing Invasive Non Native

Species (INNS) and increasing native planting. We would support proposals for de-culverting of existing watercourses.

- Waste water infrastructure – infrastructure could also refer to the water environment (water quality and quantity). Government Guidance states that sufficient detail should be provided to give clarity to all parties on when infrastructure upgrades will be provided, looking at the needs and costs (what and how much). Water supply and wastewater treatment capacity should be available and implemented ahead of development, without causing deterioration of any watercourse in accordance with the Water Framework Directive and/or adverse effects on designated sites. Developments may need to be phased to coincide with planned infrastructure upgrades, to ensure there is sufficient capacity/water supplies that can continue to meet the needs of new development and the wider environment. A water cycle study will investigate this and should provide clear recommendations for an emerging Local Plan.
- Water resources and availability – strategic plan-making should make an important contribution in reducing pressure on available water resources by planning developments in accordance with water cycle studies and in alignment with Water Resources Management Plans. This should ensure developments are phased, located appropriately and designed to use water efficiently. Climate change could result in an increase in water scarcity which is why measures to reduce demand (and by doing so, reduce the detrimental impact on the water environment of abstracting that water) are so important. We expect the water efficiency standard required in local plan policy for all new residential developments to be designed to utilise no more than 100 litres per person per day, or future successor standards where more stringent. This goes beyond the optional higher standard as per Regulation 36 of the Building Regulations 2010 (amended 2015).
- Biodiversity Net Gain – should consider increasing the requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) beyond the national minimum to further enhance biodiversity in the area. Higher BNG targets would encourage more ambitious and effective habitat creation, restoration, and connectivity within developments. This would help offset the cumulative impact of growth and contribute to long-term ecological resilience and nature recovery in Redditch. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) would be a useful tool in identifying potential areas of biodiversity and ecological enhancements. New developments should incorporate measures to protect, enhance, and create habitat corridors that improve ecological connectivity between development sites and existing blue/green spaces.
- Flood risk – the NPPF sets out the requirement for Local Plans to apply the flood risk sequential test to the selection of growth areas and sites.
- Climate change – we are encouraging all Local Authorities to identify climate change as an overall Development Plan priority and to align policies with national net zero targets and mitigation policies. There is a statutory duty on LPAs to include policies in their Local Plans designed to tackle climate change and its impacts.
- Renewable energy – we note the inclusion of climate change, and would welcome consideration of renewable energy provision. Renewable energy is an important part of the solution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and meeting future energy needs.

○ Agents of change – we note the ambition to attract business to the area. If industry is encouraged locally through the local plan, the EA has highlighted former NPPF paragraphs 193 and 200. Recommend planning policies ensure that appropriate assessment and mitigation can be carried out by the agent of change (i.e. residential allocations). Where any mitigation is not practical, we highlight the importance of providing a minimum distance buffer zone between land uses to protect neighbours from amenity impacts associated with waste activities (noise and vibration, dust, odour, litter, flies etc) and reduce tensions between conflicting land uses.
• Worcestershire County Council – recommend including the word “enhancing” under bullet point 2 of the environment priority.
• Worcestershire County Council – the environment priority would benefit from the recognition that the enhancement of the Borough’s existing network of landscape features and the creation of new habitat links are at the core of achieving enhancements to biodiversity.
• Worcestershire County Council – the Local Plan should promote age-friendly communities through accessible and adaptable housing, specialist accommodation, extra care housing and lifetime neighbourhood principles. New development should be located close to services, healthcare, public transport and community facilities to support independent living and reduce social isolation.
• Worcestershire County Council – the health priority should be expanded beyond access to green space and community facilities. The Plan should require healthy place-making principles that promote physical activity, mental wellbeing and social inclusion through walkable neighbourhoods, active travel routes, access to open space and community infrastructure. Health inequalities should also be considered as part of future growth and development.
• Worcestershire County Council – whilst our responsibilities to prepare a Minerals and Waste Local Plan are separate to those for Redditch to prepare a Local Plan, the need to safeguard existing waste management sites, mineral resources and mineral infrastructure in the Borough will need to be considered during the development of the Redditch Local Plan and should be recognised in the economic and environmental priorities for the area.
• Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council – DMBC agree that sustainable growth (including housing and employment) should be the priority of the plan. This should also include the potential contribution that sites may make towards addressing unmet housing and employment needs arising from neighbouring authorities.
• NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB – the health priority is currently framed solely around promoting healthier lifestyles through access to green space and community facilities. The ICB strongly supports healthy place-making but considers this framing incomplete: it addresses the determinants of health without addressing the capacity of healthcare services themselves. Suggestion: “Ensuring that primary and community healthcare infrastructure has sufficient capacity to serve the existing population and planned growth, with new development contributing towards the expansion, reconfiguration or provision of healthcare premises where a capacity impact is identified.”
• Historic England – ‘Conserving and promoting historic assets and local heritage...’ is identified in the priority for the historic environment. Is an historic asset the same as a heritage asset? How would the emerging Plan manage impacts on significance of heritage assets through changes within their setting? Does historic asset include designated and non-designated heritage assets? How is local heritage different to those?

• Suggestion to revise the priority: “Conserving and enhancing the historic environment, heritage assets and their setting, including Redditch’s needlemaking heritage and post-war identity where appropriate”. Please note we have removed ‘promote’ as we have separate advice on tourism aspects.
• Historic England – tourism appears to be included with the historic environment when each could be individual priorities. Tourism aligns with many Local Plan topics as a standalone subject as does heritage. Recommend tourism is considered in the economy priority instead.
• Historic England – note that climate change does not appear in the revised list of priorities and challenges set out in Section 3.4 New Priorities and Challenges compared to the previous Issues and Options. Considers this is an omission.
• Tetlow King Planning obo West Midlands Housing Association Planning Consortium – the Local Plan should seek to maximise delivery of affordable housing through both site allocations and development management policies, ensuring that future housing growth contributes towards meeting identified local needs and improving housing affordability for current and future residents.
On behalf of developers and landowners responses
• Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey – RBC should meet its housing needs in full within its own administrative area first, including utilising the Green Belt. The priority should be amended to include reference to undertaking a review of the Green Belt to meet the housing needs in full.
• Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey – Redditch should help contribute to meeting the unmet housing needs within the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area.
• Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey – delivery of housing should be considered in line with the quantum and location of employment land to be proposed.
• Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey – agree that new development should be adequately served by new or upgraded infrastructure. The requirements to deliver infrastructure should not present an impediment to the delivery of new housing and be planned so that it delivers to meet the needs of new residents.
• Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey – welcome the intention to achieve high quality design through new housing development although have reservations about the application of design coding to the delivery of new housing. Agreeing design codes on individual smaller sites can delay sites coming forward.
• Savills obo Miller Homes Limited, Bellway Homes Limited / Woolsington One Limited and Persimmon Homes – greater emphasis on the delivery of housing and a key priority should be to “meet Redditch’s housing need in full” as well as considering whether a contribution to the unmet needs of the GBBCHMA.
• Savills obo Miller Homes Limited, Bellway Homes Limited / Woolsington One Limited and Persimmon Homes – the Standard Method for the calculation of local housing need is only the ‘starting point’ for identifying the housing requirement for the plan. RBC should consider planning for a higher requirement in order to meet affordable housing needs and stimulate economic growth, for example.
• Savills obo Miller Homes Limited, Bellway Homes Limited / Woolsington One Limited and Persimmon Homes – the priorities and challenges under ‘economy’ are restricted to investment in businesses and alignment to regional economic strategies; consider that there should also be greater emphasis on recognising the economic benefits brought by housing delivery.
• Tetra Tech obo Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land – the reference to “potential cross-boundary allocations” is welcomed but does not reflect the reality that cross-boundary supply has been a long-standing feature of Redditch’s plan making. The adopted BORLP already planned to meet the majority of the Borough’s identified housing need on sites in Bromsgrove District – recognising

the constrained nature of the Redditch boundary. That constraint has since intensified with the December 2024 Standard Method uplift to 486 dpa and the current 3.06-year land supply position. Cross-boundary working should therefore be positioned as a headline strategic priority.
• Ridge and Partners LLP obo HarperCrewe – based on the previous plan's strategy to address these challenges, it is considered that housing delivery and meeting housing need needs to be reflected as a stronger priority.
• Ridge and Partners LLP obo HarperCrewe – overplays the role that brownfield land in the Borough is likely to have in addressing housing need as there is limited brownfield opportunities – the brownfield land register, last dated 2021, identifies only 14 sites with an indicative capacity of only 399 dwellings, many of the sites are labelled as already under construction or even complete.
• Ridge and Partners LLP obo HarperCrewe – Future LHN as assessed through the new standard method is considerably higher than has been planned for or delivered in the borough previously. PDL opportunities are very limited and will likely play only a minor role in addressing the required housing growth. The Local Plan must identify sufficient opportunities to accommodate growth throughout the plan period in other ways.
• Ridge and Partners LLP obo HarperCrewe – a stronger priority should be ensuring that infrastructure delivery keeps pace and is at a level that facilitates the significant housing growth required. Housing growth and infrastructure delivery should be planned together as opposed to being separate priorities, which is why it is considered that a specific priority relating to infrastructure led growth, or amending the infrastructure priority within the plan to tie it to supporting housing growth explicitly.

RBC's response:

- 3.2.2 Understanding the priorities and challenges is one of the first key steps in the production of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan so that the Local Plan can address the right matters, as appropriate. It is noted that almost two-thirds of respondents agree with the priorities and challenges set out which were shaped by responses to the issues identified in the previous Issues and Options consultation last summer.
- 3.2.3 A range of priorities and challenges have been identified by different groups, most of which the Local Plan can address, for example exploring how the Borough's housing need is met; economic growth; environmental protection; climate change; biodiversity; high quality design; sports, recreation and open space; the historic environment; and infrastructure provision. The Council will consider the new and suggested amendments to the identified priorities during the preparation of the Local Plan. Ultimately, the priorities will shape the vision for the Local Plan; the aims and objectives; the spatial strategy; allocated sites; and local policies. These matters will be the focus of future consultations.

3.3 Vision and objectives – Questions 2a, 2b, 3a and 3b

- 3.3.1 The vision and objectives section of the scoping document (section 4) explored what a local plan vision is; feedback on the comments received from the Issues and Options consultation relating to the emerging vision; and suggested potential aims and objectives for feedback covering a wide range of matters within the remit of the Local Plan. The tables below provide a summary of matters raised and underneath RBC's response to questions 2a, 2b, 3a and 3b.

Question 2a: Is our vision from the Issues and Options consultation still applicable to Redditch Borough? Yes / No / Unsure

Responses: 23

- Yes: 70%
- No: 17%
- Unsure: 13%

Question 2b: What would you change or add to the vision? Please explain your answer.

Responses: 20

Summary of matters raised

Public responses

- What does 'greener' mean? Does it mean maintaining the green spaces in the Borough?
- The vision should place greater emphasis on protecting what makes Redditch attractive.
- Would like Redditch to become one of the best places in Worcestershire to run a business, a town with a thriving independent economy, strong manufacturing sector.
- The countryside, Green Belt and local character are protected for future generations.
- Infrastructure is delivered before development rather than afterwards.
- The town centre is revitalised through investment and business confidence rather than over-reliance on residential development.
- Growth should be sustainable and proportionate rather than driven solely by housing targets.
- With Local Government Reorganisation the vision should state that Redditch will remain distinct from the West Midlands conurbation and focus on keeping Redditch a green, self-contained Worcestershire town rather than allowing it to be treated as an overspill area for neighbouring city regions.
- In light of LGR, add connecting with/embracing/focusing/positively contributing to a North Worcestershire housing market / local economy / cultural and leisure offer.
- Include a dedicated objective to actively resist urban sprawl, protect our surrounding Green Belt buffers, and enhance network of public rights of way.
- Focus more of making the best use of existing assets not demolishing buildings then paying to rebuild them. Scrap plans to waste more money on the town centre which is too large for the needs of the town, refocus investment on developing local hubs/centres to build community spirit.
- Some areas in the vision the Council do not have the power to change e.g. health care services, like doctors & dentists. The NHS has already said that Redditch does not need any more provision.

Consultation bodies and other stakeholders responses

- Community Campaigner – traditional architectural design codes/methods must be a forefront focus and the protection of existing historical buildings (including non-designated heritage assets and unclassified historic buildings).
- Sport England – supports the overall vision, however, recommends strengthening the vision through a more explicit commitment to creating an active and healthy borough. The vision also does not specifically recognise the

role that sport, recreation and physical activity play in delivering healthier communities and reducing health inequalities.
• Sport England – suggests the vision could be amended to include wording such as “Redditch will be an active, healthy and inclusive Borough where people of all ages and abilities have access to high-quality sport, recreation, leisure, open space and active travel opportunities that support physical and mental wellbeing.”
• North Worcestershire Water Management – further clarification and inclusion of watercourses as a green space in Redditch should be added. Similarly, Redditch should be resilient to existing flood risk, along with future flood risk influenced by climate change.
• Natural England – Your plan’s vision and emerging development strategy should address impacts on and opportunities for the natural environment and set out the environmental ambition for the plan area. It is critical that the vision of your local plan is underpinned by climate and biodiversity resilience, nature recovery, access to green space and linking corridors alongside transport mobility strategies, and peoples access to nature for health and wellbeing.
• Natural England – Your plan should include the natural environment in its long-term vision and objectives for the plan area. These should be based on local characteristics and circumstances and include locally specific goals for nature recovery and enhancement, supported by policies and proposals in the plan.
• Natural England – Your plan should take a strategic approach to the protection and enhancement of the natural environment, including providing a net gain for biodiversity, considering opportunities to enhance and improve connectivity. Where relevant there should be linkages with the Biodiversity Action Plan, Local Nature Partnership, National Park/Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans, Rights of Way Improvement Plans and Green Infrastructure Strategies, Nature Recovery Network.
• Worcestershire County Council – when discussing aspirations in section 4.1.1 (first bullet point) and identified emerging vision for the Local Plan (para 4.2.1) we suggest removing the word “decent” and replace with “Redditch will have better designed more energy efficient homes...” The sentence as it stands is awkward in the context of the rest of the vision statement.
• Worcestershire County Council – suggest changing “Redditch will draw upon its post-war heritage” to “Redditch will draw upon its historic landscape and post-war heritage to adapt...” The post-war development of Redditch is distinctive but is not the whole story of the town and its wider borough. The landscape character of the town and countryside is well developed and offers a strong framework to support creative adaptations.
• Worcestershire County Council – suggest adding the word “environment” to the first sentence ‘Redditch to become a greener, safer place with pride in its heritage and environment’. We would also suggest green infrastructure/natural environment, is changed to an enhanced environment and green infrastructure to avoid repetition of energy efficient.
• Worcestershire County Council – suggest a greater emphasis on healthy communities and suggest the following wording “Redditch will be a healthy, inclusive and age-friendly Borough where residents can access homes, services, employment, healthcare, green spaces and community facilities through safe and sustainable travel choices.”
• NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB – agree with respondents to the I&Os consultation support for infrastructure-led approach to growth with improvements to local services; and asks that “local services” is understood to include healthcare.
• NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB – consideration could be given to referencing health and wellbeing explicitly within the vision text, given the Plan

period to 2044 will coincide with continued growth in the Borough's older population and in the prevalence of long-term conditions.
National Highways – policy needs to be clear that growth occurs in locations that are sustainable and that any associated transport infrastructure supports active and sustainable travel as the primary mode choice.
On behalf of developers and landowners responses
Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey – reference to Redditch having more decent, energy efficient homes is vague and does not convey a clear vision of what is required. Instead, TW would suggest that the vision refers to Redditch having more homes, of the right sizes, tenures that are energy efficient and located in the right place.
Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey – in respect of employment space, TW welcome the intention to allow businesses to thrive and grow although the focus on creating highly skilled jobs, whilst welcome, detracts from the delivery of a range of different types of jobs that would be open to people of all ages with different skills levels and ambitions.
- Savills obo Miller Homes Limited, Bellway Homes Limited / Woolsington One Limited and Persimmon Homes – considered that some elements of the vision are vague, for instance, 'decent homes' and 'energy efficient homes' should be clearly defined if included in the vision. - There is too much emphasis on heritage and energy standards, and it lacks an overall focus on housing delivery and growth. Given the significant housing need of the Borough, it is considered that a balanced approach to the protection of heritage, nature and town landscapes should be taken which ensures compliance with key sections of the Framework which seek to protect such assets.
- Tetra Tech obo Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land – the current vision is weighted towards environmental, heritage and design themes. Whilst those themes are supported, the vision does not fully reflect the scale of the social and economic challenges facing the Borough, particularly housing, despite these forming a central part of the priorities. If the vision is to be a direct response to the issues, an explicit housing-delivery theme should be built in from the outset. - The vision should also positively frame the reality that, given the Borough's significant housing need, the Council should consider opportunities to meet development needs both within and, where appropriate, beyond its administrative boundaries.
Tetra Tech obo Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land – encourage the Council to consider a longer plan period of up to 20 years. In this context, the Council may wish to look to a 20-year period from Gateway 1 which would build in some time to reach adoption. This may provide further resilience from the outset.
Ridge and Partners LLP obo HarperCrewe – the vision should be amended to place greater emphasis on positively planning for growth, meeting housing needs and delivering affordable housing.

RBC's response:

- 3.3.2 The vision will describe how Redditch Borough should grow, change and what it will look like by the end of the Local Plan period, and it has a role in addressing the priorities and challenges identified. The vision sets the foundation for the Local Plan's aims and objectives; strategy; site allocations; and policies.
- 3.3.3 Although 70% of respondents agree that our vision from the Issues and Options consultation is still applicable, the vision can still be improved using the feedback

received. A proposed vision will be consulted on at the next local plan content and evidence consultation.

Question 3a: Do you agree with the proposed aims and objectives? Yes / No / Unsure

Responses: 23

- Yes: 65%
- No: 26%
- Unsure: 9%

Question 3b: Are there any aims and objectives that you would change or add? Please explain your answer.

Responses: 21

Summary of matters raised

Public responses

- Protect the Green Belt except in genuinely exceptional circumstances.
- Brownfield-first development as an absolute principle. Brownfield sites are available within the town centre but have not been developed. The Council should look to building council houses on them.
- Support the expansion of existing businesses and attract higher-skilled employment.
- Reduce unnecessary planning bureaucracy for commercial investment.
- Ensure infrastructure – including roads, GP surgeries, schools, drainage and parking – is delivered before major development.
- Encourage high-quality architecture that reflects Redditch's character rather than standardised housing estates.
- Objective to formally protect all established public rights of way, ancient woodlands, and natural corridors from fragmentation.
- Given Local Government Reorganisation, the economic and spatial objectives must explicitly rule out the sacrifice of designated Green Belt land to meet cross-boundary housing targets, ensuring our local growth remains sustainable and contained within existing urban footprints.
- Local residents should have their say on what happens on their doorstep. The plan is too vague and open to manipulation. Everyone wants a better town however without any real specifics you are asking people to vote on a dream.
- Remove provision for additional housing.
- In light of LGR, add connecting with/embracing/focusing/positively contributing to a North Worcestershire housing market / local economy / cultural and leisure offer.

Consultation bodies and other stakeholders responses

- Community Campaigner – traditional architectural design codes/methods for new developments, including placemaking principles, greenery, authentic period-style cast iron street furniture, free car parking to stimulate economic activity, support supply chains of physical skills and raw materials, ban on demolition of buildings constructed prior to 1950.
- Sport England – additional objective relating to active communities – “Ensure that all residents have access to high-quality sport, recreation and physical activity opportunities through the protection, enhancement and provision of playing fields, sports facilities, open spaces and active travel networks.”

• Sport England – Strengthen "Provide the infrastructure required to support Redditch and its future growth" Amend to include: "...including transport, education, healthcare, community facilities, sport and recreation infrastructure." This recognises that sports facilities are essential social infrastructure required to support planned growth.
• Sport England – Strengthen "Promote a greener, more environmentally resilient Redditch" Add reference to: "Protecting and enhancing parks, playing fields, green infrastructure and recreational spaces that support biodiversity, climate resilience and health outcomes."
• Sport England – "Strengthen "Improve sustainability and connectivity" Add: "Creating connected walking, wheeling and cycling networks that provide safe access to schools, employment areas, local centres, parks and sports facilities."
• Sport England – "Strengthen "Create healthy, safe and inclusive communities" Add: "Improving opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity and reducing health inequalities through the design of places and provision of community infrastructure."
• Sport England – suggested measurable outcomes including: ○ Percentage of residents living within walking distance of accessible open space and sports facilities. ○ Amount of playing field and recreational land protected and enhanced. ○ Delivery of new sport and recreation facilities alongside development. ○ Increase in active travel journeys. ○ Improvements in physical activity participation rates and reductions in inactivity levels.
• North Worcestershire Water Management – inclusion of watercourses as part of Redditch's green spaces.
• Natural England – the 'Promote a Greener, more environmentally resilient Redditch' objective should make reference to the Worcestershire LNRS.
• Natural England – the 'Improve sustainability and connectivity' objective should include reference to promoting active travel.
• Environment Agency – improvements to the potential aims and objectives: ○ Infrastructure and utilities, especially water availability and foul drainage should be brought forward in advance of development. ○ Regarding brownfield development, ensure that a potentially contaminated site is deliverable and that the allocation numbers can be achieved. ○ Greener and more environmentally resilient, including green corridors could refer to the LNRS as an important tool in understanding areas of opportunity. ○ Agree that appropriate housing should be delivered in appropriate areas, for example, not within areas of increased fluvial flood risk (refer to sequential test). ○ Delivering high quality, sustainable designs could seek to include water efficiency / water recycling measures as well as energy efficiency.
• Worcestershire County Council – there is a lack of clear reference to heritage, safeguarding of heritage assets and the enhancement of their setting. There's no reference to the conservation, enhancement and promotion of the town's heritage (despite its referenced in priorities and vision as a key opportunity). • Suggested objective – support growth that respects, conserves and enhances the historic environment, recognising its cultural, social and economic value to current and future generations.
• Worcestershire County Council – While it is implied there should be a more explicit reference to the distinctive landscape character of Redditch, given the range of functions that it supports and are listed in the aims and objectives.

The value of landscape is wide and particularly important in supporting ecosystem services, the provision of healthy and attractive places (this should not be limited to POS), provides the setting of heritage assets and older settlements, in addition to its integrated place within Redditch town. The Plan will need to support delivery of LNRS and other conservation measures to align the aims and objectives with both the vision & wider environmental trends.
- Worcestershire County Council – suggested additional objectives: - Promote Age-Friendly Communities – ensure new development supports people to live independently throughout all stages of life through accessible homes, specialist accommodation where required, walkable neighbourhoods and access to healthcare, public transport and community facilities. - Reduce Health Inequalities – use planning policies to improve access to green infrastructure, sport, recreation, healthcare and community facilities, particularly in areas experiencing deprivation and poorer health outcomes.
NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB – recommends that one measurable outcome relates to healthcare infrastructure, for example, the proportion of residential allocations supported by secured healthcare contributions, so that the alignment of growth and health infrastructure can be monitored transparently over the Plan period.
Historic England – disappointing that the suggested objectives do not recognise the opportunities for the historic environment to contribute to the delivery of the new Plan's priorities.
Tetlow King Planning obo West Midlands Housing Association Planning Consortium – affordability is referenced within the proposed objective, the scale of affordable housing need in Redditch warrants a stronger and more explicit commitment within the Local Plan's objectives. The Council has identified shortages in affordable housing as a key challenge for the Borough and this should be reflected throughout the Plan's strategic objectives and any housing related future policies.
Tetlow King Planning obo West Midlands Housing Association Planning Consortium – welcome an objective focused on development deliverability and viability. This should recognise the need to balance affordable housing delivery, infrastructure provision, environmental requirements and design standards to ensure planned growth can be successfully brought forward over plan period.
On behalf of developers and landowners responses
Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey – concerned by the use of the word “phase” in relation to the delivery of new development. TW would wish to avoid a situation where the phasing of new development was such that it would prevent new development coming forward in a timely manner. TW fully acknowledge the need to deliver infrastructure that is aligned with the development but consider that this could be achieved through appropriately worded policies, CIL and Section 106 agreements.
Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey – in respect of the prioritising brownfield first and urban regeneration, this is a matter of principle that all new developments would need to adhere to in any case. In light of the NPPF's proposed presumption in favour of development on previously developed sites within urban areas, TW query whether this objective is necessary.
Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey – TW welcome the opportunity to strengthen public transport and deliver safe and attractive walking and cycling networks but consider that the reference to encouraging active travel should also be added to this objective.

Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey – welcome the intention to deliver the right mix of homes with a strong focus on affordability and provision for different life stages. Suggest that a reference to homes being delivered in the right location, that are accessible to services and facilities should be added to the objective.
Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey – In relation to the spatial strategy, TW contend that the Council should seek to meet all of its housing needs within its own administrative area first before looking to adjoining neighbours to meet any unmet need that cannot be accommodated within Redditch. Any needs that are to be met in adjoining authorities should if at all possible be met on sites that adjoin Redditch town rather than them being remote from it.
Tetra Tech obo Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land – whilst the brownfield-first aim is compliant with national policy, it does not explicitly follow that green belt release should be undertaken in accordance with paragraphs 143, 148 and 155 of the NPPF, prioritising previously developed land, then grey belt, and then other green belt where release is necessary. Given the Borough's tightly drawn boundary, the substantial LHN uplift (486 dpa) and the current 3.06-year housing land supply position, the aim should be reframed to make this sequential logic explicit.
Tetra Tech obo Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land – suggest the addition of a new aim reflecting the Borough's long-established reliance on cross-boundary supply, and the shared Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area geography with Stratford-on-Avon District: "Work with adjoining authorities to secure cross-boundary allocations where these represent the most sustainable option for accommodating Redditch's growth".
Ridge and Partners LLP obo HarperCrewe – whilst there is reference to “delivering affordable and appropriate housing”, it does not place sufficient emphasis on the importance of delivering housing growth and identifying land to meet future development need.
Ridge and Partners LLP obo HarperCrewe – the vision and associated potential aims and objectives therefore have a heavy emphasis on environmental quality, community wellbeing and the protection of assets yet very limited reference to accommodating future housing needs.
Ridge and Partners LLP obo HarperCrewe – the focus on PDL is disproportionate to the actual opportunity to deliver housing growth on these sites in the borough.
Ridge and Partners LLP obo HarperCrewe – given the scale of housing growth that the district is likely to have to accommodate, infrastructure provision will be critical in determining where development can be delivered sustainably. The emerging plan should recognise that investment in education, community facilities and other infrastructure can increase the capacity of settlements to accommodate additional growth and, in some instances, help unlock sustainable development opportunities that might otherwise been constrained.

RBC's response:

3.3.4 The Government's Local Plan guidance outlines that the vision statement should include and be split into clear and focussed paragraphs based on specific aims and objectives. These aims and objectives should be aspirational underpinned by a realistic appreciation of what the Local Plan's policies can genuinely shape and deliver. No more than 10 measurable outcomes will be identified to help monitor progress towards meeting the vision statement.

3.3.5 It is understood that almost two-thirds of respondents agree with the proposed aims and objectives. Respondents highlighted a wide range of aims and objectives, some of which are already covered by the proposed aims and objectives. New objectives

and amendments were identified and will be considered as we develop the aims and objectives to be consulted on at the next local plan content and evidence consultation.

3.4 Local Plan topic-based content – Questions 4a, 4b, 5a and 5b

- 3.4.1 The local plan topic-based content section of the scoping document (section 5) explored current and emerging (at the time of the scoping consultation, the August 2026 version of the NPPF was not published) national policy in the NPPF. The section sought feedback on the indicative content of the new-style Borough of Redditch Local Plan and the potential topic-based policies the Local Plan could contain. The tables below provide a summary of matters raised and underneath RBC's response to questions 4a, 4b, 5a and 5b.

Question 4a: Do you agree with the indicative content of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan? Yes / No / Unsure

Responses: 24

- Yes: 79%
- No: 13%
- Unsure: 8%

Question 4b: Is there any content you would change or add? Please explain your answer.

Responses: 20

Summary of matters raised

Public responses

- Planning process needs to be easier.
- Should include strong policies regarding:
 - Green Belt protection.
 - Protection of agricultural land.
 - Town centre business incentives.
 - Support for independent retailers.
 - Protection of employment land from unnecessary conversion to housing.
 - Parking standards that recognise the reality of modern family and business life.
 - Infrastructure delivery tied directly to new development.
- Policy specifically addressing cross-boundary strategic pressures. With the transition to a new North Worcestershire Council, the content needs explicit policies that protect existing Green Belt boundaries from being reallocated to absorb external urban housing shortfalls.
- Policy addressing green infrastructure networks. The environment section must include enforceable content on the preservation, mapping, and enhancement of all public rights of way and wildlife corridors to ensure they cannot be fragmented by streamlined planning processes.
- Provide the detail at the consultation stage, how can anyone support a proposal when it contains no detail. Without a clear picture of what would happen the consultation is meaningless, leaving the council free to do whatever it likes without the agreement of residents.

Consultation bodies and other stakeholders responses
Community Campaigner – traditional architectural design codes/methods for new developments, including placemaking principles, greenery, authentic period-style cast iron street furniture, free car parking to stimulate economic activity, support supply chains of physical skills and raw materials, ban on demolition of buildings constructed prior to 1950.
Sport England – recommends that the Local Plan explicitly identifies sport, recreation, physical activity and active design as key components of infrastructure planning and healthy place-making.
Sport England – recommends that the Local Plan includes measurable outcomes relating to health and physical activity, such as improving access to sports facilities, open space and active travel opportunities. This would align with the proposed vision, infrastructure-led growth agenda and objective of creating healthy and inclusive communities
Environment Agency – the spatial strategy should be informed by a robust evidence base. Particular reference should be made to flood risk, provision of infrastructure (water supply and foul drainage) and consideration of climate change.
- Worcestershire County Council: - Under “Environment” add landscape. It is important to recognise that landscape is a product of both natural and cultural processes and therefore it is not accurate to group it under “natural environment.” - Age-friendly communities and specialist accommodation for older people. - Accessible and adaptable housing standards. - Health inequalities and access to healthcare infrastructure. - Electric vehicle charging infrastructure
NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB – asks that healthcare is expressly identified within infrastructure provision and contributions to support the delivery of the Local Plan, and that the supporting Infrastructure Delivery Plan identifies primary and community healthcare requirements arising from the growth strategy and the delivery mechanism for each.
Historic England – recommend content in respect of the historic environment, heritage assets and their setting but acknowledges the approach set out and that content will become clearer once the NPPF has been issued.
Tetlow King Planning obo West Midlands Housing Association Planning Consortium – housing is listed in the draft framework; it is assumed that this includes the provision of affordable housing.
On behalf of developers and landowners responses
Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey – we would hazard against duplication about the spatial strategy and land allocations overlapping with site allocation policies. Ideally, they would only need to be a single set of allocations with associated policies that would set out what was required rather than duplicating these within the Local Plan.
Savills obo Miller Homes Limited, Bellway Homes Limited / Woolsington One Limited and Persimmon Homes – housing should have greater emphasis in the emerging Local Plan. A key focus of the Local Plan should be to ensure sufficient homes are provided to meet the Council’s objectively assessed needs in order to ensure that the plan is positively prepared in line with the requirements of the NPPF paragraph 36(a). It is also considered that the affordable need should be assessed and whether there is a need to increase the housing requirement to account for this.
Tetra Tech obo Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land – the Spatial Strategy should be prepared on a functional geography basis, reflecting that Redditch's

development needs are unlikely to be met solely within the administrative boundary.
Tetra Tech obo Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land – site allocations should include, where justified, cross-boundary sites identified through joint working with Stratford-on-Avon District Council.
Tetra Tech obo Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land – given the functional relationship between cross-boundary sites and the Redditch urban area, the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan should account for the population and service demand associated with cross-boundary developments that are directly served by Redditch's services, schools, healthcare, employment and retail offer. Planned strategic growth facilitated through an Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Whole Plan Viability Assessment can provide both patronage and support a sustainable cross-boundary growth strategy.
Tetra Tech obo Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land – the Local Plan should acknowledge that Green Belt release will be necessary to meet the Borough's identified housing need, with grey belt sites positioned as the first source of supply beyond previously developed land, consistent with the current NPPF.
Ridge and Partners LLP obo HarperCrewe – a clear and effective spatial strategy with policies for the amount of housing development and an assessment of strategic growth options will be vital components. Given the constraints affecting the Borough, this is likely to require consideration of locations beyond the existing urban area, including sustainable locations within the Green Belt and Open Countryside.

RBC's response:

- 3.4.2 Question 4b was sometimes misunderstood with potential policies the Local Plan could include e.g. parking standards (which is the focus of questions 5a and b), rather than the content/structure of the Local Plan.
- 3.4.3 The content of local plans to be produced under the new plan-making system is clearer now that the August 2026 NPPF has been published, which was only in a draft form at the time of the scoping consultation. The consultation responses received and the publication of the August 2026 NPPF will continue to be reviewed and will be reflected in the next local plan content and evidence consultation.

Question 5a: Do you agree with the topic-based policies that the Borough of Redditch Local Plan could contain? Yes / No / Unsure

Responses: 24

- Yes: 75%
- No: 8%
- Unsure: 17%

Question 5b: Are there any topic-based policies that you would change or add? Please explain your answer.

Responses: 21

Summary of matters raised

Public responses

- Add policies covering:
 - Permanent protection of important countryside and landscape views.

○ Greater support for advanced manufacturing and skilled employment. ○ Protection of existing industrial estates. ○ Greater flexibility for rural businesses. ○ Strong design standards. ○ Higher parking standards and enforcement. ○ Better management of delivery and servicing within the town centre. ○ Protection of local shopping centres from becoming dominated by vacant units or unsuitable uses.
● Contain a specific topic-based policy on 'Green Belt Integrity and Border Buffers'. This policy must explicitly state that Redditch will not release Green Belt land or alter boundaries to accommodate the unmet housing needs of neighbouring urban areas outside Worcestershire.
● There should be a robust 'Green Infrastructure and Accessibility' policy that legally protects all existing public rights of way, leisure routes, and natural spaces from being encroached upon by new developments, ensuring our town's distinct green character is preserved.
● Some of the areas highlighted do not fall under the remit of Redditch Borough Council but under the County Council.
Consultation bodies and other stakeholders responses
● Community Campaigner – key objective is traditional architecture.
● Sport England – inclusion of specific policies addressing the following matters: ○ Protection and Enhancement of Sports Facilities – a policy should seek to protect existing sports facilities, playing fields, playing pitches and recreational land from loss unless robust evidence demonstrates they are surplus to requirements or suitable replacement provision at least equivalent quantity and quality is secured. ○ Provision of Sport and Recreation Infrastructure – a policy should require new development to contribute towards the provision, improvement and long-term maintenance of sport and recreation facilities where demand is generated by development. Sport England note the NPPF consultation document advocates the use of standards for open space and playing field land, if this is introduced Sport England would advocate local standards based on an up-to-date Playing Pitch Strategy as opposed to the utilisation of national standards. ○ Active Design and Healthy Communities – a policy should support the application of Active Design principles to ensure development: • Encourages everyday physical activity. • Creates attractive and safe walking, wheeling and cycling environments. • Integrates homes with schools, employment areas, local centres, open spaces and sports facilities. • Reduces reliance on private car travel.
● North Worcestershire Water Management – much of the information in the 2017 Local Plan should still be used, however the following information should be included on top of this: ○ There should be specific mention of a required watercourse buffer of between 5-10m from development. ○ The National Standards for SuDS (2025) should be referenced to summarise the national expectations for sustainable drainage. ○ The Local Plan should also include reference to the SuDS Design Guide (2018) created by Redditch Borough Council in partner with various district councils. ○ While the current local plan mentions Flood Zone models in terms of development, many sites that do experience significant flooding are not included on the national Flood Zone modelling due to catchment restrictions. As such, it would be necessary to specify that

developments containing, or within close proximity to, a watercourse must provide site-specific fluvial flood risk modelling. ○ To ensure the protection of Redditch's water quality in the natural environment, the Local Plan must mention the need for the SuDS treatment train, and the Simple Index Approach to mitigate pollution. ○ There must also be mention of ensuring developers stay within the greenfield runoff rates on sites, when designing drainage systems.
• Natural England – would like to see the inclusion of strategic policies on: ○ Geodiversity and Biodiversity ○ Designated sites ○ Biodiversity Net Gain ○ Green and Blue Infrastructure ○ Local Nature Recovery Strategy ○ Water Quality and Resources and Flood Risk Management ○ Protecting Best and Most Versatile Land ○ Protected Landscapes ○ Connecting People with Nature ○ Health and Wellbeing
• National Grid Electricity Transmission – NGET understand the need for allocating land for housing and employment and support such development. However, where proposed sites interact directly with, or border an NGET asset, there is a requirement for such assets to be considered within any future policy regarding the sites. NGET do not seek to prevent development of sites which interact with assts, however, a considered and proactive approach to proposed allocations which interact with NGET assets will assist in mitigating against any potential issues that could arise from development within close proximity of such assets.
• Environment Agency – understand the approach and the areas highlighted, specifically flood risk, water (environment), air quality, climate change and site allocations. Further evidence will likely be required to support these chapters. You could consider adding renewable energy into the list.
• Worcestershire County Council – Landscape could be added as a specific thematic area. To embed it in Natural Environment and Historic Environment is valid to a point, but it risks being reductive given the multifunctional services that landscape supports that is expressed through landscape character.
• Worcestershire County Council – a policy requiring developments to support ageing well through accessible and adaptable homes, specialist accommodation, inclusive design, safe walking routes and access to services and facilities.
• Worcestershire County Council – a policy requiring major developments to demonstrate how they will support physical activity, mental wellbeing, social interaction, access to green infrastructure and healthy lifestyles.
• Worcestershire County Council – depending on the final decision-making policies in the NPPF when it is published, and any forthcoming updates to National Planning Policy for Waste, as well as how these issues will be addressed in the forthcoming Minerals and Waste Plan documents, it may be appropriate to include policy/ies referring to impacts from non-mineral and waste development on safeguarding mineral resources, mineral sites and supporting infrastructure, and waste management sites. • Although very limited in extent, there are some safeguarded terrace and glacial sand and gravel resources within the borough. There are also two supporting mineral infrastructure sites. There are a number of waste management sites within the borough.
• Worcestershire County Council – The site allocations process and future policy development should be informed by the consideration of how any safeguarded mineral resources, mineral sites and supporting infrastructure, and waste

management sites could be affected, and the need to apply the “agent of change” principle.
Worcestershire County Council – the development of the Redditch Local Plan could help to facilitate waste management development, which can often be an appropriate use on industrial estates. We would ask that that waste needs be recognised among other industrial and employment land requirements in calculating employment land allocation requirements.
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council – request that wider housing need including unmet needs in the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area (GBBCHMA) is considered when selecting the chosen spatial strategy and housing requirement.
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council – highlight the need to consider the accommodation requirements of Gypsy and Traveller communities and Travelling Showpeople. Emerging evidence indicates that accommodation shortfalls are arising across parts of the conurbation and in neighbouring authorities.
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council – advocates identifying employment land requirements, ensuring that sufficient land is allocated not only to meet Redditch’s own economic development needs but also the potential to support unmet employment land requirements arising from neighbouring Functional Economic Market Areas (FEMAs) where sustainable opportunities exist.
- NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB – recommends a locally specific policy covering: - Developer contributions towards healthcare. - Plan-led approach to healthcare mitigation – the Local Plan and its Infrastructure Delivery Plan should establish clearly that residential development which increases demand on primary and community healthcare will be expected to mitigate that impact through Section 106 contributions. - Health Impact Assessment – requirement for major development to be accompanied by a Health Impact Assessment. - Healthcare land and premises – policy support in principle for the provision, extension, reconfiguration or redevelopment of healthcare facilities; and provision, within any strategic scale allocation, for the assessment of whether on-site healthcare floorspace (or land for it) is justified by the cumulative capacity impact of that allocation together with committed development in the same practice catchments. - Housing mix and specialist housing – where policies promote older persons’, extra care or C2 accommodation, those policies should acknowledge the associated enhanced healthcare demand.
Historic England – recommend the inclusion of policies for the historic environment, heritage assets and their setting.
Tetlow King Planning obo West Midlands Housing Association Planning Consortium – the Local Plan should include a clear and comprehensive affordable housing strategy; including consideration of affordable housing need, tenure requirements, delivery mechanisms, rural and specialist affordable housing provision, and monitoring arrangements to assess delivery over the plan period.
On behalf of developers and landowners responses
Savills obo Miller Homes Limited, Bellway Homes Limited / Woolsington One Limited and Persimmon Homes – any policies in relation to housing size and tenure/ mix should be determined on a site-by-site basis, based upon the latest available evidence at the point of submission.
Savills obo Miller Homes Limited, Bellway Homes Limited / Woolsington One Limited and Persimmon Homes – housing requirement should be formulated

using the standard method as a minimum, however other factors such as unmet need from neighbouring authorities and affordable housing need should be factored in and the housing need increased accordingly.
Savills obo Miller Homes Limited, Bellway Homes Limited / Woolsington One Limited and Persimmon Homes – the environment and climate change theme is also considered to be important, although this should not go beyond Building Regulations based on a Ministerial Statement, titled ‘Planning – Local Energy Efficiency Standards Update’ produced on 13 December 2023. In addition to the above guidance, it is also likely that the Future Homes Standard will be implemented in advance of the emerging Local Plan being adopted.
Savills obo Miller Homes Limited, Bellway Homes Limited / Woolsington One Limited and Persimmon Homes – development should not be required to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain in excess of the statutory 10% requirement, as this often leads to significant viability challenges and can also result in an inefficient use of land as more land is required to be left undeveloped.
Savills obo Miller Homes Limited, Bellway Homes Limited / Woolsington One Limited and Persimmon Homes – greater emphasis on ‘Site allocation policies’, with particular guidance for strategic allocations. Any criteria included within the site allocation policies should however be agreed and discussed with the relevant developer to ensure what is included is appropriate and would not cause any deliverability issues.
- Tetra Tech obo Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land – subject to the final form of the NPPF, we encourage the Council to include the following locally specific policies: - Cross-boundary growth and cooperation. A dedicated policy setting out how sites at the edge of Redditch that lie within neighbouring administrative boundaries – but which share a functional relationship with the Borough – will be identified, assessed and, where justified, allocated. - Grey belt. A specific policy on grey belt land, reflecting the criteria at paragraphs 155–157 of the NPPF.
- Ridge and Partners LLP obo HarperCrewe – should contain a policy relating to Green Belt assessment and release where required to meet housing need. It is likely that housing growth requirements may require consideration of Green Belt land. In fact, where identified needs cannot be met, the NPPF mandates a review of Green Belt boundaries. - Given the challenges, an assessment of sustainable opportunities within the Green Belt will be vital in informing the strategic growth options of the plan and is a matter that needs greater recognition within the proposed scope of the plan

RBC’s response:

- 3.4.4 Three-quarters of respondents agree with the topic-based policies that the Borough of Redditch Local Plan could contain.
- 3.4.5 Local plans to be prepared under the new plan-making system will be substantively different to local plans adopted under the legacy plan-making system. New style local plans will be more concise and streamlined and will not include all of the wide array of policies typically found in historically adopted local plans. The role of national policy has changed.
- 3.4.6 The scoping document acknowledged that at the time of publication the draft NPPF published in December 2025 was not in its definitive final form and therefore the scope of the policies in the draft NPPF were uncertain. Now that the finalised version of the NPPF, published in August 2026, is available the Council will continue to fully

review the policies within the Framework. This will ensure the Local Plan is consistent with national policy, including not containing policies which duplicate, substantively restate or are inconsistent with the content of national decision-making policies, unless directed by other policies in the Framework, in accordance with policies PM6 and PM15. This will enable the Council to prepare necessary justified locally specific policies that are compliant with national policy.

- 3.4.7 Opportunities to provide comments on any locally specific policies and the content of the local plan will be available at the subsequent local plan content and evidence consultation stage, as well as during the proposed local plan consultation.

3.5 Local Plan evidence base – Questions 6a and 6b

- 3.5.1 The Local Plan evidence base section of the scoping document (section 6) explored the evidence base compiled to date, the evidence currently being prepared, and the evidence that may require updating or new evidence. Feedback was sought on the proposed evidence base and any additional evidence required. The tables below provide a summary of matters raised and underneath RBC's response to questions 6a and 6b.

Question 6a: Do you agree with the evidence base to support the Local Plan (table 2)? Yes / No / Unsure

Responses: 21

- Yes: 67%
- No: 24%
- Unsure: 9%

Question 6b: Is there any evidence you would change or add? Please explain your answer.

Responses: 23

Summary of matters raised

Public responses

- Ensure landscape sensitivity.
- What evidence nothing is there? As a community member who has provided evidence of at least one area I would be interested to know why some of those things haven't started yet?
- At least 1 estate has independent research on what it needs and has been voicing it for a long time and offering to continue to find the funding. Why is there no green spaces reports?
- The Council should also prepare evidence relating to:
 - Road congestion and junction capacity.
 - GP and NHS capacity.
 - School places.
 - Utility capacity (water, electricity and sewerage).
 - The cumulative effect of housing growth.
 - Commercial demand from existing Redditch businesses.
 - Retail leakage to neighbouring towns.
 - Parking demand across Redditch.

• The Local Plan should be evidence-led rather than target-led.
• The evidence base must be expanded to include studies that address the impending North Worcestershire Council reorganisation and the preservation of our natural spaces.
• An updated 'Green Belt Purposes Assessment' is required to specifically evaluate the role of Redditch's borders in preventing merging with the West Midlands conurbation.
• A comprehensive 'Green Infrastructure and Public Rights of Way Audit' must be added to formally map all nature trails and walking routes, ensuring their protection is based on complete data.
• A strategic study to assess how the structural shift to a North Worcestershire authority will impact our capacity to resist external housing targets.
• I find the evidence questionable, no involvement with a good number of residents. How can you provide evidence around a plans impact if you have not drawn up the plan yet.
Consultation bodies and other stakeholders responses
• Sport England – Indoor and Built Sports Facilities Assessment: ○ Whilst the evidence base includes an updated Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy, Sport England recommends the preparation or update an Indoor and Built Facilities Assessment in line with Sport England guidance. ○ This should assess the quantity, quality, accessibility and future needs for facilities such as: ▪ Sports halls; ▪ Swimming pools; ▪ Health and fitness facilities; ▪ Indoor tennis and other specialist sports facilities; ▪ Community sports facilities. ○ This evidence will help identify investment priorities and ensure that future development is supported by an appropriate range of sports infrastructure.
• Sport England – Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Evidence: ○ Sport England welcomes the inclusion of the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy and recommends that it is reviewed and updated to reflect: ▪ Population growth forecasts; ▪ Changes in supply and demand; ▪ Facility quality and accessibility; ▪ Future demand generated by housing growth.
• Sport England – Sports Facility Strategy: ○ The Council should consider preparing a wider Sports Facility Strategy which draws together the findings of both indoor and outdoor facility assessments and identifies: ▪ Current deficiencies; ▪ Future infrastructure requirements; ▪ Investment priorities; ▪ Opportunities for co-location and community sports hubs.
• Sport England – strongly supports preparation of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and recommends that it explicitly identifies: ○ Indoor and outdoor sports infrastructure needs; ○ Playing fields and recreation provision; ○ Funding requirements; ○ Potential developer contributions and delivery mechanisms required to support planned growth.

• Natural England – the strategy for allocating land should avoid protected sites and apply the biodiversity mitigation hierarchy in the NPPF; give great weight to conserving and enhancing designated landscapes; and avoid the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land. Site selection evidence base should include: ○ Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments, Landscape Sensitivity Assessments and Landscape Character Assessments. ○ Soil surveys and mapping (Agricultural Land Classification available on Magic maps) ○ ecological surveys, green infrastructure and biodiversity opportunity mapping. ○ Must also be informed by the Sustainability Appraisal, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment.
• Environment Agency – agree (and provided guidance) with the listed documents that are needed within their remit including the Sustainability Appraisal and SEA; Site Assessment and Selection Methodology; Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Levels 1&2; Infrastructure Delivery Plan; Water Cycle Study; Habitats Regulations Assessment; and Green Infrastructure, Ecology and Biodiversity Assessment.
• Environment Agency – concur that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) will be required. ○ The SEA themes should incorporate the ‘SEA topics’ suggested by Annex I(f) of the SEA Directive, including biodiversity, flood risk, climate change (incorporating mitigation and adaptation), soil and water quality/resources. ○ Climate change – must include policies designed to secure the development and use of land contributes to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change. The forthcoming Plan should seek to ensure that air, water and soil quality is improved and that the use of natural resources is sustainable, including water. ○ The SA should seek to identify and address potential negative effects on the water environment, including implications relating to wastewater.
• Worcestershire County Council – the County Historic Environment Record (HER) should be a key evidence base for the Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA).
• Worcestershire County Council – the County Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) evidence base is currently in the process of being updated with a new addition of urban areas being included. The County Historic Landscape Character (HLC) mapping adds time depth and a finer grain of assessment. Both LCA and HLC should be considered material in the preparation of the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment and Heritage Impact Assessment.
• Worcestershire County Council – additional evidence should be prepared to support future policies relating to health and wellbeing and ageing well.
• Worcestershire County Council – the plan should allow for appropriate waste management facilities to come forward. This can be enabled through allocating sites for a broad range of employment uses, and these needs should be considered in developing/updating the HEDNA.
• Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council – request that regional / sub-regional evidence bases e.g. the GBBCHMA Strategic Growth Study Refresh is fully considered.
• NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB – requests that it is engaged as a named stakeholder in the preparation of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and the Health Impact Assessment. We would also encourage engagement with Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, and Herefordshire and

Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust so that acute and community infrastructure, including the role of the Alexandra Hospital, is properly reflected.
NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB – asks to be consulted on the scope of the SEA.
Historic England – has published a document relating to site allocations in Local Plans which covers all types of allocation and sets out a site selection methodology in relation to heritage assets.
Tetlow King Planning obo West Midlands Housing Association Planning Consortium – alongside an updated assessment of affordable housing need, evidence should be prepared in respect of the need for accessible and adaptable housing, space standards, climate change requirements and open space, all of which can have significant implications on development viability.
Tetlow King Planning obo West Midlands Housing Association Planning Consortium – the production of an Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) would also be welcomed to provide additional guidance of how to apply future policies and obligations/requirements.
National Highways – are keen to engage with the Council on a number of documents, most notably the Strategic Transport Assessment and Infrastructure Delivery Plan, amongst other contributing documents.
On behalf of developers and landowners responses
Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey – the Local Plan is being prepared in advance of the Spatial Development Strategy (“SDS”). There will be no overriding strategic direction for the provision of new housing and employment until such time as the SDS is prepared and adopted. Notwithstanding the above, the new Local Plan will need to have regard to wider requirements for the delivery of housing and employment in meeting these needs both within Redditch but also on the wider sub-region basis that may include meeting the needs of other authorities within the same Housing Market Area. The current Framework still requires local authorities to work with their neighbours on cross boundary matters and whilst the duty to cooperate is no longer a legal test to comply with when preparing Local Plans this has not removed the need to work collaboratively when needed.
In light of the future requirements and the need to work cross boundary with other authorities in the same HMA to meet these needs, it is suggested that certain evidence-based documents are prepared with these wider objectives in mind e.g. the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (“HEDNA”), the Green Belt and Grey Belt Assessment, the Green Belt Exceptional Circumstances Paper, Housing Land Supply Evidence and the Strategic Transport Assessment. TW consider that looking at these on a wider geography than just the administrative area of Redditch could potentially have wider benefits in seeking to meet and deliver housing and employment needs through the north Worcestershire area going forward.
Savills obo Miller Homes Limited, Bellway Homes Limited / Woolsington One Limited and Persimmon Homes – evidence pertaining to housing need, Green Belt and Site Selection is considered to be particularly important and should be commenced as soon as possible.
Savills obo Miller Homes Limited, Bellway Homes Limited / Woolsington One Limited and Persimmon Homes – site specific evidence submitted to RBC by developers should be taken into consideration when drafting these documents to ensure the Plan is in accordance with NPPF paragraph 21.
Tetra Tech obo Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land – supports the commissioning of a Green Belt and Grey Belt Assessment and the preparation of a Sustainability Appraisal. However, to properly reflect the well-established need for cross-boundary supply, consider that the geographic scope of key evidence should

extend to settlements and land parcels outside the Redditch Borough boundary. The Green Belt and Grey Belt Assessment should be co-ordinated with the Green Belt Assessment published by Stratford-on-Avon District Council as part of the SWLP Regulation 19 document. A consistent, joint methodology across the two plan areas would avoid divergent conclusions on the same functional Green Belt parcels.
• Tetra Tech obo Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land – a Strategic Transport Assessment should be commissioned with modelled cross boundary development scenarios. It should be acknowledged that infrastructure improvements and transport assessment can assist in unlocking large scale grey belt sites.
• Tetra Tech obo Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land – Housing Land Supply Evidence should explicitly consider the potential contribution of cross-boundary sites to Redditch's five-year land supply and longer-term trajectory, recognising the precedent set by the adopted RLP4 (2017) in relying on cross boundary supply to meet identified need.
• Tetra Tech obo Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land – the SA should explicitly test cross-boundary spatial options and assess sites in adjoining authorities that adjoin the Redditch urban edge on a consistent methodology with sites within the Borough. The Council should recognise the functional relationship between the Redditch urban area and settlements/land immediately outside the Borough boundary, including Mappleborough Green, reflecting the shared HMA geography and the reality that some edge-of-Redditch locations in adjoining districts function as natural extensions of the Redditch urban area rather than as separate settlements.
• Tetra Tech obo Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land – consider preparing a Settlement Study or Growth Options Assessment. Such work should objectively consider the ability of settlements and edge-of-settlement locations to accommodate growth, taking account of factors including accessibility, sustainability credentials, infrastructure capacity, relationship to services and facilities, environmental constraints, and patterns of historic growth. A consistent methodology should be applied to locations both within and adjoining the Borough boundary to ensure that all reasonable growth options are properly assessed and compared.
• Ridge and Partners LLP obo HarperCrewe – it is vital to understand the relative contribution different parcels make to Green Belt purposes, noting the importance the NPPF places on identifying Grey Belt and the recognition that not all Green Belt sites perform the same strategic function.
• Ridge and Partners LLP obo HarperCrewe – the evidence base should be broad enough to allow the Council to properly assess alternative growth strategies capable of meeting the Borough's future housing need. Given the challenges, it is difficult to see how the Council can establish an appropriate spatial strategy unless a full range of growth options are considered including sites currently within the Green Belt, as now directed by the NPPF where needs cannot otherwise be met.
• Ridge and Partners LLP obo HarperCrewe – it is important that the HEDNA, Housing Land Supply evidence, Settlement Hierarchy Review and Site Assessment and Selection Methodology are prepared with sufficient scope to test a full range of growth options.

RBC's response:

- 3.5.2 Two-thirds of respondents agree with the evidence base documents proposed to support the production of the Local Plan. Some of the suggested additional evidence will be covered by identified evidence base documents, for example, assessment of

road congestion and junction capacity will form part of the Council's Strategic Transport Assessment.

- 3.5.3 The evidence base is fundamental to delivering a 'sound' and justified local plan. Suggested additional evidence base documents or matters to be included within already identified evidence base documents will be reviewed. Furthermore, as the Local Plan progresses, additional evidence may also need to be prepared or commissioned.

3.6 Consultation & engagement strategy – Questions 7a, 7b, 8a, 8b and 9

- 3.6.1 The consultation and engagement section of the scoping document (section 7) explored and welcomed feedback on the consultation principles proposed to guide future consultation methods. The tables below provide a summary of matters raised and underneath RBC's response to questions 7a, 7b, 8a, 8b and 9.

Question 7a: Do you agree with the consultation principles identified? Yes / No / Unsure
Responses: 19
• Yes: 74% • No: 16% • Unsure: 10%

Question 7b: What consultation principles would you change or add? Please explain your answer.
Responses: 14
<u>Summary of matters raised</u>
Public responses
• Suggest adding a principle of 'Technical Accessibility' – ensuring that for those with specialised knowledge or interest (e.g. energy, structural planning), there is a pathway to submit data-backed, technical feedback that is treated with the same weight as general feedback. • The officers are the best people to deal with the communities assets needs and their agenda of best for the town should be followed. Anyone interfering and not aiding this should be reprimanded. Paper consultation is a great idea but also be aware many community members are unable to read so an audible option for those and the blind would also be good. • The council webpages are hard work to navigate. • Videos are a good idea if there's a relatable knowledgeable worker on them explaining the idea and why. • Focus groups easily become insular and have their narrative controlled or feedback given easily twisted to fit a result already decided. They take up time people don't have working in the community and they have become a tick box exercise. When stakeholders become part of many of these they carry the narrative that isn't accurate for all. Stakeholders should be carefully chosen from proactive whole community focused stakeholders over those not willing to look at the wider community to ensure the best for all.

• The consultation should make greater efforts to engage: ○ independent businesses; ○ manufacturers; ○ town centre traders; ○ residents' associations; ○ parish councils; ○ young people who intend to remain in Redditch.
• Consultation responses should be published in a clear and transparent format showing how comments have influenced the final Local Plan.
• The consultation principles must be expanded to ensure they reach everyday working residents, rather than just those who have the spare time to attend formal meetings or navigate complex online portals. Do more to make residents aware of Local Plan consultations.
• Future consultation strategies must include proactive, plain-English outreach, specifically regarding high impact decisions like the 2028 council reorganisation and any proposed changes to our Green Belt boundaries.
• Relying heavily on digital-first methods risks shutting out a huge portion of the community.
• The council must actively meet residents, ensuring that major decisions about our town's layout are not left entirely to career politicians or restricted to boardroom discussions.
• I don't trust the council to carry out the wishes of the people of Redditch based on recent history they will just do their own thing.
• Email and ability to upload PDF documents online.
• Advertise on all noticeboards.
Consultation bodies and other stakeholders responses
• Worcestershire County Council – additional emphasis should be placed on engaging groups that are often under-represented/ seldom heard in plan-making, including older people, younger people, residents with disabilities and those experiencing health inequalities.
• Tetlow King Planning obo West Midlands Housing Association Planning Consortium – whilst digital engagement should form a central part of the consultation strategy, it is important that alternative methods of participation continue to be available e.g. ability to submit representations by email as well as on a consultation platform.
• Tetlow King Planning obo West Midlands Housing Association Planning Consortium – welcome an explicit commitment to ongoing engagement with Registered Providers and other affordable housing stakeholders throughout the plan making process.
On behalf of developers and landowners responses
• Tetra Tech obo Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land – an additional principle recognising the need to engage communities, stakeholders, parish councils and landowners immediately outside the Borough boundary should be established where cross-boundary allocations are under consideration.
• Tetra Tech obo Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land – further principle of targeted developer engagement. Planning consultants, site promoters and housebuilders are best placed to advise on the deliverability, phasing and viability of identified developments, and early engagement enables the Council to identify infrastructure bottle necks and delivery risks before draft policies and site allocations are prepared. Proactive engagement would strengthen the soundness of the emerging Plan's housing trajectory.

RBC's response:

- 3.6.2 Almost three-quarters of respondents agree with the consultation principles identified. It is acknowledged that not all of the responses to question 7b directly relate to consultation principles; instead, there are some comments that relate to consultation methods (which is the focus of questions 8a and b). The Council's consultation and engagement strategy will guide future Local Plan consultation principles and methods, taking into account the feedback received. It is important that all residents, groups, consultation bodies and the development industry from a wide demographic are encouraged to be engaged in the development of the Local Plan and there are some helpful suggestions from respondents that will be considered for future consultations.

Question 8a: Do you agree with the potential consultation methods identified? Yes / No / Unsure

Responses: 20

- Yes: 70%
- No: 20%
- Unsure: 10%

Question 8b: What potential consultation methods would you change or add? Please explain your answer.

Responses: 14

Summary of matters raised

Public responses

- More human interaction.
- More evening consultation events for working residents.
- Business roundtable meetings.
- Dedicated sessions with local employers.
- Interactive maps allowing residents to identify local issues.
- Better publicity through local newspapers, which remain an important source of trusted local information for many residents.
- Interactive workshops held in local community centres and libraries at varying times, specifically weekends and evenings.
- Information regarding major boundary or Green Belt reviews should be physically publicised via notices along public rights of way and popular natural paths, ensuring users of these spaces are directly notified.
- Documents must also be presented in short, plain-English summaries rather than dense planning jargon.
- Independent scrutiny of any plans to make sure the council carry out the wishes of the residents and don't pursue their own agenda.
- Do more to make more residents aware of these consultations. Far too often, the response to these are very low because people do not engage with such council matters like this that will/may affect them in years to come.
- Advertise on all noticeboards.

Consultation bodies and other stakeholders responses

- Natural England – find it easier for a consultation document, such as a PDF to be sent to us with the questions included. Then, we will provide a response in the same format (as a pdf letter of response). The online form means that

hyperlinks to our evidence does not show, there are word limits in the box, and it is difficult to format our response as we would wish.
- Worcestershire County Council – at 7.2.6 add accessible on-screen readers. - NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB – is invited to any focus groups proposed for community and physical infrastructure providers, and to officer-level engagement on infrastructure matters. - Tetlow King Planning obo West Midlands Housing Association Planning Consortium – encourages the Council to facilitate targeted engagement with RPs and affordable housing stakeholders at key stages of plan preparation. This could take the form of stakeholder workshops, roundtable discussions or focused evidence sessions, particularly when preparing housing evidence, viability assessments and affordable housing policies.
On behalf of developers and landowners responses
- Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey – it is generally acknowledged that Local Plan consultations have a low response rate and are typically responded to by particular interest groups or those with a specific objection in mind. In light of this, any opportunity to engage with younger people or those who would not typically engage with the planning system would be welcomed and that such an approach would take some out of the box thinking to achieve so the Council could seek to engage with a wider, more diverse audience. Use of webinars or social media could be additional methods to be employed to engage with a different audience. - Tetra Tech obo Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land – the Council should directly engage with developers to support effective and informed plan-making.

RBC's response:

- 3.6.3 Over two-thirds of respondents agree with the potential consultation methods identified. The Council's consultation and engagement strategy will guide future Local Plan consultation principles and methods, taking into account the feedback received. It is important that all residents, groups, consultation bodies and the development industry from a wide demographic are encouraged to be engaged in the development of the Local Plan and there are some helpful suggestions from respondents that will be considered for future consultations.

Question 9: Do you consider there is anything else relevant to consultation that has not been mentioned? Please explain your answer.
Responses: 14
<u>Summary of matters raised</u>
Public responses
- The Local Plan should not become an exercise in meeting centrally imposed housing numbers at the expense of local character. - Redditch has a distinctive identity, excellent parks, valuable Green Belt and an established manufacturing economy. These strengths should be protected and enhanced. - Future development should be infrastructure-led, focused on brownfield regeneration wherever possible, and designed to improve the quality of life for existing residents rather than simply increasing the Borough's population. Economic growth, skilled employment and support for local and new businesses should receive equal or greater weight alongside basic housing provision.

The Local Plan should strike a better balance between environmental protection, economic prosperity and sustainable growth, ensuring Redditch remains an attractive place to live, work and invest.
The consultation strategy completely fails to address how the council will communicate the direct planning consequences of the 2028 local government reorganisation to the public. As Redditch transitions into a separate North Worcestershire authority, any future discussion or consultation regarding cross-boundary infrastructure, housing shortfalls, or threats to the Green Belt must be flagged to residents as an extraordinary strategic issue. The local community deserves total transparency regarding how these structural shifts might expose our borders to West Midlands urban expansion.
Consultation on a plan which has not been drawn up yet is meaningless. No independent audit process to ensure the plan reflects the wishes of residents not the personal agenda of individual dominant council members who are in leading roles in the council. More involvement from residents throughout the building of the plan, there is no point in spending money on a plan if it then gets rejected by residents. It should be the residents who have the final say on the various parts of the plan, not councillors who have their own agenda.
The HEDNA document is not in page order. The conclusion part runs from page 100+ then includes page 60+ which is not relevant to the conclusion.
This consultation has a total lack of dates (time scales) and also information to give an objective view on this consultation.
Consultation bodies and other stakeholders responses
Natural England – Annex A for advice relating to soils, protected sites, water quality and quantity, BNG etc. Annex B for Air Quality advice.
Worcestershire County Council – WCC are the Local Highways Authority and have responsibility for provision of education places across the county. We will continue to work with RBC as the local plan is developed and provide the relevant evidence bases and assessments to support plan development. This will include input into objectives, policies and infrastructure delivery plans through the existing collaborative arrangements.
Historic England – provided suggestions relating to the Sustainability Appraisal.
On behalf of developers and landowners responses
Tetra Tech obo Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land – whilst the statutory Duty to Cooperate is being phased out under the LURA 2023 and replaced by new alignment tests and Spatial Development Strategies, Redditch has established a history of supporting cross-boundary growth. Given Stratford is in the same HMA as Redditch, direct engagement should be sought with relevant stakeholders to ensure wider unmet needs are addressed.

RBC's response:

- 3.6.4 The relevant planning matters under the Council's control will be considered as the Local Plan progresses.

3.7 Responses to non-consultation questions

- 3.7.1 The table below summarises the responses received that do not specifically address one of the questions posed in the scoping document and underneath RBC's response.

Responses to non-consultation questions
<u>Summary of matters raised</u>
Consultation bodies and other stakeholders responses
Community Campaigner – historic environment related guidance for design codes, construction methods and contractors.
Community Campaigner – enhancement and protection suggestions and working with stakeholders for the betterment of designated and non-designated heritage assets.
Community Campaigner – enhancement suggestions for conservation areas and suggestions to improve the permission process.
Community Campaigner – appropriate improvements to historic buildings to combat climate change and provide economic benefits. Additionally, improvements to the outdoor environment e.g. maximising biodiversity, flooding and transport suggestions to mitigate climate change.
Community Campaigner – suggestions for the application process, and enforcement penalties for the deliberate neglect to historic buildings.
Forestry Commission – recommends that the Local Plan aligns with the NPPF to ensure the protection of irreplaceable habitats, such as ancient woodland and veteran trees. Additionally, trees play a crucial role in achieving BNG by providing habitats for wildlife, improving air quality, and contributing to climate resilience and therefore encourage the integration of tree planting and woodland creation into development plans to meet BNG requirements and enhance local biodiversity.
- Natural England: - The Nature Recovery Network (which aims to expand and connect wildlife habitats to support species recovery and deliver wider benefits such as carbon capture, air and water quality improvements and recreation etc.) does not stand out as a key driver. The plan should include policies and proposals for nature recovery. - The Plan should map local ecological networks, including buffers and wildlife corridors and set out policies and proposals to safeguard and enhance the network, including contributions through development where appropriate. - The scoping stage does not include the theme/issue of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS). The LNRS should inform the Local Plan by identifying the most appropriate locations for habitat creation, restoration and enhancement, where actions are likely to deliver the greatest benefits for nature and the wider environment; and supporting planners, developers, environmental organisations, communities, residents and businesses in targeting investment and activity to areas where they can make the greatest contribution to nature recovery. - All public authorities have a duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Local planning authorities in England are legally required to "take account" of Local Nature Recovery Strategies when developing Local Plans and making planning decisions. It is vital to consider how areas mapped within a LNRS and the Potential Measures proposed are reflected in the plan, including the extent of safeguarding which should be applied in those locations. - Your published Worcestershire LNRS should act as an essential spatial evidence-base that will be vital for identifying both potential areas of importance for biodiversity, the connectivity of ecological corridors and green infrastructure. It should inform development site assessments; biodiversity net gain arrangements; site allocations and associated

green infrastructure; while also enabling planning application determinations to be made. ○ Reference should be made to the LNRS within the site allocations policy wording when available. This is in order to develop clear policies and strategies that give developers an indication as to what the requirements are in relation to nature recovery such as whether there are any areas that are of particular importance to biodiversity (as identified within the LNRS mapping) or whether there are any associated biodiversity actions recommended for a site (these can be found within the LNRS strategy). ○ General advice for local plans provided at Annex A, standard advice for air quality impacts at Annex B, standard advice for soil and agricultural land quality at Annex C, and a separate local plans advice note.
• Canal & River Trust – The Trust has no waterways, assets or land interests within the area and as such we have no comment to make.
• National Grid Electricity Transmission – identified NGET assets in the Borough, including 6 overhead transmission lines, 3 electrical substations and NGET landownership all around Feckenham.
• National Grid Electricity Transmission – the security and reliability of the UK's current and future energy supply is highly dependent on having an electricity network which will enable the existing and new electricity generation, storage, and interconnection infrastructure that the country needs to meet the rapid increase in electricity demand required to transition to net zero, while maintaining energy security.
• National Grid Electricity Transmission – the Council should ensure that development proposals located near transmission assets demonstrate that they will not compromise safety, operability, maintenance access, asset replacement or future network expansion. The Council should safeguard existing and potential access routes required for the delivery and removal of Abnormal Indivisible Loads (AILs) associated with the construction, replacement and maintenance of transmission-scale equipment, including large transformers at strategic substations and resist development or highway alterations that would prejudice, constrain or render impractical AIL access unless suitable mitigation or alternative agreed routes can be secured.
• Active Travel England – expects Local Plans to be informed by a robust, data-led understanding of existing and future active travel and public transport networks, travel patterns and connectivity. Baseline work should establish current conditions, identify barriers and opportunities, and take account of planned transport infrastructure, services and policies. Baseline evidence should include: ○ Analysis of travel patterns and mode choice across different population groups and journey purposes. ○ Mapping of existing and planned active travel networks, public transport services and key local amenities, including schools, parks, play areas, food shops, healthcare facilities and community facilities; together with an assessment of their connectivity by active travel and public transport, informed by the DfT Connectivity Tool. ○ Identification of existing deficiencies in connectivity, accessibility and mode share, and opportunities for improvement over the plan period. ○ Identification of factors affecting the suitability and attractiveness of active travel and public transport, including route audits of networks serving potential strategic sites. ○ Review of Local Transport Plans (LTPs), Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs), Rights of Way Improvement Plans (ROWIPs), Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs), and other relevant local transport and infrastructure strategies.

- Active Travel England – Local Plan visions should be informed directly by baseline findings and adopt a vision-led approach, consistent with national planning policy, that prioritises sustainable travel from the outset. The vision should seek to maximise journeys made by active travel and public transport, reduce reliance on private car travel, and support wider health, equality, climate and environmental objectives.
- ATE expects vision statements to: Commit to growth that improves health, wellbeing, quality of life and environmental outcomes through increased use of active travel and public transport, including measurable increases in active travel and public transport mode share over the plan period.
 - Set clear and differentiated ambitions across settlements, neighbourhoods and accessibility contexts.
 - Define the connectivity and infrastructure standards expected of new development, which should be consistent with Manual for Streets, Inclusive Mobility and Local Transport Note 1/20: Cycle Infrastructure Design.
 - Promote equality of access, inclusive design and affordable travel choices.
 - Support environments that are safe, inclusive and accessible for all users, including women and girls.
 - Support carbon reduction and wider environmental objectives through reduced dependence on private motor vehicle travel.
- Active Travel England – evidence required to test options, proposed spatial strategy and site allocations:
 - Forecasts of active travel and public transport demand that are aligned with mode share targets and reflect the characteristics of different places, settlement types and accessibility contexts.
 - Demonstration that the proposed spatial strategy and site allocations have been informed by, and selected on the basis of, their ability to maximise access by active travel and public transport, minimise reliance on private car travel, and support mode shift.
 - Demonstration of how the proposed strategy will improve connectivity and accessibility to key destinations, and address identified constraints and deficiencies.
 - Identification of the active travel and public transport infrastructure and services required to support planned growth, together with evidence of their deliverability, including infrastructure requirements, costs, funding sources, phasing and implementation risks.
 - Assessment of the cumulative impacts of proposed development on active travel and public transport networks, including cross-boundary impacts where relevant.
 - Assessment of the contribution of the proposed strategy to public health, equality, inclusion, carbon reduction and wider environmental objectives.
- Active Travel England – The initial site assessment exercise should consider the extent to which potential allocations can support and deliver the Local Plan vision and a vision-led transport strategy. This should include an assessment of a site's ability to:
 - Maximise accessibility to key destinations by active travel and public transport.
 - Support high levels of active travel and public transport use and minimise reliance on private car travel.
 - Connect effectively to existing and planned active travel and public transport networks.
 - Support the delivery of sustainable transport infrastructure and services from an early stage of development.

○ Contribute to the creation of complete, connected neighbourhoods and wider health, equality, climate and environmental objectives. ○ Where new or improved transport infrastructure is required, priority should be given to active travel and public transport interventions before consideration of highway capacity enhancements, in accordance with the transport hierarchy.
• Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) – has no comments in regard to nuisance and air quality at this stage.
• NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB – collaboration to ensure that: ○ The type and location of housing built, ensuring it is accessible and better meets health and care needs of local people, recognising the impact of the new housing on health and ensuring the ability for the new build occupants to carry out a healthy lifestyle. Noting the ageing population, increased prevalence of long-term conditions and disability. ○ Recognition of the impact of the increase in population new to Redditch Borough on health services infrastructure, ensuring that the developer mitigates the harmful impact created and that provision is included and mitigated within local plans, and where implications are detrimental there is a fair and consistent approach to developer contributions in accordance with Para 204 of the NPPF and Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2011 (as amended).
• NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB – supports the delivery of housing suitable for older people; however, such development carries the highest per-capita healthcare demand of any housing type, and its impact must be assessed on that basis rather than on standard occupancy assumptions alone.
• West Midlands Combined Authority – the WMCA area has historically sought assistance in meeting housing and employment land needs from neighbouring areas with strong functional relationships reflected through transport connectivity, commuter, and migration flows. As the Scoping Document recognises, Redditch benefits from good road and rail connections into Birmingham. Whilst the emerging Birmingham Local Plan review intends to meet its own housing need, across the wider WMCA area a shortfall of approximately 28,000 homes remains in the current tranche of Black Country plans, and the latest internal analysis of local authority EDNAs suggests a substantial (est 475 ha) employment land shortfall across the WMCA area.
• West Midlands Combined Authority – it is requested that as the Redditch Local Plan evolves consideration is given to economic relationships with the WMCA area, particularly to the opportunities offered by the West Midlands Growth Plan and the West Midlands Strategic Employment Sites Study, which identifies the M42/M5/A435 Redditch and Bromsgrove as Opportunity Area 9.
• West Midlands Combined Authority – has recently commenced work on its Spatial Development Strategy, which will determine the scale and distribution of growth between its constituent local authorities over at least a 20-year period and guide their local plan reviews. A key component of the evidence base is the refresh of the Strategic Growth Study which covers the WMCA area as well as Redditch. Once the evidence base is completed, and its findings considered in the light of the new National Planning Policy Framework, the scale of housing and employment shortfalls in the WMCA area will become clearer.
• National Highways – The SRN in the vicinity of the Redditch Local Plan area is formed of the M42 Motorway approximately 6km to the north of Redditch town centre, which links into the M40 approximately 10km to the northeast of Redditch town centre. The A46 Trunk Road runs approximately 11km to the south of Redditch town centre. M42 junctions 2 and 3 presently perform within capacity during peak hours, however Local Highways Authority roads approaching the junction 3 circulatory experiences delays in both peak periods.

The M42 mainline westbound experiences consistent delay in the am peak typically extending to the M40 diverge.
National Highways – Sustainable residential and economic (employment) development remains a clear priority, and National Highway is supportive in terms of facilitating assessment and delivery of proposed growth, helping to meet both local and national government objectives.
On behalf of developers and landowners responses
The Planning Bureau Limited obo Churchill Living and McCarthy & Stone – advocates that the Local Plan should go beyond having a specific older persons housing policy that details locational requirements but instead the Local Plan should identify the older persons housing need and seek to allocate some sites to deliver such identified need.
- The Planning Bureau Limited obo Churchill Living and McCarthy & Stone – must ensure that when setting M4(3) standards that the accompanying viability assessment correctly assesses and includes additional cost for delivering this type of housing. M4(3) housing requires significant modifications to a typical unit beyond a M4(2) unit e.g. wheelchair circulation space. Given the level of likely need for older persons housing, the council should be careful not to prejudice delivery through the imposition of overly prescriptive and unnecessary criteria. - McCarthy & Stone recently undertook a wheelchair user survey of all of its developments to understand the proportion of residents that use a wheelchair. This identified that only 2.7% of residents of occupied flats use a wheelchair in their apartments whilst 3.2% of residents use a wheelchair in communal areas.
The Planning Bureau Limited obo Churchill Living and McCarthy & Stone – the viability of specialist housing for older people is more finely balanced than ‘general needs’ housing and we are strongly of the view that these housing typologies should be robustly assessed for viability and affordable housing separately to mainstream housing. Advice is provided on what should be noted within the viability assessment.
The Planning Bureau Limited obo Churchill Living and McCarthy & Stone – our experience is that older person’s housing proposals will not viably provide affordable housing on a typical development site given that unit numbers will not generate sufficient affordable housing for a registered provider to have interest in acquiring units; typical sites are too constrained to accommodate mixed management arrangements; and viability has consistently demonstrated that it is not financially feasible to provide ‘policy compliant’ affordable housing. The affordable housing & housing mix policies should be applied flexibly in respect of older persons housing or a reduced/exempt affordable provision.
Savills obo Miller Homes Limited, Bellway Homes Limited / Woolsington One Limited and Persimmon Homes – the standard method for calculating local housing need stipulates that RBC is required to deliver 462 dwellings per annum and given the extent of the (minimum) housing need, RBC will be obliged to deliver around 9,000 homes over the plan period.
Savills obo Miller Homes Limited, Bellway Homes Limited / Woolsington One Limited and Persimmon Homes – commentary and supporting documents to support the promotion of their site at Brockhill.
Savills obo Miller Homes Limited, Bellway Homes Limited / Woolsington One Limited and Persimmon Homes – RBC should meet its own needs in full, but the plan should maintain flexibility to assist neighbouring authorities where justified and the plan should not constrain supply. RBC is part of the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area and unmet housing needs have been identified within the GBBCHMA for a number of years. It remains that, across the wider HMA, a shortfall of 76,500 dwellings exists that should be met through cross-boundary cooperation.

There is little by the way of contribution from authorities within the GBBCHMA towards meeting this need. The 'narrative' within the GBBCHMA is now that there is no unmet need, as revisions to the Standard Method has 'redistributed' this need to the authorities surrounding Birmingham and the Black Country. However, this overlooks that housing within the GBBCHMA has been under-delivered since at least 2017 when the BDP was adopted. It is not appropriate for this historical under-delivery to simply be 'wiped clean' moving forwards.
Savills obo Miller Homes Limited, Bellway Homes Limited / Woolsington One Limited and Persimmon Homes – As of April 2025, RBC can only demonstrate a housing land supply of 3.11 years. In terms of housing delivery, there were 174 net completions in the monitoring year 2024/25. This similarly represents a significant under-delivery, even when compared against the adopted Local Plan housing requirement of 337 dwellings per annum. Since 2011, only two years have met/exceeded the housing requirement. When utilising the data underpinning as yet unpublished 2024 HDT measurement, RBC only delivered 70% of the homes required over three year period and again is therefore subject to the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
Savills obo Miller Homes Limited, Bellway Homes Limited / Woolsington One Limited and Persimmon Homes – the base date proposed for the plan period is not clear and should be clearly outlined in order for the plan to be in accordance with NPPF paragraph 16 (d). RBC should consider whether a longer plan period is necessary if larger scale developments such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns are included.
Tetra Tech obo Taylor Wimpey Strategic Land – commentary to support the promotion of their site at Mappleborough Green.
Ridge and Partners LLP obo HarperCrewe – commentary to support the promotion of their site at Astwood Bank.

RBC's response:

- 3.7.2 A wide array of comments are summarised above that were not specifically answering one of the questions in the scoping consultation document. The relevant points will be considered as the Local Plan progresses.

Section 4: Next steps

4.1 Next steps

- 4.1.1 The responses received to this scoping consultation, together with responses from the Issues and Options consultation in the summer of 2025, will inform the preparation of the Local Plan and the Council's engagement strategy for future consultations.
- 4.1.2 There will be two further opportunities to help shape the Local Plan. The next consultation is the proposed Local Plan content and evidence consultation which is anticipated to be held in June 2027 for a minimum of 6 weeks. The final consultation is expected to be held in March 2028 for a minimum of 8 weeks which is a consultation on the full draft Local Plan before it is submitted for independent examination. The anticipated key milestone dates can be found in the Borough of Redditch Local Plan timetable, available at <https://www.redditchbc.gov.uk/redditchplan-timetable>.
- 4.1.3 The Council's website includes all information on the Local Plan; including the Local Plan timetable, notice of intention to commence local plan preparation, scoping consultation details, Gateway 1 self-assessment, evidence base, details of the previous Issues and Options consultation, and the privacy notice – <https://www.redditchbc.gov.uk/redditchplan>. This will be kept up to date throughout the preparation of the Local Plan, and any updates will be published there.

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Equality Strategy 2026-2028 (inc. Engagement Policy)

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Matthew Dormer (Leader)
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Assistant Director	Hannah Corredor
Report Author	Job Title: Performance & Improvement Manager Contact email: h.mole@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881685
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Council Priority	High-Quality Services
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 Equality Strategy 2026 – 2028 (including the Engagement Policy) be approved.****2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Council previously operated under an Equality Strategy covering the period 2022-2026 and an Engagement Strategy from 2022 to 2025. These strategies have helped embed equality considerations across service delivery, decision-making, engagement and workforce practices. As those strategies have now reached the end of their intended timeframe, an updated Equality Strategy, which includes the Engagement Policy as an appendix, have been developed for 2026-2028.
- 2.2 Progress and achievements from the previous strategies will be reported through the Councils' annual reporting arrangements alongside future updates on delivery of the new strategy.
- 2.3 The Equality Strategy is supported by an Action Plan, which brings together activity taking place across Council services to deliver the authority's equality objectives. The Action Plan enables more consistent monitoring of progress under each objective and enables the Council to demonstrate to residents how equality considerations are being embedded within the authority's work.
- 2.4 The refreshed Engagement Policy is included as an appendix to the Equality Strategy, demonstrating how effective equality work depends on high-quality insight and an understanding of the needs and experiences

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of different communities. It sets out how the Council will undertake inclusive and meaningful engagement so that the insight gathered from residents, community groups, partners, and staff can inform Equality Impact Assessments, service improvement activity and wider decision-making.

- 2.5 Housing Services has a dedicated Engagement Strategy for Redditch tenants which aligns with and complements the corporate approach, whilst also meeting the specific requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing

3. OPERATIONAL DETAIL

- 3.1 Both documents build on the Council's existing equality and engagement work and reflect learning from residents, community groups, partners, and staff over the four-year period of the last strategy. They provide an updated framework for ensuring equality, accessibility and community insight throughout the life of the Strategy.

- 3.2 The strategy sets out four equality objectives for 2026-2028:

- Continue to deliver fair and accessible services.
- Strengthen inclusive engagement and communication.
- Improve understanding of communities and support inclusion.
- Support an inclusive and representative workforce.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications. However, where future actions arising from the Equality Action Plan or engagement activity require additional resources, these will need to be considered through the relevant service planning, budget setting or decision-making process.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Equality Strategy supports the Council in meeting the authority's responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Duty requires local authorities to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different groups.
- 5.2 Approval of these documents will provide a clear framework for demonstrating that equality, accessibility and community engagement are embedded within policy development, service delivery and decision-making across the Council.

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6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS**Organisational Change**

- 6.1 Both documents recognise the importance of maintaining a consistent approach to equality, accessibility and community engagement during periods of change.

Relevant Council Priority

- 6.2 The Equality Strategy and Engagement Policy contribute to the delivery of high-quality services.
- 6.3 Together, they help ensure services are informed by the needs and experiences of residents, support continuous improvement and promote fair, effective, and inclusive service delivery across the Council.

Community Impact

- 6.4 The strategies will have a positive impact on local communities by helping the Council to better understand local needs, support inclusion and ensure that services and decisions are informed by the views and experiences of residents. This contributes to community well-being and cohesion across the Borough.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.5 There are no direct climate change implications arising from the approval of the Equality Strategy and Engagement Policy. The documents do not commit the Council to any specific projects, developments or operational activities that would directly affect greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption or climate adaptation measures.
- 6.6 However, the principles set out within the Equality Strategy and Engagement Policy support inclusive decision-making and engagement, which can help ensure that the impacts of climate change and environmental changes on different communities are better understood. This is particularly relevant for groups who may be disproportionately affected by extreme weather, fuel poverty, poor housing conditions or other climate-related risks.
- 6.7 Future actions, policies or projects developed under the framework of these documents will continue to be considered on their individual merits and, where appropriate, will be subject to separate assessment of climate change implications.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

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- 6.8 The subject matter of this report is directly concerned with equality, diversity and inclusion.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 Without an up-to-date Equality Strategy and Engagement Policy, there is a risk that the Council cannot clearly demonstrate how equality and engagement considerations are embedded. This could increase the risk of inconsistent practice across services and reduce assurance that the Council is meeting its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 7.2 The approved documents will help mitigate these risks by providing a clear and consistent framework for considering equality impacts, engaging with residents and communities and supporting informed decision-making. The Action Plan will also support the delivery and monitoring of identified priorities over the life of the Strategy.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix A - Equality Strategy 2026-2028
Appendix 1 - Engagement Policy 2026-2028

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Matt Dormer (Leader)	July 2026
Lead Director / Assistant Director	Hannah Corredor	03/08/26
Financial Services	Paul Earley	04/08/26
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Executive8th September 2026

	Engagement & Equalities Advisor Helen Mole Business Improvement Manager	
Climate Change Team (if climate change implications apply)	Matt Eccles, Climate Change Manager .	04.08.26

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Redditch Borough Council Equality Strategy 2026-2028

Title	Redditch Borough Council Equality Strategy 2026-2028
Description	This Strategy sets out our commitment for progressing equality over the next two years.
Created by	Engagement and Equalities Advisor
Date created	May 2026
Maintained by	Engagement and Equalities Advisor
Next Review Date	April 2028

Version number	Modified by	Modifications made	Date modified	Status

If you need this information in another language or format, please contact us and we will do our best to help.

Email: equalities@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Phone: 01527 548284

Foreword

Redditch is a borough with proud communities, diverse experiences and a strong sense of place. As a Council, we want everyone to feel valued, respected and able to access the opportunities, services and support they need to thrive.

This Equality Strategy sets out our commitment to ensuring fairness, dignity and inclusion remain central to everything we do between 2026 and 2028. For our Council, equality means fair treatment and fair access for all residents. It builds on the progress already made across the Council and reflects what we have learned through working with residents, community organisations, partners and staff.

Equality is not a standalone activity. It is part of how we design services, make decisions, engage with communities and support our workforce. This strategy provides a practical framework for continuing that work while recognising the changing environment in which local government operates.

We know there is always more to do. By listening to people, understanding different experiences and considering the impact of our decisions, we can continue to improve services and strengthen community cohesion across the borough.

I am pleased to support this strategy and look forward to working with residents, community organisations, businesses, partners and colleagues to help deliver its objectives.

Councillor Matt Dormer
Leader of Redditch Borough Council

1. Purpose

At Redditch Borough Council, we want everyone to be treated with fairness, dignity and respect. This Equality Strategy sets out how we will continue to do that between 2026 and 2028.

Over recent years, we have listened to residents, community groups and staff to better understand the different needs, experiences and barriers people face. This learning has helped shape how services are delivered, how decisions are made and how we work as an employer. While positive progress has been made, we recognise that there is more to do.

This strategy builds on existing learning and sets a clear direction for continuing to embed equality into everyday Council activity. Our aim is to support a borough where people from all backgrounds can live, work and participate fully, and where individuals and communities feel valued, respected and included.

The strategy will also support the Council during any period of organisational change. By maintaining a clear focus on equality, we can better understand how decisions may affect different people and communities, helping to ensure services remain fair, accessible and responsive to local needs throughout any transitions moving forward.

2. Scope

This strategy applies to everyone who lives in, works in or visits Redditch. It covers all Council services and functions, the Council's workforce and Elected Members.

It reflects the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 and supports a consistent approach to equality across all areas of Council activity, including during periods of change.

3. Our Legal Duties and Responsibilities

The Equality Act 2010 provides the legal framework for our work on equality. It protects people from discrimination based on nine protected characteristics and places duties on public bodies.

As a local authority, the Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty. This requires us to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations between different groups

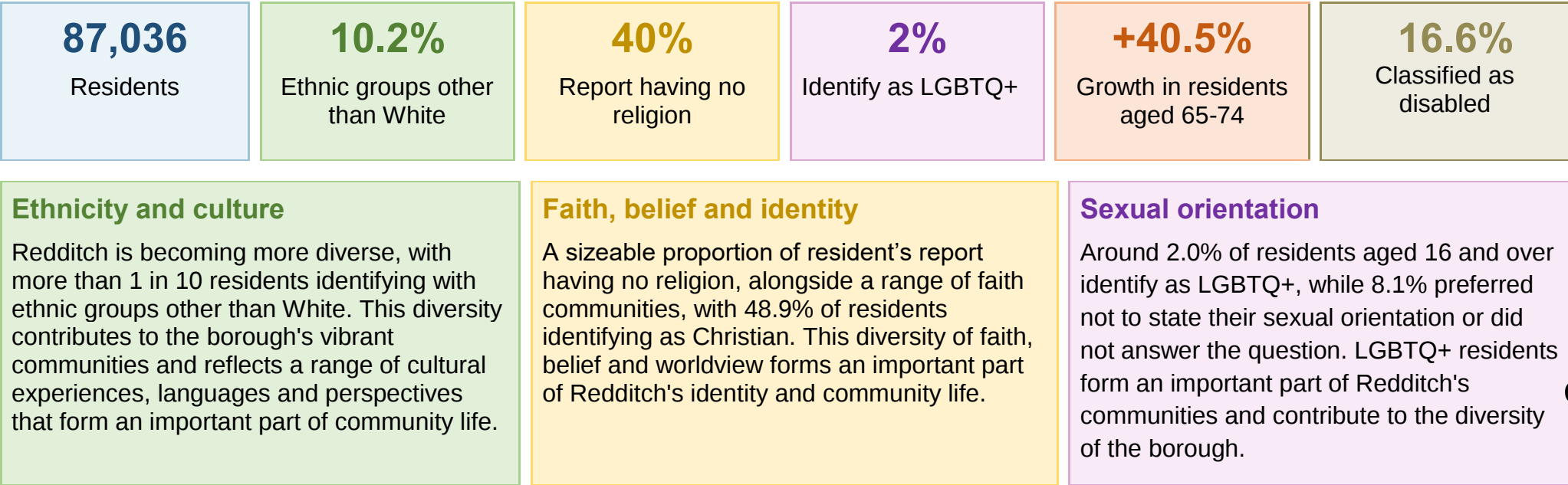
While publishing this strategy helps meet our legal responsibilities, it also reflects our broader commitment to fairness and inclusion. We also recognise that poverty and socioeconomic disadvantage can significantly impact people's lives and opportunities. Although not a protected characteristic in law, this remains an important consideration in how we understand inequality locally.

4. Understanding Redditch Borough

Redditch is a diverse and evolving borough, home to over 87,000 residents, an increase of 3.4% between 2011 and 2021, living across a range of communities and neighbourhoods. Feckenham is the only parish within the Borough, providing a distinct rural community alongside the town's predominantly urban population.

Understanding who our residents are, how the population is changing and where different groups may experience barriers or inequalities is essential to delivering fair, accessible and inclusive services.

Here we have provided an overview of Redditch's population and communities, highlighting key demographic trends and equality-related characteristics. It draws together evidence on age, diversity, disability, caring responsibilities and wider inequalities to help inform decision-making, service planning and the Council's commitment to advancing equality of opportunity across the borough.



Age and life stage

Redditch is home to people at all stages of life, with a median age of 40. The 40.5% increase in residents aged 65 to 74 highlights the borough's ageing population and the importance of accessibility, digital inclusion and wellbeing

Disability, health and caring

Disability, long-term health conditions and caring responsibilities are an important part of many residents' lives. Redditch is home to 7,562 unpaid carers, representing 9.1% of residents aged 5 and over, with 2.9% providing 50 hours or more of care each week, supporting family members, friends and neighbours.

Socio-economic inequality

While Redditch has many strengths, opportunities and outcomes are not experienced equally across the borough. Differences in income, deprivation, housing, health and digital access can affect people's life chances, with some communities facing greater barriers than others.

Source: ONS Census 2021 dataset via Nomis

While Redditch benefits from diverse communities, strong local identities and a growing population, the data also demonstrates the importance of understanding how age, disability, caring responsibilities, ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation and wider socio-economic factors can influence people's experiences and opportunities. This evidence provides an important foundation for delivering fair, inclusive and accessible services and for shaping the priorities of the Equality Strategy.

5. Equality in Practice: What We Have Learned

Between 2022 and 2026, equality considerations increasingly informed how services were designed, delivered and reviewed across Redditch. Insight from residents, partners and staff supported improvements in access, fairness and service responsiveness.

The examples below show how equality has been embedded across key service areas, demonstrating a practical and joined-up approach rather than isolated initiatives.

5.1 Housing, Regeneration and Local Development

The Council made significant progress in improving access to affordable, secure and good quality homes while regenerating key community assets. This included the delivery of 19 new Council homes in Church Hill, providing accessible and affordable housing for families, older residents and those with the greatest need.

The transformation of the Town Hall into a modern community hub will bring NHS services, Council departments and community spaces together in one accessible location, reducing barriers to essential services and supporting joined-up delivery. A three-year financial plan protected key services and enabled continued investment in regeneration during periods of economic uncertainty.

Improvements to the Redditch Homes allocations system, including clearer guidance and eligibility criteria, strengthened fairness, transparency and access for vulnerable applicants.

5.2 Economy, Skills and Innovation

Investment in skills and innovation supported more inclusive economic growth. The Council secured over £16 million for the development of the Digital Manufacturing Innovation Centre, contributing to job creation, business growth and skills development for young people and small and medium-sized enterprises.

The introduction of a new Council Plan, with priorities focused on community, housing, green and safe spaces and prosperity, guided improvements to public spaces, access to skills and employability opportunities, particularly benefiting residents who face barriers to work or economic participation.

5.3 Community Engagement, Planning and Participation

The Council strengthened community voice through accessible engagement opportunities. The Local Plan roadshow, delivered across nine locations alongside an online platform, enabled residents to play an active role in shaping development up to 2043 and broadened participation among people less able to engage in traditional consultations.

Free family events, including the Arrow Valley Lights Trail, created inclusive opportunities for residents of all ages and backgrounds to participate in community life, supporting social cohesion and accessible leisure.

5.4 Cost of Living Support and Financial Resilience

Recognising the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, the Council delivered a coordinated response to provide accessible support and guidance. Through a multi-channel approach, including partnership leaflets, online resources, community outreach and work with local voluntary and community organisations, the Council helped residents, including those who may be digitally excluded, to access financial and practical support.

The Government's Household Support Fund (HSF), which operated until March 2026, provided targeted assistance to residents experiencing financial hardship. Working with Citizens Advice Bromsgrove and Redditch and local voluntary and community sector organisations, the Council helped distribute almost £348,000 of support during the final phase of the programme, including £124,000 through local community organisations and £220,000 in direct payments to eligible households. Support was delivered through a range of initiatives including foodbanks, food pantries, warm spaces and household support schemes, helping residents most affected by rising living costs.

Although HSF has now ended, the Council continues to work with Worcestershire County Council and local partners to help residents access support through the Crisis and Resilience Fund and other available assistance programmes.

5.5 Voluntary, Community and Partnership Support

The Council continued to champion voluntary and community organisations, recognising their vital role in promoting equality and supporting residents facing disadvantage. The Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Programme was expanded, offering grants of up to £10,000 to organisations including carers' services, debt advice providers, food pantries, older people's support and family services. Ring-fenced funding for smaller grassroots organisations improved equitable access to funding and ensured groups supporting protected and under-represented communities were not disadvantaged.

5.6 Health, Leisure and Inclusion

The Council worked to maintain and improve access to inclusive leisure and wellbeing services. The Council has continued to support and enhance access to inclusive leisure and wellbeing services. Through the Redditch Play Audit and Investment Strategy, work is underway to improve inclusive and accessibility across all play areas where possible, with Arrow Valley achieving elements of the PiPA (Plan Inclusive Play Areas) accreditation. Through Rubicon Leisure the Council offers a range of inclusive health and wellbeing activities including Cancer Rehab, Escape Pain and Exercise on Referral and offers financial inclusivity through the Active Redditch Card providing reductions up to 100%.

5.7 Workforce Development and Organisational Culture

The Council continues to promote a working environment based on fairness, dignity and respect. Learning and leadership activity, including Dignity at Work training, supports a culture where equality is part of everyday practice and service delivery. Further detail on the Council's approach as an employer is set out in section 8.

5.8 Impact and Learning

Taken together, this work shows how Redditch Borough Council has continued to embed equality, inclusion and fairness into everyday practice. The activity delivered between 2022 and 2026 reflects learning from previous strategies, engagement with residents, community organisations and staff, and a growing understanding of what helps people access services, opportunities and support in different ways.

This work demonstrates how equality considerations are increasingly embedded in how the Council plans, delivers services and works with partners.

The learning from this period provides a strong foundation for the Equality Objectives set out below and will continue to inform how the Council develops its approach in a proportionate and practical way.

6. Equality During Change

Redditch Borough is entering a period of significant change as preparations continue for the transition to a new unitary authority in North Worcestershire from April 2028. Throughout this period, equality will remain an important consideration in how services are planned,

reviewed and delivered. Understanding how different residents and communities experience change will help ensure decisions are informed by local evidence, community insight and an awareness of potential barriers.

We recognise that change can affect people in different ways. Factors such as age, disability, health, caring responsibilities, income, language and digital access can influence how people access services, information and opportunities to participate in community life and local decision-making. Considering equality impacts at an early stage helps us better understand these differences and supports fair, accessible and inclusive outcomes.

We will continue to work with residents, community organisations, partners and staff to understand lived experiences and identify emerging issues as plans develop. This will help ensure that the diverse needs of Redditch's communities continue to be understood and considered throughout the transition, while ensuring local insight helps inform future planning and decision-making.

Equality will also remain an important consideration for our workforce. As organisational arrangements evolve, we will continue to support staff through fair processes, clear communication and access to appropriate wellbeing, learning and development opportunities.

The Council will continue to make appropriate use of digital technology to support service delivery and decision-making. Where digital tools are used, they will be applied in a proportionate and transparent way, with appropriate safeguards, human oversight and consideration of accessibility and inclusion.

7. Equality in Service Delivery

The Council aims to deliver services that are fair, clear and accessible. This involves taking a proportionate and practical approach to equality when services are designed, reviewed and delivered, building on the learning outlined earlier in this strategy.

7.1 Thinking about Equality in Decisions

The Council has an established Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process to help ensure equality considerations are taken into account when developing policies, reviewing services and making decisions. Equality Impact Assessments help the Council understand how proposals may affect different people and communities, identify potential barriers and consider opportunities to promote equality, inclusion and accessibility.

Equality Impact Assessments form part of the Council's decision-making framework and are completed for key decisions taken by Executive and Council, as well as for other proposals where there may be a significant impact on residents, communities or employees. The level of assessment undertaken will be proportionate to the scale, nature and potential impact of the proposal being considered.

The Council provides equality guidance, supporting templates and access to advice to help officers consider equality impacts in a practical and proportionate way. Rather than taking a rigid, one-size-fits-all approach, officers are expected to be able to explain how equality has been considered, drawing on available evidence, engagement findings, local knowledge and professional judgement where appropriate.

This reflects the Council's legal duties while recognising the realities of service delivery and decision-making. quality considerations are particularly important when services are reviewed, redesigned or reduced. Considering equality at an early stage helps the Council understand potential impacts on residents, communities and the workforce and ensures these are reflected in planning, decision-making and service delivery.

7.2 Using Equality Information and Learning

The Council publishes equality information each year to show how equality is being considered across its work. This includes information about the Council's workforce, such as the gender pay gap and, where appropriate, people who use its services.

Reviewing this information helps build understanding of how different groups experience employment and access services, and where barriers may exist. Equality monitoring also highlights gaps in understanding and where further insight could be helpful. Monitoring activity remains proportionate and focused on supporting learning and improvement rather than meeting targets for their own sake.

7.3 Equality in Commissioning and Procurement

Many services are delivered by partner organisations, and the way services are bought and commissioned can influence people's experiences. When procuring goods and services, whether delivered directly by the Council or on its behalf, the Council considers equality, fairness and accessibility in a proportionate way.

Suppliers and partners are expected to share a commitment to inclusive and respectful practice and to meet their responsibilities under equality law. By being clear about expectations and encouraging fair access to opportunities, including for local businesses and community organisations, the Council seeks to ensure public money is used responsibly and supports positive outcomes for people who live, work or visit the borough.

8. Equality as an Employer

Our workforce plays a vital role in delivering services. Creating an inclusive working environment helps staff feel respected, supported and able to do their best work.

As the Council prepares for the transition to a new unitary authority, we will continue to support staff through fair processes, clear communication, opportunities to engage with change and access to wellbeing and development support. We recognise that organisational

change can affect people differently and will continue to consider equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the transition. This learning-based approach will help support staff wellbeing, resilience and fair decision-making.

Embedding equality within workplace culture helps ensure the Council remains a place where people feel respected, valued and supported to work collaboratively, contribute their skills and experience, and deliver inclusive, high-quality services for our communities.

8.1 Equality in Everyday Employment Practice

The Council has a range of employment policies that apply to all staff and prospective employees. These policies set shared expectations around behaviour, fairness, support and accountability, helping to create a working environment that is inclusive and respectful.

Rather than being viewed as stand-alone documents, these policies support everyday practice — guiding how people are treated, how issues are addressed and how decisions are made. They cover areas such as equality of opportunity, dignity at work, flexible working and work–life balance, and provide a framework for preventing and addressing discrimination, bullying and harassment. The Council keeps these policies under review to ensure they continue to reflect how the organisation works and evolves.

8.2 Learning and Support for an Inclusive Workplace

An inclusive working culture relies on people having the confidence, awareness and understanding to apply equality principles in their roles. Equality learning supports this by encouraging reflection on how behaviours and decisions affect colleagues and the communities the Council serves.

The Council's approach to learning is shaped by its wider values and culture, and is embedded through a range of activity, including Dignity at Work training, induction, refresher learning, targeted workshops and access to guidance and resources. This supports a consistent approach across the organisation, in the same way that equality learning informs service design and delivery.

This approach helps to:

- promote fair and respectful behaviour at work
- support inclusive leadership by managers and Members
- recognise and value different perspectives and experiences
- build confidence in addressing issues such as discrimination, bullying or harassment
- maintain a working environment where people feel safe, valued and supported

Supporting an inclusive workplace will remain important throughout the transition to a new unitary authority. We will continue to provide staff with learning, guidance and support that helps them understand and apply equality principles in their day-to-day roles. Maintaining a positive and inclusive culture will help support staff wellbeing, resilience and fair decision-making, while ensuring employees feel respected, valued and able to continue delivering high-quality services for our communities.

9. Engagement and Listening

Listening to residents, staff, service users and partners helps the Council make informed and inclusive decisions. Engagement is about learning what matters to people and understanding how Council decisions may affect them. By hearing from a wide range of voices, the Council can build a better picture of local needs and use this insight to help shape services, policies and partnership work where appropriate.

9.1 How We Approach Engagement

The Council's Engagement Policy sets out how engagement is planned and delivered. It reflects learning from previous consultation activity and supports an approach that is flexible, proportionate and suited to different communities.

Engagement is planned based on who the Council needs to hear from and the most appropriate ways to involve them. In practice, this means the Council seeks to:

- plan engagement proportionately and make effective use of available resources
- encourage participation from a wide range of people, including those less likely to take part
- provide suitable opportunities for involvement, recognising different needs and circumstances

Good engagement is not just about collecting feedback. It is also about being open and realistic about what can be influenced, and using what people tell us to improve understanding over time. The Council seeks to be clear about why engagement is taking place and how feedback will be used to help manage expectations.

Where appropriate, engagement insight is considered alongside other information to help inform decisions within available resources. Over time, this approach supports stronger relationships with communities and more meaningful ongoing conversations.

For Council tenants, engagement is supported through the Housing Services Tenant Engagement Policy and dedicated tenant engagement arrangements, which provide opportunities to influence housing services and decisions that affect them. These arrangements complement this Strategy and Engagement Policy, supporting the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing. Alongside wider engagement activity, these arrangements help ensure that tenants' experiences and perspectives continue to inform service development and improvement.

By listening to people and learning from their experiences, we can continue to develop services and policies that are responsive to the communities we serve.

10. Measuring Progress

Measuring progress helps the Council understand how well it is meeting its commitment to equality, accessibility and inclusion. We use information, feedback and insight to understand how people experience our services, identify areas of good practice and highlight where further action may be needed. Sharing this information helps support openness, learning and informed decision-making.

The Equality Strategy 2026-2028 builds on the learning, achievements and experience gained through the Council's Equality Strategy 2022-2026, while responding to current priorities and future challenges.

An annual update on progress against this strategy will be provided through the Council's reporting arrangements. This will include key achievements from both the current and previous Equality Strategy, helping to demonstrate the difference this work is making, support accountability and identify opportunities for further improvement.

As the strategy is implemented, we will continue to review and strengthen our activities in response to feedback, emerging needs, changing legislation and best practice. In terms of measuring success, we will develop a performance evaluation and reporting framework which will align with the priorities set out in the strategy.

11. Equality Objectives 2026-2028

The Council publishes equality objectives to guide its approach to equality, diversity and inclusion over the period 2026 to 2028. These objectives provide a clear focus for how the Council will continue to embed equality in its work.

Objective 1: Continue to Deliver Fair and Accessible Services

The Council will continue to ensure services are as fair and accessible as possible by identifying and addressing barriers where reasonable and proportionate to do so. Services will be kept under review to ensure they remain responsive to the needs of local communities.

Objective 2: Strengthen Inclusive Engagement and Communication

The Council will continue to develop its approach to engagement and communication so that people can stay informed and share their views. This will be delivered in line with the Council's engagement approach (Section 9), supporting fair opportunities for residents to participate in local decision-making.

Objective 3: Improve Understanding of Our Communities and Support Inclusion

The Council recognises the diversity of people, experiences and backgrounds within the borough. Building on existing insight, partnerships and community relationships, the Council aims to improve its understanding of how different people experience services and community life. This will help support inclusion, promote respect and strengthen community cohesion, contributing to a borough where people feel welcomed and valued.

Objective 4: Support an Inclusive and Representative Workforce

The Council will continue to support a working environment where employees feel respected, supported and able to contribute, promoting fairness across recruitment, development and progression and maintaining an inclusive workplace culture.

12. Equality Action Plan

The Equality Action Plan translates these objectives into practical actions. It focuses on continuing to embed equality into everyday work, supporting learning and preparing for future change. The plan will be kept under review to ensure it remains relevant, proportionate and effective.

13. Contact Us

We welcome feedback and involvement from residents, partners and community groups.

Email: equalities@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Phone: 01527 548284

If you need this information in another format or language, please contact us and we will do our best to help.

Equality Action Plan 2026 - 2028		
Theme	What we will continue to do	Examples of how these are being delivered
Understanding Our Communities Better	Use available information (including service feedback, engagement, complaints and partner insight) to understand how people experience	Equality Impacts: Equality considerations built into quarterly performance and service monitoring reports to support informed decision-making.

<i>(Supports Objectives 1, 2 & 3)</i>	services and identify any differences between groups • Apply this understanding to inform service planning, review and improvement • Where analytical tools or AI-supported insight are used, remain mindful of limitations and potential bias, and balance this with professional judgement and local knowledge. • Use available evidence to consider equality impacts linked to service change.	Service Feedback and Complaints Data: Using feedback and complaints data to identify recurring themes and improve services, including understanding differing experiences across groups. Equality Data and Evidence: Using available data proportionately to inform service planning, policy development. Family Hub Services: Using tools such as pre and post questionnaires to measure the outcomes, understand impact and improve delivery Using Insight to Inform Strategy: Applying consultation findings and local evidence to inform strategies including in our Shared Homelessness Strategy.
Making Our Services Easier to Access and Use <i>(Supports Objectives 1 & 2)</i>	• Apply the Council's approach to equality (Section 7) within service design and policy development. • Use feedback and insight to identify and address barriers to access where reasonable and proportionate • Communicate clearly with residents about service changes. • Where reasonably practicable, ensure public-facing information reflects accessibility guidance and good practice. • Keep services under review to help understand how changes may affect different residents and communities over time.	Inclusive Play Audit: Improving accessibility in public spaces by identifying and addressing barriers to access. Town Hall Refurbishment: Improving physical access, including face to face reception desk, to services following the reopening of the Town Hall. Equality in Decision-Making: Equality considerations embedded within committee reports to support transparent and informed decisions. Consultation and Service Design: Engagement activities such as the Local Plan consultation used to shape services and policies based on resident feedback. Clear and Accessible Communication: Providing information in plain English and accessible formats when services or policies change. Family Hubs: Offering tailored approaches e.g. 1:1, home visits to ensure services are accessible to a wider range of residents.
Listening to People and	• Deliver engagement activity in line with the Council's approach (Section 9), providing	Responsible Landlord: Maintaining safe, secure and well-managed Council homes, while working with tenants through engagement activity, tenant satisfaction surveys and improvements to housing

Supporting Their Involvement <i>(Supports Objectives 2 & 3)</i>	opportunities for people to be involved in local decision-making • Work with voluntary, community, cultural and faith organisations to support dialogue and improve understanding • Where appropriate, use accessible communication tools to help widen participation. • Consider engagement findings alongside other information to help inform decisions and service development over time.	services and allocations processes to better understand and respond to need, supporting sustainable tenancies and fair access to housing. Community Engagement Activity: Delivering engagement linked to major programmes such as town centre regeneration, housing and service planning. Inclusive Engagement Methods: Using a mix of digital and non-digital approaches (e.g. online surveys, paper forms, face-to-face engagement) to reach diverse communities. Corporate and Service Surveys: Using surveys such as the annual Places and Budget Survey's and Tenant Satisfaction Surveys to inform service improvements. Partnership Working: Collaborating with voluntary, community, cultural and faith organisations (e.g. Redditch Community Wellbeing Trust, Family Hub Network). Community Collaboration: Working with residents and groups (e.g. allotment associations) to co-design services and improve local spaces.
Bringing Communities Together and Valuing Differences <i>(Supports Objectives 2 & 3)</i>	• Support inclusion and community cohesion through partnership-led activity, where resources and capacity allow. • Maintain awareness of hate crime reporting processes and use available information to help understand local issues and trends. • Continue to engage with voluntary and community sector organisations during periods of change. • Ensure Council communications are respectful and inclusive, including where AI-supported tools are used	Pride in Place: Delivering long-term investment in Greenlands and Woodrow to improve community facilities, regenerate spaces and support inclusive, resident-led change. Community Grants: Supporting voluntary and community sector activity through local grant funding. Community Safety and Prevention: Delivering coordinated programmes to support inclusion and safety, including prevention activity, awareness campaigns, Designing Out Crime initiatives and partnership working through the Safer Redditch Partnership. Neighbourhood Services and Local Environment: Providing visible reassurance through Neighbourhood Wardens, helping to reduce anti-social behaviour and improve local environments, supported by Environmental Visual Audits. Hate Crime Awareness and Reporting: Promoting awareness, improving reporting and ensuring accessible systems through engagement and campaigns.

		Community Engagement and Involvement: Delivering events, outreach and engagement activity to raise awareness, alongside supporting volunteering, community-led initiatives and groups (including SEND networks) with resources, venues and connections.
Supporting our Workforce and Building an Inclusive Workplace (Supports Objective 4)	• Use workforce equality information to understand staff experiences and identify patterns over time • Support managers and Elected Members to apply fair and inclusive leadership in practice • Build on existing learning and development activity to promote inclusive ways of working, support wellbeing and encourage fair treatment at work. • Where new technology is used in workforce-related processes, consider potential equality implications and maintain appropriate human oversight. • Continue to promote awareness of wellbeing support and encourage a working environment where staff feel able to seek support when needed.	Workforce Data and Insight: Improving equality data within HR systems to better understand staff experiences and inform workforce planning. Training and Development: Delivering equality, diversity and inclusion training to staff, managers and Members to support inclusive leadership. Wellbeing Support: Promoting the Employee Assistance Programme and wider wellbeing support to staff. Inclusive Policies: Ensuring HR policies reflect inclusive practice and support fairness. Staff Engagement: Delivering the annual Staff Survey and using findings to improve workplace culture and staff experience.

Please note that, following approval, this document will be formatted and branded by the Graphics team.

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Redditch Borough Council Engagement Policy 2026-2028

Title	Redditch Borough Council Engagement Policy 2026-2028
Description	This policy sets out the Council's approach to delivering inclusive and meaningful community engagement over the period 2026–2028.
Created by	Engagement and Equalities Advisor
Date created	May 2026
Maintained by	Engagement and Equalities Advisor
Next Review Date	April 2028

Version number	Modified by	Modifications made	Date modified	Status

If you need this information in another language or format, please contact us to discuss how we can best meet your needs. Email: equalities@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk or Phone: 01527 548284

1. Purpose

At Redditch Borough Council, we want people to feel informed, heard and able to influence decisions that affect their lives. Engagement plays an important role in helping us understand what matters to people, how services are experienced and how decisions may affect different communities. This insight strengthens the evidence we use and supports fair, practical and responsive decision-making.

This Engagement Policy builds on the work we have already delivered, and the learning gained from previous engagement activity. Over recent years, we have developed a more consistent and inclusive approach, improving how we involve residents, communities and partners in shaping local services and decisions. This experience has helped us create a more practical and joined-up way of working, which this policy now sets out and strengthens for the period 2026 to 2028.

As we continue to develop our approach, we are focused on making it easier for people to take part in engagement and maintaining the relationships we have built with communities and partners. We will continue to listen carefully, particularly to underrepresented voices, and be open about how feedback is used. By doing this consistently, we aim to strengthen trust and ensure engagement is meaningful and valued.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all consultation and engagement activity undertaken or commissioned by Redditch Borough Council between 2026 and 2028, where we are seeking to understand views, inform decisions or improve services. Activity may range from statutory consultation to more informal engagement and may take place at a corporate, service, or local level.

Engagement may be undertaken to meet statutory requirements or to support service improvement and community involvement. It plays an important role in understanding views and informing policies, priorities, services, budgets, and decision-making, including supporting Equality Impact Assessments.

This policy applies to external consultation and engagement activity only. It does not cover internal consultation within the organisation, such as matters relating to employee pay and conditions, which are managed separately through Human Resources. Consultation on planning applications, the Local Plan, and Traffic Regulation Orders is also outside the scope of this policy.

Across all engagement activity, the Council will take a coordinated and proportionate approach. This includes using established engagement channels and partnerships, encouraging participation from a wide range of people, and using a mix of methods to reflect different needs and circumstances. The Council will be clear about what can be influenced and will ensure that feedback is considered alongside other relevant evidence when making decisions.

3. Building on our Successes

Engagement activity in recent years has helped us better understand how people want to take part and what makes engagement effective. We have delivered a range of engagement activity across the Council, including:

- borough-wide consultations such as the Local Plan roadshows, combining face-to-face events with online engagement
- targeted engagement with tenants and service users to inform housing and community safety services
- partnership work with voluntary and community organisations to reach underrepresented groups
- use of surveys, drop-in sessions and community events to support service improvements

We have learned that:

- people are more likely to take part when engagement is clear, relevant and easy to access
- using a mix of online and in-person approaches helps reach a wider range of people
- working with community groups improves reach and trust
- clear communication about what can and cannot change helps manage expectations
- engagement is most effective when it takes place early and is linked to decision-making

This learning shapes how we will continue to develop and improve our approach.

4. Our Responsibilities

National responsibilities

The Council has a responsibility to involve residents and communities in its work. This includes requirements under legislation such as the Equality Act 2010, Local Government Acts and national guidance. We follow established principles of good consultation (the Gunning Principles), ensuring engagement is fair, timely and allows people to give informed views. Alongside this, our approach reflects a wider commitment to being open, transparent and accountable.

What this means locally

In Redditch, engagement supports the Council's priorities and the Equality Strategy and Action Plan. It helps us understand lived experience and consider how decisions may affect different communities. We will continue to strengthen how we:

- reach underrepresented communities
- use insight to inform decisions
- link engagement with equality considerations

A mix of digital and non-digital methods will continue to be used to ensure engagement remains accessible and flexible.

Engagement During Change

During periods of organisational or service change, engagement will remain an important way of understanding the needs, priorities and concerns of residents, communities and stakeholders. The Council will provide clear and accessible opportunities for people to contribute so that community insight can inform planning and decision-making and help maintain trust during periods of change.

5. Our Approach to Community Engagement

What we mean by community engagement

Community engagement is about listening to people, understanding their experiences, and involving them in decisions that affect their lives. It builds on ongoing engagement activity across the Council and can range from sharing information through to working more closely with communities to shape solutions. The approach taken will depend on the issue and what we are trying to achieve, ensuring engagement is both appropriate and meaningful.

Why engagement matters

Engagement helps the Council understand what matters to people, design better and more accessible services, and make informed and balanced decisions. It also supports the development of stronger relationships and helps build trust over time.

For communities, engagement provides an opportunity to have a voice in local decisions, influence services and priorities, and build confidence and understanding. It also helps people see how their views contribute to outcomes and shape future services.

Good engagement is clear, meaningful and takes place early enough to influence decisions. Taking a thoughtful and proportionate approach helps ensure engagement is both effective and valued by those taking part.

What we mean by community

People may identify with communities in different ways, including where they live, shared interests or experiences, and aspects of identity or background. These connections are not always fixed, and individuals may belong to more than one community at the same time.

Our approach recognises this and reflects the different ways people experience community life. We continue to build on existing relationships while also seeking to reach new and less-heard voices, ensuring a broader and more inclusive understanding of our communities.

6. Who is Involved and How We Work Together

Community engagement is a shared responsibility across the Council. Understanding people's experiences and views is essential to delivering services that work well and reflect local needs. Engagement should be part of everyday activity and link with policy, communication, equality work and service delivery.

Across the Council engagement is coordinated to reduce duplication, make best use of resources and ensure insight is shared and used effectively.

Service areas lead engagement relevant to their work, supported by the Performance and Improvement Team. This includes designing inclusive engagement, choosing appropriate methods and using findings to inform decisions.

Elected Members play an important role in representing community views and supporting engagement locally. Scrutiny processes help ensure community insight is considered in decision-making.

7. Putting this into Practice

Community engagement will continue to develop as part of how the Council works day to day, building on existing practice.

Embedding engagement in everyday work

Engagement will be built into how the Council plans, designs and reviews its work. This includes policy development, service design and improvement, budget setting and priority-setting, as well as Equality Impact Assessments. Bringing engagement into these core areas helps ensure that decisions are informed by a combination of data, insight and lived experience, supporting stronger and more balanced decision-making.

A proportionate and inclusive approach

We recognise that not all decisions require the same level of engagement, and that people experience different barriers to taking part. Our approach will reflect the scale and impact of each issue, ensuring that engagement is proportionate and meaningful. We will use a mix of methods and make reasonable adjustments where needed so that people can take part in ways that work for them.

Working alongside the Equality Strategy

Engagement plays an important role in supporting the delivery of the Equality Strategy and its action plan. It helps us hear from underrepresented communities, understand different experiences and identify potential impacts of decisions. This insight informs Equality Impact Assessments and strengthens how equality is considered across the Council's work.

Tenant engagement

Engagement with Council tenants is an important and distinct area of activity.. Housing Services has a dedicated Engagement Strategy for Redditch tenants which aligns with and complements the corporate approach, whilst also meeting the specific requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing

Engagement during change

During periods of organisational or service change, engagement will remain central to how we understand and respond to local needs. We will continue to listen to residents, communities, businesses and partners, using their insight to help inform future service design, priorities and decision-making. Alongside providing opportunities for participation, we will communicate openly about developments and be clear about how feedback is considered, helping to ensure local voices continue to be heard throughout periods of change.

Working with partners and communities

We will continue to work closely with community groups and partners. This includes building on existing relationships, reaching a wider range of people and making the best use of local

knowledge. Working in partnership also helps reduce duplication and supports more effective and long-term engagement.

8. Monitoring and Learning

We will take a data-led approach to engagement so that it helps improve outcomes for residents and supports the delivery of the best possible services. For each engagement exercise, we will set clear aims linked to the decision, service or outcome being considered, including who we need to hear from, the level of take-up we are seeking and how we will monitor whether the approach is reaching a broad and representative range of people. Where appropriate, this will include reviewing participation data, representation and the effectiveness of the methods used. We will use this learning to strengthen future engagement and improve service design and delivery.

9. Get Involved and Contact Us

You can find out about current consultations and engagement opportunities on the Council website www.redditchbc.gov.uk/council/strategy/consultations/

We welcome feedback and involvement from residents, partners and community groups.

Email: equalities@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Phone: 01527 548284

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 17th March, 2026

MINUTES

MINUTE EXTRACT

Present:

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

Officers:

Toni Ainscough, Maria Bailey, Ruth Bamford, Matthew Bough, Mark Cox, Amanda Delahunty, Matthew Eccles, Rachel Egan, Claire Felton, Rebecca Green, Georgina Harris, John Leach, Julie Lorraine, Katie Sharp-Fisher and Judith Willis

Democratic Services Officers:

Eve Davies

109. EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY

The Senior Housing Strategy Officer presented a report on the Empty Homes Strategy.

Members were informed that in October 2025 there were 542,276 empty homes recorded across England, representing 2.1 per cent of all homes. At the same point in time, Redditch Borough had 660 empty homes, of which 320 had been empty for more than six months.

The strategy set out the Council's commitment to identifying empty homes and developing options to bring them back into use as quickly as possible. It outlined the priorities and actions for tackling empty homes across the Borough and for applying the most effective interventions available.

Officers highlighted that a contribution of £7,681 from Redditch Borough Council's Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant (2026/27) had been agreed to support the funding of a part-time Empty Homes Officer.

The aims of the strategy were to:

- help alleviate housing need

Chair

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 17th March, 2026

- improve housing conditions
- offer a wider choice of housing to residents
- minimise the blight that could result where properties were left empty and neglected

It was explained that there were two main types of empty homes. Short-term empty homes were those unoccupied for under six months and typically occurred as part of property sales or routine changes in personal circumstances. Long-term empty homes were dwellings unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for six months or longer. Bringing long-term, privately owned empty homes back into use was the primary focus of the strategy, as these properties often remained empty due to additional underlying factors.

Officers reported that residential properties could remain empty for various reasons, including unresolved inheritance or ownership issues, new homes awaiting sale, abandonment, lack of funds for repairs, awaiting planning decisions, repossession, or perceived difficulties in renting. In some cases, owners also retained sentimental attachment to a property.

The Committee was advised that there was no Act of Parliament that placed a statutory duty on Local Housing Authorities to tackle empty homes. However, Councils had a general duty under the Housing Act 1985 to review housing conditions and housing needs. National policy empowered Local Authorities to bring vacant dwellings back into use, guided by a local strategy.

Local Authorities also had discretionary powers to charge Council tax premiums and a range of legislative tools to address empty homes.

The strategy focused on supporting homeowners to bring empty properties back into use and utilising enforcement measures where necessary. It centred around three priority areas:

1. Developing systems, processes and multi-agency working
2. Improving intervention pathways, resources and performance
3. Strengthening early intervention, engagement and monitoring

Officers advised that the action plan had been developed in line with the Local Government Association's Empty Homes Toolkit, which promoted a staged approach focused on accurate data, early engagement, proportionate enforcement and strong partnership working.

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 17th March, 2026

The Portfolio Holder for Housing asked Members to note that Redditch was in the lower bracket nationally for the proportion of empty homes, with 8.43 long-term empty homes per 1,000 dwellings. The Portfolio Holder welcomed the strategy and commented that the Council continually sought to improve its approach.

Members also made the raised the following points:

- Thanks were expressed to officers for their work in producing the report.
- The action plan provided clarity about when Members and the public could expect to see empty homes being brought back into use.
- Members welcomed the alignment of the strategy with Local Government Association good practice guidance.
- It was noted that the strategy represented a positive step towards bringing homes back into use at a time when many residents were in need of housing.

RECOMMENDED that

The Redditch Borough Council Empty Homes Strategy 2026 – 29 be adopted.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 8.27 pm

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REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Executive
2026**

Tuesday, 9 June

Amended Empty Homes Strategy

Relevant Portfolio Holder		Councillor Portfolio Holder for Housing	
Portfolio Holder Consulted		Yes	
Relevant Assistant Director		Assistant Director Community and Housing Services	
Report Author: Matthew Bough		Job Title: Strategic Housing Services Manager Contact email: matthew.bough@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Tel: 01527 64252 ext 3120	
Wards Affected		(All Wards);	
Ward Councillor(s) consulted		N/A	
Relevant Council Priority		Community & Housing;	
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 amended Redditch Borough Council Empty Homes Strategy 2026 – 29 (appendix 1) be adopted.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A complaint was received by the Monitoring Officer regarding the wording of the Empty Homes Strategy 2026-29.
- 2.2 The complainant felt the strategy was misleading and ambiguous and referred to “Redditch Borough Council homes” repeatedly and gives the interpretation that the figures relate to Council’s own housing stock.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1 Officers have undertaken a review of the wording in the strategy and confirmed it does not repeatedly refer to “Redditch Borough Council homes”.
- 3.2 Having reviewed the wording of the strategy the first sentence of the introduction refers to Redditch Borough had 660 empty homes, however on page 6 under ‘Local Context’ refers to “Redditch Borough Council had 660 empty homes”. This phrasing in the local context section could give the impression that the properties are owned by the Council rather than being located within the Borough.

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2026**Tuesday, 9 June

3.3 Officers consider that this wording may be ambiguous and could inadvertently lead readers to interpret the figures as relating to the Council's own housing stock.

3.2 The Strategy has been amended in the following ways:

- Within the introduction on page 4 the following sentence has been added to the end of the first paragraph.

“This strategy is related private sector empty homes within the Borough of Redditch. Redditch Borough Council's own housing stock empty homes (known as voids) are monitored separately and are not included in the Strategy.”

- The sentence in the Local context page 6 has been altered from

In October 2025, Redditch Borough Council had 660 empty homes, of which 320 had been empty for more than 6 months

to

In October 2025, there were 660 private sector empty homes in the Borough of Redditch, of which 320 had been empty for more than 6 months.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications from this report

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no legal implications from this report.

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

6.1 This Strategy meets the Government's requirement that local authorities continue to deliver high quality and sustainable services for residents during local government reorganisation.

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2026**

Tuesday, 9 June

Relevant Council Priority

- 6.2 Tackling Empty Homes positively impacts:
- Community and Housing

Climate Change Implications

- 6.3 There are no climate change implications from this report.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.4 There are no specific equalities and diversity implications from this report.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 Updating the wording of the strategy ensures readers are fully aware of the purpose of the strategy.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 - Redditch Borough Council Empty Homes Strategy 2026 –
29

**Executive
2026**

Tuesday, 9 June

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Bill Hartnett.	TBC
Lead Director / Assistant Director	Judith Willis	13/4/26
Financial Services	Debra Goodall	13/4/26
Legal Services	Claire Felton	23/4/26

Redditch Borough Council

Empty Homes Strategy 2026 – 2029



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Foreword

I am delighted to introduce this updated Redditch Empty Homes Strategy, as addressing the issue of Empty Homes continues to be a key priority for maximising the use of our existing housing stock.

Safe and secure homes should provide stability for people living across Redditch Borough. However, empty homes in our communities can lead to vandalism and other crimes as well as diminishing the quality of the environment overall. At a time of high housing need and increasing homelessness, empty homes are a waste of a valuable opportunity to provide a family with somewhere to build a successful future.

The aim of this strategy is to further improve our current approach to make the best use of all existing housing across our Borough, and it reflects a step change in our commitment to bringing empty homes back into use.

Whilst Redditch Borough Council already helps willing empty home owners with problems they may be experiencing; we have been able to secure Homelessness Prevention Grant funding to invest additional resources to provide a more proactive approach. We aim to contact owners of empty properties, empty for more than 6 months, and work collaboratively to find the right solutions to complex situations.

This strategy will not punish homeowners with valid reasons for vacancy (e.g. in care, serving in the armed forces), instead it targets those who allow assets to fall into disrepair, reducing housing availability for Redditch residents.

The Council carefully monitors the number of empty homes across the Borough. We are committed to finding new ways of ensuring, wherever possible, all housing is brought back into use, including adopting best practice, learning from successful approaches elsewhere and talking to our empty home owners to find out what support they need.

We are looking forward to seeing this new approach to tackle the scandal of empty homes, bringing them back to life as warm safe places to live.

Councillor Bill Hartnett
Executive Member for Housing

Introduction

In October 2025, Redditch Borough had 660 empty homes, of which 320 had been empty for more than 6 months. There were 943 households on the housing register requiring affordable housing. This strategy lays out how the Council will address local empty homes, supporting home owners to bring properties back in to use as quickly as possible and to use enforcement where appropriate.

This strategy is related private sector housing. Redditch Borough Council's own housing stock void figures are monitored separately and are not included in the Strategy.

Redditch Borough Council is committed to ensuring housing is available to meet the needs of local communities. The Council aims to provide more homes for residents, reduce social housing registers and to increase the availability of affordable rental properties. Bringing empty homes back into use, is a key objective to support these goals.

The aim of this strategy is to:

- help alleviate housing need
- improve housing conditions
- offer a wider choice of housing to residents
- minimise the blight that can result where properties are left empty and neglected

Empty homes can have a negative impact on a local area for several reasons, they:

- attract pests and vermin
- can become a focal point for illegal activities such as anti-social behaviour, vandalism and fly tipping
- increase the risk of squatting
- fall into disrepair – increasing renovation costs and possible risks to the public if structures are unsafe
- increase pressure on public resources

Our commitment

Redditch Borough Council is committed to identifying empty homes and developing options for bringing them back into use as quickly as possible. We will do this by setting out clear priorities and actions to tackle empty homes across the Borough and to use the most effective and appropriate interventions.

What is an empty home?

An empty home is a dwelling which is unoccupied and substantially unfurnished. There are two main types of empty homes. Short term empty homes are dwellings which have been unoccupied for under six months. It is often the case that these are in the process of sale. Short term empty homes naturally occur as people's circumstances change, and they move between homes.

Long-term empty homes are dwellings which have been unoccupied and are substantially unfurnished for six months or longer. Bringing long-term, privately owned empty homes back into use is the focus of this strategy. Rather than representing a natural process of change, long-term empty homes indicate there may be other factors leading to a property remaining empty.

What are the reasons behind empty homes?

Residential properties remain empty for various reasons, for example resolving legal ownership as part of an inheritance process. Other factors include new homes waiting for a buyer, owners abandoning properties, owners having a lack of funds for repairs and refurbishment, waiting for planning consent or decision, repossession and perceived difficulties in renting. There is also evidence that some owners have sentimental attachment to a property and are reluctant to part with it for emotional reasons.

Some owners refuse to engage with the council, or they may be unaware of the issues with their property and the effect it is having on the local area. These are often the properties which can fall into disrepair and stand empty for numerous years. It is essential that the council understands the reasons and intentions behind the properties remaining empty to be able to tailor an approach to support the owner in reaching the best possible outcome.

Advantages of bringing empty homes back in to use

Advantages of bringing empty homes back in to use include:

- reducing and discouraging levels of anti-social behaviour, crime, fly-tipping and vandalism
- increasing the provision of affordable housing
- recovering debt owed to the council
- supporting corporate economic growth and development priorities, objectives and strategies
- improving an area, reducing environmental decline and local people's quality of life resulting from living near a long-term empty home
- reducing additional council tax premiums for home owners

National Context

According to the council tax database for 2025, there were 542, 276 empty homes recorded in October across England, representing 2.1% of all homes. This number has risen by 8% since 2024. Of all empty homes, 309,856 were recorded as long-term empty, 57%.

Action to tackle empty homes has a significant potential to address national housing needs. At the end of June 2025, 86,650 households were in temporary accommodation across England and owed a main housing duty by the local housing authority.

National empty homes policy focuses on empowering local authorities to bring vacant dwellings back in to use, guided by a local empty homes strategy. Local authorities have the discretion to charge empty home owners council tax premiums and have a range of legislative powers to tackle empty homes (*appendix 1*). There is no act of parliament that creates a duty on local housing authorities to tackle empty homes. However, councils do have a general housing duty to review housing conditions and needs.

Council Tax Premiums

Since April 2013 local authorities have been able to charge a council tax premium on homes, empty for more than 2 years, that is, an amount charged on top of the council tax due. From April

2021, local authorities could charge a premium of up to 100% for dwellings that had been empty for between 2 to 5 years, up to 200% for dwellings that had been empty for between 5 to 10 years, and up to 300% for dwellings that have been empty for 10 years or more. Since April 2024, local authorities have been able to charge a premium on properties empty for more than 1 year.

In 2025, 291 out of 296 local authorities charged a premium on empty homes. Across England, 153,000 home owners were charged a premium, 28.2% of all empty homes. Some empty home owners are exempt from paying council tax. The key reasons for this are the owner:

- is deceased and the property is subject to probate
- has moved to hospital or into a care home
- is a charity

Good Practice

The Local Government Association's (LGA) 2023 report, A Practical Approach for Councils on Dealing With Empty Homes, lays out recommendations for best practice identified through case studies and research exploring local authorities' empty homes approaches. LGA good practice approaches focus on systematically identifying and recording empty homes in their areas and engaging, encouraging and using enforcement to bring homes back in to use. Case studies in the report cover the benefits of well-trained and dedicated staff working to effective procedures.

Local Context

Redditch is situated in the north of Worcestershire and has a population of 87,847. In December 2025, there were 943 people on the housing register in need of affordable housing. In October 2025, there were 660 empty homes in the Borough of Redditch, of which 320 had been empty for more than 6 months. Bringing empty homes back into residential use, could contribute to meeting the Borough's housing needs.

National data shows that in October 2025 there were 33,215 long-term empty homes, across the wider West Midlands area (1), representing 1.26% of all dwellings or 12.6 per 1000 dwellings. Across the region, the number of empty homes increased by 4782 (16.8%) between October 2024 and October 2025.

The proportion of empty homes varies widely by local authority area. In October 2025, Stratford upon Avon had the highest number of long-term empty homes per 1000 dwellings at 18.38 and Solihull the least at 5.51. Redditch featured amongst the lowest 10 local authorities at 8.43 empty homes per 1000 dwellings.

Number of Long-Term Empty Homes in Worcestershire

Local Authority	Per 1000 Dwellings	Number Long-Term Empty Homes 2025	Number Long-Term Empty Homes 2024	Change since October 2024	
Bromsgrove	8.88	384	369	15	4.0 %
Malvern Hills	15.97	621	626	-5	-0.8 %
Redditch	8.43	320	283	37	13.0 %
Worcester	14.53	698	653	45	7.0 %
Wychavon	13.71	857	886	-29	-3.3%
Wyre Forest	7.40	364	337	27	8%

Worcestershire	11.59	3244	3154	90	2.9%
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Source: Council Tax Base Oct 2025 & Oct2024

Wychavon achieved a reduction in the number of empty homes over the period, one of the top 5 highest reductions across the wider West Midlands. Rugby achieved the highest reduction, 212 empty homes brought back in to use since 2024. Birmingham saw the highest increase at 1654 empty homes.

(1) In the context of the Council Tax Base, the wider West Midlands refers to Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire. West Midlands and Worcestershire (ONS)

When the number of long term empty homes and all empty homes in Redditch are compared with the number of dwellings in the area, we can see that approximately half have been empty, for less than 6 months. This indicates a relatively higher turnover when compared with the data for Worcestershire as a whole and England.

Local Authority	Proportion of Empty Homes 2025	Proportion of Long-Term Empty Homes 2025
Redditch	1.74%	0.84%
Worcestershire	1.91%	1.16%
England	2.10%	1.20%

In October 2025, there were 320 long-term empty homes in Redditch. The table below shows how these were dispersed over council tax banding. Just over 87% of all empty homes are in bands A to C.

Council Tax Banding	Number	Percentage
A	120	37.5
B	111	34.7
C	48	15.0
D	20	6.3
E	15	4.7
F	2	0.6
G	2	0.6
H	2	0.6

Of all 660 empty homes, 380 were paying full council tax. 134 were paying a premium, which constitutes 20.3% of all empty homes. This was slightly above the county average of 19.3% and below the average for England of 28.2%. There are 146 properties exempted from paying council tax. The reasons for this are varied but most commonly, the owner is deceased and their estate is in probate, or the owner has moved to receive or provide care elsewhere.

From April 2026, Redditch Borough Council premiums will be charged as follows, (where an empty home owner does not qualify for an exemption):

Time Empty	Council Tax Premium
1-5 years	100%
5-10 years	200%
10 years plus	300%

Local Good Practice

Wychavon and Malvern district councils have recently developed their empty homes resources. In 2024, Wychavon appointed a dedicated Empty Homes Officer, who has made progress, bringing long- term empty properties back in to use.

Wychavon District Council & Malvern Hills District Council

Both Worcestershire district councils have a full-time, dedicated empty homes officer working in the private sector housing team. The council tax and private sector housing teams work together, sharing data on a weekly basis to maintain an up to date and accurate empty homes data base.

Local Government Association recommended processes are used to track and monitor empty homes. Wychavon District Council has a target of bringing 30 homes back into use between 2024 and 2028, as part of the We Are Wychavon Plan. Empty homes officers use a range of tools to achieve their aims. Tools include informing property owners of support available as early as possible and using enforcement where necessary. Successful joint working with council tax colleagues also ensures owners of empty homes are paying the correct council tax premiums.

Empty Homes Strategic Priorities

Our approach to tackling empty homes and delivering on our commitment, is centred around three priority areas:

Priority 1

Develop systems, processes and multi-agency working

Priority 2

Improve intervention pathways, resources and performance

Priority 3

Strengthen early intervention, engagement and monitoring

The strategy action plan (appendix 2) lays out details of how each of the strategic priorities will be delivered.

Accountability

Officers will implement the action plan, and progress will be monitored through regular performance reports.

Appendix 1 Legislative Powers for Tackling Empty Homes

Legislation	Summary of Power	Lead Department	Timescale	Priority Use	Notes / Practical Considerations	If Owner Cannot Be Located
Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949	Require owner to keep property free from rats/mice and remove accumulations of waste.	Private Sector Housing/ Worcestershire Regulatory Services	Quick	First-line	Can be used immediately if infestations or waste are visible. Covers gardens and interiors. Cost recovery.	Serve notice to last known address, affix to property, and proceed with works in default if no response. Recover costs via local land charge.
Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 s.29	Secure unsecured or dangerous empty building to prevent unauthorised entry.	Private Sector Housing (with Legal & Property Services)	Quick	First-line / Escalation	48 hrs notice unless urgent. Works in default recoverable from owner.	Affix notice to property and proceed to secure if no owner contact. Charge costs to property as a land charge.
Building Act 1984 s.77 & s.78	Order owner to make building safe (s.77) or take emergency action (s.78).	Private Sector Housing/ Building Control	Quick (s.78) / Medium (s77)	First-line / Escalation	s.78 allows immediate works if imminent danger. Cost recoverable from owner.	Proceed under s.78 without owner consent if imminent danger. For s.77, serve notice to last known address and property. Charge

Legislation	Summary of Power	Lead Department	Timescale	Priority Use	Notes / Practical Considerations	If Owner Cannot Be Located
						costs as land charge
Building Act 1984 s.79	Require repair/restoration or demolition of ruinous/dilapidated buildings affecting amenity.	North Worcestershire Building Control	Medium	Escalation	Limited to amenity impact. Can require rubbish removal from site.	Serve notice to last known address and property. Works in default possible if no owner found. Costs recoverable.
Town and Country Planning Act 1990 s.215	Require improvement of land/building where condition harms local amenity.	Planning Enforcement	Medium	First-line / Escalation	Minimum 28 days compliance. Used for overgrown/derelict sites.	Serve notice to last known address and affix to site. Works in default if no owner found; costs recovered as land charge.
Housing Act 2004	Require works to remove Category 1 or 2 hazards under HHSRS.	Private Sector Housing	Medium	First-line / Escalation	Enables works in default, fines. Powers of entry included.	Serve to last known address and property. If no access, use power of entry (with warrant if needed). Works in default recoverable.

Legislation	Summary of Power	Lead Department	Timescale	Priority Use	Notes / Practical Considerations	If Owner Cannot Be Located
Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO)	Take control of empty home to let/manage it.	Private Sector Housing, Strategic Housing and Business Development Manager (with Legal & Cabinet approval)	Medium / Long-term	Escalation	Must be empty 6+ months. High capital and management resource required.	Can proceed even without contact, reasonable steps to locate owner required, then apply to First-tier Tribunal.
Enforced Sale Procedure (LPA 1925 s.103)	Force sale of property to recover debts over £1,000.	Legal Services (triggered by Private Sector Housing, Council Tax Recovery, or Housing Strategy)	Medium	Escalation / Last resort	Simpler than CPO. Can be linked to works in default or council tax arrears.	Ownership not required for contact, sale can proceed based on registered title and debt charge.
Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO)	Acquire property without owner consent to bring into use.	Private Sector Housing, Strategic Housing and Business Development Manager (with Legal & Cabinet approval)	Long-term	Last resort	Cabinet approval required. Must show voluntary action attempts first.	Can proceed without contact, but must evidence reasonable attempts to trace owner. Notice published and posted on site.
Housing Act 1985 s.17	Compulsory purchase to improve housing stock	Private Sector Housing, Strategic Housing and	Long-term	Last resort	Needs Secretary of State approval. High cost. Disposal to	Can proceed without contact, but must evidence

Legislation	Summary of Power	Lead Department	Timescale	Priority Use	Notes / Practical Considerations	If Owner Cannot Be Located
	or bring empty homes into use.	Business Development Manager (with Legal & Cabinet approval)			RSL/developer/owner-occupier.	reasonable attempts to trace owner. Notice published and posted on site.

Empty Homes Strategy – Action Plan

This action plan has been developed in line with the Local Government Association’s Empty Homes Toolkit, which promotes a staged approach focused on accurate data, early engagement, proportionate enforcement and strong partnership working.

The plan reflects LGA best practice by prioritising the establishment of reliable data and governance arrangements first, followed by structured engagement and intervention pathways, and then scaling up early intervention and enforcement activity once systems are embedded.

The phased delivery model ensures the Council builds capability incrementally, demonstrates value for money, and uses enforcement powers proportionately and effectively to bring empty homes back into use.

Priority 1 – Develop systems, processes and multi-agency working.

Action	KPI / Measure	Start	End	Key Milestones	Responsible Team(s)
Develop systems to record and track empty homes across the district	Centralised empty homes system goes live, 100% of known empty homes logged and tracked	1 st Aug 2026	1 st January 2027	System design complete (1 st August 2026); Go-live (Jan 2027)	Private Sector Housing (Lead), Council Tax
Develop and embed data-sharing processes between PSH and Council Tax	Data-sharing arrangement agreed; routine data transfer embedded as business as usual	1 st July 2026	1 st Sept 2026	Data-sharing agreement signed (1 st July 2026); Automated / routine transfer in place (1 st Sept 2026)	Council Tax (Lead), Information Management, Private Sector Housing
Participate in joint departmental and agency working group for complex cases	Quarterly meetings held; minimum 5 complex cases reviewed and actioned per year	15 th June 2026	Ongoing	First meeting attended (15 th June 2026)	Private Sector Housing (Lead), Council Tax, Planning, Building Control,

					Legal Services, Worcestershire Regulatory Services
Review options for public reporting of empty homes	Online reporting route improved and promoted; baseline established for number of public referrals	1 st July 2026	31 st Dec 2027	Online updates completed (1 st Oct 2026); Communications campaign launched (Dec 2026)	Web Team (Lead), Private Sector Housing, Communications, Customer Services

Priority 2 – Improve intervention pathways, resources and performance

Action	KPI / Measure	Start	End	Key Milestones	Responsible Team(s)
Review PSH processes using support, advice, incentives and enforcement	Baseline established for case progression times; standard empty homes case pathway approved and implemented	1 st September 2026	1 st December 2026	Process mapping completed (30 th Sep 2026); Pathway approved (1 st December 2026)	Private Sector Housing (Lead), Legal Services, Finance, Strategic Housing
Identify range of support, incentives and enforcement options	Menu of support and enforcement tools agreed and documented	1 st October 2026	1 st March 2027	Options appraisal completed (1 st December 2026); Toolkit approved (1 st March 2027)	Private Sector Housing (Lead), Strategic Housing
Develop scoring matrix aligned to LGA Empty Homes Toolkit	Scoring matrix designed and applied to 100% of empty home cases	1 st November 2026	1 st March 2027	Draft criteria (1 st December 2026); Full implementation (1 st March 2027)	Private Sector Housing (Lead)

Analyse effectiveness of empty homes processes	Annual performance report produced; improvement actions agreed and tracked	1 st December 2027	1 st February 2028 (then annual)	Baseline dashboard (1 st November 2027); Year-end analysis (Feb 2028)	Private Sector Housing (Lead), Strategic Housing
Identify and explore good practice to address barriers	Benchmarking completed; practice note adopted and implemented	1 st December 2027	31 st March 2028	Desk research (Dec 2027); Peer engagement (Mar 2028); Practice adoption (Jun 2028)	Private Sector Housing (Lead), Strategic Housing, Empty Homes Regional Network
Develop targets to bring empty homes back into use	Annual and strategy-level targets set; quarterly monitoring in place	1 st Sept 2026	15 th Dec 2026	Baseline agreed (Oct 2026); Draft targets (Nov 2026); Sign-off (Dec 2026)	Private Sector Housing

Phase 3 – Strengthen early intervention, engagement and monitoring

Action	KPI / Measure	Start	End	Key Milestones	Responsible Team(s)
Develop early intervention processes for newly identified empty homes	From go-live, 100% of newly identified empty homes contacted within 12 weeks	1 st Nov 2026	28 th Feb 2027	Workflow design complete (30 Nov 2026); Go-live (Feb 2027)	Private Sector Housing (Lead), Council Tax
Create survey to establish effectiveness of early intervention for previous empty homes owners	Survey designed and issued	1 st Jan 2027	31 st Mar 2027	Survey design (Feb 2027)	Private Sector Housing

Consult previous owners of empty homes	Annual survey completed; action log agreed and monitored	1 st April 2027	30 th June 2027	Findings Report (June 2027)	Private Sector Housing (Lead)
Monitor and report on homes brought back into use	Annual empty homes performance report published	1 st Jan 2027	Ongoing	First annual report published (Apr 2027)	Private Sector Housing
Explore options to increase homes brought back into use (complex / multi-agency cases)	Options appraised annually; at least one new delivery option piloted	1 st Jan 2027	31 st Dec 2027	Long list (Mar 2027); Shortlist & pilots (Jul–Sep 2027); Appraisal (Dec 2027)	Multi-Agency Working Group (Lead), Legal, Finance, Registered Providers / Partners

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MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), Councillor Craig Warhurst (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Brandon Clayton, Wanda King and Ashley Monk

Officers:

Matthew Austin, James Bevan, Matthew Bough, Paul Earley, Claire Felton, John Leach, Simon Parry and Katie Sharp-Fisher

Democratic Services Officers:

Eve Davies

19. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Gemma Monaco.

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

21. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader asked Members to note that at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 27th July 2026, the following items had been pre-scrutinised:

- Housing Assistance Policy 2026
- Food Waste Collections Implementation

Following discussions, the Committee endorsed the recommendations set out in the reports. The Committee also proposed further recommendations in relation to the Housing Assistance Policy 2026, which were detailed in the 'Additional Papers 2' pack.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, the Leader thanked the Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their work in pre-scrutinising the reports.

Chair

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22. HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY 2026

The Private Sector Housing Manager presented a report regarding the Housing Assistance Policy 2026.

The Committee was advised that the purpose of the policy was to support disabled and vulnerable individuals to remain living independently in their own homes. Assistance typically included adaptations such as stairlifts, level-access showers and extensions to facilitate ground-floor living arrangements.

Members noted that, whilst the majority of the elements of mandatory grants were prescribed by legislation, the Council was required to maintain a local policy to set out its approach to a number of discretionary elements for the application of discretionary funding. This included the provision of top-up funding where the cost of necessary adaptations exceeded the grant funding available.

The revised policy had been developed collaboratively by officers from all Worcestershire local authorities. The shared approach was intended to improve the customer experience, ensure consistency across the county and support preparations for Local Government Reorganisation.

The Committee was informed that the principal amendments to the 2024 policy had been made to achieve three key objectives:

- To establish a common policy across Worcestershire authorities and provide greater clarity and consistency of arrangements.
- To adopt nationally recognised performance targets in order to improve delivery timescales for urgent and non-urgent, as well as complex and non-complex, cases.
- To remove additional discretionary fees for high-value adaptations, thereby providing greater flexibility to approve exceptional cases.

Members also noted that the policy recognised the Armed Forces Covenant and set out how the Council would work with local organisations to ensure that serving personnel, veterans and their families received appropriate support where required.

In relation to funding, the Committee was advised that the revised policy would not place any additional financial burden on the Council. Funding for housing assistance was provided by Government through the Better Care Fund and through recycled funding arising from previous assistance cases where repayment conditions had been triggered.

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In concluding the presentation, the Private Sector Housing Manager advised that the policy would enable the Council to meet its statutory responsibilities, provide a fair and transparent framework for housing assistance, support residents to remain independent in their homes, improve energy efficiency and help address service failures where identified.

Following presentation of the report, the Committee considered the recommendations that had been proposed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held the previous evening as set out below:

RECOMMENDED that

The following amendments be made to the Housing Assistance Policy 2026:

- 1) Wording be added to the first paragraph of section 13 – Decisions, Notifications and Redeterminations, to read: “The Council will do everything it can to fast track cases where applicants have rapidly progressing or terminal conditions.”
- 2) Information is set out at the beginning of the document on who is eligible to apply under the Policy (both for the Disabled Facilities Grant and any discretionary assistance set out under the Policy).
- 3) That the financial eligibility criteria (i.e. income and savings test limits and contribution thresholds for amounts above the limit) are clearly set out in the Policy and communicated through information on the Disabled Facilities Grant available on the Council’s website.
- 4) That the Policy is accessible in the languages of communities identified as being under-represented in accessing Disabled Facilities Grant.

In considering the recommendations proposed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Members were advised that arrangements were already in place to prioritise applications involving residents who were receiving end-of-life or palliative care, or who were living with a rapidly progressing illness. Occupational Therapists were able to award an additional thirty priority points at the start of the assessment process, enabling such cases to be fast-tracked where appropriate. Works would then be resolved within fifty-five days, where possible. It was acknowledged that the report could be amended to provide greater clarity regarding these arrangements and the role of Occupational Therapists in prioritising cases.

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With regard to eligibility criteria, officers confirmed that the relevant information was already contained within the policy. However, it was recognised that further clarification could be incorporated to make the criteria easier for applicants to understand.

Members also considered comments relating to the financial eligibility criteria. Officers explained that the means-testing process was complex and assessed a range of factors, including household income, savings and pension arrangements. As a result, it was not possible to provide fixed income or savings thresholds within the policy. It was further noted that the means-testing framework was set by central Government and subject to periodic amendment. To assist applicants, officers suggested that links to further information regarding the means-testing process could be provided on the Council's website.

Members also raised questions regarding the cost of translation services and the associated resource implications.

Following detailed discussions regarding the proposed recommendations, Members agreed to note the comments provided by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The Housing Assistance Policy be approved and adopted; and**
- 2) Delegated authority be granted to the Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to agree any revisions to the Housing Assistance Policy and in line with any legislative or government guidance updates.**

23. FOOD WASTE COLLECTIONS IMPLEMENTATION

The Environmental Services Manager presented the Food Waste Collections Implementation report.

Members were advised that the requirement to introduce a separate food waste collection service had been established under the Environment Act 2021, with a compliance deadline of the end of March 2026. As part of the Act, the Government had committed to providing capital funding for vehicles and containers, together with ongoing revenue funding to support service delivery. Whilst capital funding had been received, the Government had delayed providing details of the ongoing revenue funding arrangements. Members were informed that no specific allocation for food waste collections

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had been identified within the Local Government Finance Settlement and there had been no significant increase in funding to support implementation costs.

It was reported that a number of local authorities had opted not to implement the service at this stage, including Wyre Forest District Council, due to concerns regarding funding.

The Committee was advised that Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council had been working together to develop a joint service. A joint procurement exercise had initially been undertaken with Wyre Forest District Council because of limited depot capacity across the area and the intention to use a third-party provider to support delivery and share risk. However, following changes to the funding position, Wyre Forest District Council had withdrawn from the procurement process, meaning that the original proposal could not proceed.

As part of the Council's financial planning, provision had been made within the Medium Term Financial Plan to address an anticipated shortfall in revenue funding. However, Members were informed that this funding would now be required to support the overall rollout of the service.

The Environmental Services Manager explained that the proposed approach would initially provide food waste collections to approximately fifty per cent of households in Redditch, commencing between late January and early February of the following year. Members noted that the collection vehicles had a lead time of approximately twelve months and were expected to arrive in December 2026. The service would therefore be introduced in phases, rather than being implemented across the whole Borough at once. This phased approach would enable the Council to ensure the service was operating effectively before extending it further.

It was highlighted that a number of local authorities, including Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, had implemented their services on a Borough-wide basis from the outset and had subsequently experienced significant operational difficulties. Members were advised that the phased rollout was intended to mitigate these risks, avoid disruption to existing recycling services and protect the Council's reputation.

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The report also outlined proposals for additional funding to support the eventual expansion of the service to all households. Members were informed that the Council was not currently compliant with its statutory duties in relation to food waste collections. However, commencing implementation would demonstrate progress towards compliance and reduce the risk of legal challenge. It was further noted that Government was not currently taking enforcement action against authorities that had yet to fully implement the service and that none of the Worcestershire local authorities were fully compliant at that stage.

The Committee was advised that the additional funding requirement identified within the report would enable the Council to recruit the necessary staff and deliver further collection rounds, with the aim of achieving full implementation of the service by summer 2028.

Members also noted that the delivery of food waste caddies would be undertaken by in-house staff. This approach was considered advantageous as staff had developed a detailed knowledge of the local area and would be able to support the rollout effectively from the outset.

Consideration was also given to the proposed leasing of land to support service delivery. The Committee was advised that the Council did not have sufficient space at its existing facilities and would therefore need to utilise privately leased land with sufficient space for vehicle storage and staff parking. Although efforts had been made to identify a single suitable site, negotiations were currently taking place in relation to two smaller sites which together would meet operational requirements.

Associated costs would be shared between Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District Councils on a 60:40 basis, with Bromsgrove District Council meeting the larger proportion. The proposed lease arrangement would provide operational security whilst also recognising the uncertainty surrounding Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). A five-year lease with a three-year break clause was therefore proposed, providing flexibility to review requirements as LGR progressed and alternative sites potentially became available.

Following presentation of the report, Members had detailed discussions and made the following comments:

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- Concerns were raised regarding potential hygiene and odour issues associated with food waste collections, together with questions about where the collected waste would be processed and any impact on local communities. Members were advised that food waste would be transported to an anaerobic digestion facility operated by Severn Trent Green Power in Kinver. Food waste would not be stored overnight in vehicles or at operational sites except in the event of a breakdown, and no adverse impacts on local residents were anticipated.
- The scheme would divert a significant proportion of food waste from the residual waste stream, reducing the volume sent for incineration. Approximately thirty per cent of the average household residual waste bin was estimated to consist of food waste.
- Household participation rates remained uncertain and planning assumptions were based on a fifty per cent uptake rate, reflecting national experience. A communications campaign, including letters and social media activity, would support the rollout and encourage participation.
- The initiative also aligned with wider waste minimisation objectives by encouraging residents to reduce food waste and maximise recycling.
- It was noted that disposal arrangements had only recently been finalised once implementation timescales became clearer. Whilst the preferred treatment facility had limited remaining capacity, local authority food waste was generally preferred by operators due to its varied composition and so would be prioritised.
- The phased implementation approach was welcomed as it would allow operational issues to be identified and resolved before the service was expanded Borough-wide. Lessons could also be learned from the experiences of other authorities that had encountered difficulties with full-scale implementation from the outset.
- The Chief Executive advised that correspondence had been submitted to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) outlining the Council's circumstances and demonstrating that all

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reasonable efforts were being made to comply with statutory requirements.

- It was emphasised that the implementation timetable set out in the report should be adhered to.
- Members were informed that food waste collections would take place on a weekly basis. Residents would receive a seven-litre kitchen caddy and a twenty-three-litre external food waste container, with food waste collected on the same day as residual waste.
- Existing assisted collection arrangements for elderly and disabled residents would be extended to include food waste collections, with further information to be provided as part of the communications campaign.
- Flats and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) would be included in a later phase of the rollout to enable lessons learned from the initial implementation to be applied.
- The external food waste containers would be fully sealed and fitted with locking lids to minimise spillages and reduce the risk of pests.
- The Council would provide food waste liners, with an initial supply delivered alongside the caddies and further supplies available on request rather than through blanket distribution.
- Providing liners was intended to increase participation and reduce concerns regarding cleanliness of kitchen caddies. Experience from other authorities indicated that the provision of liners resulted in higher usage rates. Approximately £8,000 had been allocated for the initial supply of liners, with a further £5,000 to £6,000 earmarked for future distribution.
- The liners would be manufactured from a plastic polymer rather than compostable material, as this was the preferred option at the treatment facility. Compostable liners could also interfere with processing and had a shorter storage life.
- Members noted that the proposed approach reflected a model that had been successfully adopted by a number of authorities nationally.

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NOTED the progress made on food waste collection implementation.

RESOLVED that Authority be granted to the Assistant Director for Regeneration and Property Services to negotiate and finalise the terms of the lease for land identified to operate food waste collections from.

RECOMMENDED that an allocation of additional ongoing revenue of £376,311 for the expansion of the food waste collection service from 2027/28 is considered as part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan, with any decision deferred until the full financial implications are assessed alongside wider funding priorities through the budget process.

24. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN SCENE SETTING REPORT 2027/28

The Financial Services Manager presented the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Scene Setting Report.

Members were advised that the report represented the first stage in the process of preparing the 2027/28 budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan through to 2030/31. The report set out the proposed timetable, key assumptions and financial issues that would inform the development of future budget proposals.

It was noted that the report had been prepared during a period of significant change. Whilst the Government had provided a three-year financial settlement, uncertainty remained beyond that period. Members also recognised the implications of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and the approach of vesting day, which created additional uncertainty for long-term financial planning.

The Financial Services Manager highlighted three key messages arising from the report. Firstly, the Council continued to face a number of significant financial pressures. An initial review of the budget had identified pressures totalling approximately three million pounds. Members were advised that a number of savings and efficiency measures had yet to be delivered and that some one-off savings, including those achieved through vacancy management, had not been incorporated into the Council's base budget. In addition, projected shortfalls within the Town Hall budget and other emerging pressures indicated that further action would be required to address the funding gap.

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Secondly, Members were advised of the need to continue prudent financial planning. The assumptions underpinning the MTFP included provision for a two per cent pay award, annual increases in fees and charges, and Council tax increases in line with Government expectations and referendum limits. Despite these assumptions, the financial settlement did not fully offset rising costs, including pay, contractual commitments and inflationary pressures. The Council would therefore need to continue identifying efficiencies and opportunities to strengthen its long-term financial sustainability.

Thirdly, the report highlighted the uncertainty surrounding future local government funding arrangements as a consequence of LGR. As details continued to emerge, the Council's financial planning would need to take account of the associated risks and uncertainties.

In summary, the Committee noted that the report provided the framework for the development of the 2027/28 budget, set out the principal financial challenges and assumptions facing the Council, and established the timetable through which detailed budget proposals would be brought forward for Member consideration.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance highlighted the need to address the two point three million pound savings requirement. He stated that the administration would take greater ownership of the budget process moving forward and noted that additional pressures could arise if future pay awards exceeded the contingency included within the financial assumptions. He further commented that local government remained underfunded and advised that he would be working closely with the Director of Finance and the Finance team to identify savings and address emerging budget gaps.

In response to a query regarding the impact of national policy changes and the future of the New Homes Bonus, officers advised that the funding stream had not been confirmed as ending entirely. It was noted that the local government funding landscape remained highly fluid, making it difficult at this stage to identify with certainty which funding streams would continue beyond the current settlement period. Greater clarity was expected as vesting day approached.

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RESOLVED that

- 1) The budget process outlined in this report be followed for the 2027/28 annual budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan (2027/28 to 2030/31) subject to the impact of Local Government Reorganisation and vesting day on 1 April 2028.**
- 2) The current pressures of £2.338m be noted for consideration as part of the budget process for 2027/28.**

25. TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN REPORT 2025/26

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance presented the Treasury Management Outturn Report for 2025/26. Members were advised that the report presented a positive position and confirmed that the Council had complied with its Treasury Management Strategy. The report also highlighted how the Council had managed treasury activity during a period of global market and economic uncertainty.

Members noted that the Council's investments remained in a positive position and that borrowing was well within approved limits. The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance commented that this demonstrated responsible financial management from a treasury perspective.

Officers clarified that the reported borrowing figure of one hundred and sixty million pounds included one hundred and twenty five million pounds relating to previous refinancing of the Housing Revenue Account.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the Council's Treasury performance for the financial year 25/26 be noted.**
- 2) the position in relation to the Council's Prudential indicators be noted.**

26. QUARTER 4 FINANCIAL MONITORING AND OUTTURN REPORT 2025/26

The Financial Services Manager presented the Quarter Four Financial Monitoring and Outturn Report for 2025/26.

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The Committee was advised that the report set out the Council's final financial position for 2025/26, including performance against budget, explanations for key variances, and the impact on Council balances, reserves and the capital programme.

It was reported that the Council had closed the financial year with an overspend of £579,000. Members noted that this was significantly lower than some of the service pressures projected during the year. The overspend had been funded from the General Fund balance.

The largest service pressures were within Finance and Customer Services, this was largely as a result of a housing benefit subsidy shortfall of one point two million pounds. Additional budget pressures had arisen from the use of agency staffing and work relating to VAT. Environmental Services had also experienced an overspend, largely due to fleet maintenance costs and bereavement services. Members were informed that many of these pressures were one-off in nature and were not expected to recur. These issues, together with income shortfalls and recruitment challenges, would be reflected in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) scene-setting report.

The Committee noted that the Council had benefited from positive corporate finance outcomes during the year, including one point six million pounds in Section 31 grant funding and £541,000 of investment income.

Despite the year-end overspend, the Council remained in a relatively stable financial position, with a General Fund balance of £6.79 million. It was highlighted that these balances provided an important degree of financial resilience. Members also noted that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) position was broadly in line with budget and that the Council continued to invest in its housing stock, energy efficiency measures and the delivery of new homes.

In conclusion, Members noted that while an overspend had been recorded at year-end, the report provided a clear explanation of the underlying pressures and outlined the actions being taken to address them.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance commented that the Council's financial position had changed since Quarter Four, with overspends now anticipated in relation to both the Innovation Centre and the Town Hall. He advised that work was being undertaken with the Director of Finance to gain a clearer

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understanding of earmarked reserves and balances, including reviewing projects to ensure that resources were directed towards schemes that were deliverable. Where projects were no longer considered achievable, consideration would be given to reallocating resources accordingly.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the updated procurements position set out in Appendix A to the minutes be noted, with any new items over £0.200m to be included on the forward plan.

RECOMMENDED that

- 2) The 2025/26 revenue outturn position is an overspend of £0.579m which will be funded by an allocation from the General Fund Balance.
- 3) The Ward Budget allocation for 2025/26 of £54,000 had approved allocations at £46,900 as at 31 March 2026, resulting in £7,100 which is transferred to General Fund reserves.
- 4) The General Fund Balance of £7.364m (as at 1 April 2025) being reduced to £6.792m as a result of the £0.579m overspend and the £0.007m net transfer from Ward Budget Reserves using the approach previously agreed with members
- 5) The outturn position in respect of the GF Earmarked Reserves is £20.957m and HRA Earmarked Reserves is £9.160m as at 31 March 2026.
- 6) The 2025/26 capital outturn position is £8.154m spend against a total estimated programme of £31.847m. The net balance of £23.693m will be carried forward and included for review within the 2026/27 capital programme.
- 7) HRA net operating expenditure is £0.397m, broadly in line with the revised budget, and is break even after a small variance in planned use of balances at year end. Capital Expenditure is net £1.326m more than budget and the balance be carried forward and included in the 2026/27 HRA capital programme.

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27. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Members considered the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8th June 2026.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8th June 2026 be noted.

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

There were no minutes or referrals from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or any of the Executive Advisory Panels on this occasion, other than those already detailed.

29. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 9th June 2026 be approved.

30. 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

There was no urgent business on this occasion

The Meeting commenced at 6.01 pm
and closed at 7.03 pm

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Executive
2026****28th July****Food Waste Collections Implementation**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Brandon Clayton
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Assistant Director	Simon Parry
Report Author: Matthew Austin	Job Title: Environmental Services Manager Contact email: matthew.austin@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 548206
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	No
Relevant Council Priority	Green, Clean & Safe
Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1. The Executive **NOTE** the progress made on food waste collection implementation.
- 1.2. The Executive **RESOLVE** that Authority be granted to the Assistant Director for Regeneration and Property Services to negotiate and finalise the terms of the lease for land identified to operate food waste collections from.
- 1.3. The Executive **RECOMMEND** that:
- 1.4. An allocation of additional ongoing revenue of £376,311 for the expansion of the food waste collection service from 2027/28 is considered as part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan, with any decision deferred until the full financial implications are assessed alongside wider funding priorities through the budget process.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The Government has set a new statutory duty under the Environment Act 2021 to introduce a dedicated separate weekly collection of food waste from all households by 31st March 2026.
- 2.2. As the Council does not currently operate such a service, this will require additional resources to operate, and due to the current size restrictions of the Councils' depots, the Council is unable to add these to our existing arrangements without significant investment in additional land as well as an expansion of the Councils' Operators Licence with

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the Traffic Commissioner and Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA).

- 2.3. For this reason, the decision was taken in January 2025 to externalise the Food Waste collection service, and plans prepared to carry out a joint tender between Bromsgrove District Council, Redditch Borough Council, and Wyre Forest District Council for an external organisation to provide this service on the Councils' behalf, utilising expected "new burdens" funding that had been promised from Central Government as part of the legislation being enacted.
- 2.4. Capital funding was provided by Central Government to support the purchase of vehicles and containers to operate the service with. Further revenue funding was promised under the "new burdens" principle, although confirmation of the value of this funding was delayed repeatedly, and the tender process was eventually started without the confirmation of revenue funding from Central Government due to the approaching statutory deadline. Funding was put in place within the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to offset any potential shortfall that might arise from disparities in government funding models and the Councils' true costs.
- 2.5. In December 2025 it was identified that the promised revenue funding had instead been rolled into the general settlement fund for the Councils', with no identifiable allocation for the operation of food waste collections. This left a significant annual funding gap for provision of the service.
- 2.6. In light of this, Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) has taken the decision not to implement Food Waste Collections until such a time as Government funding is provided, or Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) has been completed, and the new Unitary Authority can review this decision.
- 2.7. With insufficient funding in the Medium-Term Financial Plan, and the withdrawal of Wyre Forest District Council from the tender process, it was not possible to progress with award of the contract under procurement rules.
- 2.8. As a result of this, the Council is currently not compliant with its statutory duty.
- 2.9. Many other Local Authorities have publicly declared that they are unable to meet this duty as a result of not receiving expected additional funding

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for the provision of food waste collections, and are reviewing how they can comply with this legal duty.

- 2.10. In total, 25% of Local Authorities have not implemented food waste collections by the required start date, and a number of Authorities have declared that until additional funding is provided to implement food waste, they will not be implementing this service, whilst others have announced delays in implementation, and/or a switch to a phased implementation to balance their financial and legal responsibilities.
- 2.11. A review of options for internal delivery has been undertaken to allow implementation of the service utilising the funds currently available within the MTFP in 2026/27, and this report presents details on the proposed implementation of a partial food waste collection service utilising the current funding built into the MTFP for ratification, and also details the additional revenue funding required in 2027/28 to support expansion of this service to achieve full compliance with our statutory duty.
- 2.12. This approach now replaces the previous route approval by Council in January 2025 for the outsourcing of the Domestic Food Waste Collection Service in favour of launching an in-house collection service as set out within this report.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1. Aside from the identified funding shortfall, the primary limiting factor on launching an in-house food waste collection service is having the physical space to operate a service from.
- 3.2. Having reviewed all Council owned land across Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils' portfolios, only one site belonging to RBC was identified as viable from a space and legal usage perspective, but this site had a limit on its usage that would require a significant payment linked to its Capital Value to allow it to be repurposed.
- 3.3. Having explored this option, this has been ruled out as not being cost effective prior to LGR.
- 3.4. Having engaged the services of a local land agent, we have identified a limited number of commercially available sites available for lease on the open market, although no single site met our needs to deliver the service.

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- 3.5. As such, two sites in close proximity to each other have been identified that collectively meet our needs, and Officers are making arrangements to lease these on a 5-year term with a break clause after 3 years to support flexibility alongside the timescales for LGR.
- 3.6. This site will be operated as a joint operational depot for the provision of Food Waste Collections across both Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough in order to reduce the individual costs to each Authority of operating a depot and managing the service. This will also give opportunities for further operational efficiencies and increased resilience of the service in line with the Councils' existing joint services to residents.
- 3.7. Specialist food waste collection vehicles have been ordered to support provision of the Food Waste collection service to all residents, and are scheduled for manufacture and delivery by December 2026. The vehicles were ordered in expectation of a full roll-out of the service to all properties as part of the service tender process.
- 3.8. Food Waste Caddies have been ordered, with an expected delivery date in September 2026 for storage in advance of distribution to households ready for the commencement of collections.
- 3.9. When implementing a new food waste collection service, there are a number of variables relating to the "participation rate" and the "set out rate", which is related to how many residents use the service when it is available, and how regularly they may use it. This will impact on the volume of waste collected and the level of resource needed to provide the service.
- 3.10. Research carried out by WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) suggests that an average performing food waste collection service will achieve a participation rate of 35%-55% with the set-out rate 10-15% lower than this (not all households take part every week).
- 3.11. The Councils' have had modelling carried out previously with external consultants *Circulogic*, as well as the government assessment of need that underpinned the Capital funding provided, and have used this alongside detailed route planning using our local knowledge to identify staffing requirements to deliver this service.
- 3.12. Food waste collections will be implemented in line with existing collection days across both Council areas to ensure ease of engagement by residents with the new service, and help improve the

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likely participation rates as well as simplify associated communication about services.

- 3.13. To support engagement with the service, it is planned to provide one roll of food waste caddy liners to all households when the service is introduced. These are bags that fit inside the 7ltr kitchen caddy to help keep them clean and facilitate transfer to the collection caddy for disposal, which is the reason most often cited for not using food waste collection services elsewhere.
- 3.14. Provision of these liners has been demonstrated by the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP¹) to increase uptake in the food waste service, and reduce odour associated with the service.
- 3.15. Although these are not included in the capital funding allocation from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the cost of providing the initial supply and on-going replacements to support residents' engagement with the service has been built into the service models, and will only be supplied on request to residents. This will ensure costs are proportionate to the number of households using the service in order to minimise the cost of this and secure the benefit of diverting food waste from the residual waste stream.
- 3.16. Whilst this is an investment in the service, it is expected to support higher participation in the service and increase the environmental benefits of operating the service by addressing the main concerns regarding hygiene of kitchen caddies and associated odour. This will especially support residents in communal and higher density housing areas by addressing the most often cited areas of uncertainty, and removing the barrier of residents feeling they need to invest in bags themselves.
- 3.17. In light of the financial limitations on how much of the service the Councils' can deliver in the 2026/27 and 2027/28 financial year with current budgets, Officers are currently working towards a two-phase implementation of the service. Phase One is planned to start in Quarter 4 2026/2027, with delivery to a proportion of local residents with a staggered rollout during January, February and March that will allow the Councils to ensure security of the new service and address any issues as they arise.
- 3.18. Overview of planned service implementation:

¹ WRAP are a major UK-based environmental charity and global climate action NGO. They are best known for running campaigns like **Love Food Hate Waste** and orchestrating industry initiatives to increase recycling and reduce waste.

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	Start Date	Redditch Borough Council
Phase 1	Q4 2026/27	2 Collection Rounds implemented (Approx. 50% households to receive service.)
Phase 2	Subject to additional funding	2 Additional Collection Rounds to be implemented to support 100% service provision.

- 3.19. Resident engagement with the new service will be monitored and allow for potential expansion of the service within the phase 1 resources during the first quarter of 2027/28. A reprofiling of the resources required for implementing Phase 2 may then also be possible.
- 3.20. Revenue funding has been provided by Central Government to support communicating the new service to residents. This funding will be used to provide an information pack to each household along with their caddies, as well as wider messaging through social media and via partner organisations such as Parish Councils and Housing providers.
- 3.21. Communal sites, and registered Social Landlords make up approximately 5% of households within the Council's area, and have specific challenges in managing waste. These often need a greater level of support to avoid a negative impact when introducing new services, as well as higher rates of waste contamination and lack of engagement with services.
- 3.22. As a result, it is planned to omit these sites from Phase 1 and plan for the more complex communal sites to be phased in as part of Phase 2 in the third and 4th quarter of the 2027/28 financial year, alongside more targeted resident engagement and education to support this as part of improving the Council's wider performance on recycling services.
- 3.23. Phase 2 implementation will require additional recruitment of staff and delivery of caddies to residents prior to service commencement.
- 3.24. Assuming that funding is approved for 2027/28 as part of the budget setting process, the full implementation would be complete by September 2027 utilising a phased implementation as planned for Phase 1.

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- 3.25. Faster implementation of both Phase 1 and 2 could be achieved utilising a full launch to all properties in parallel instead of a phased rollout, but this would significantly increase the risk of reputational harm and additional costs to address any issues, and so is not recommended, especially given the relatively small improvement in timescales that this would achieve (estimated at 8 weeks variance).

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 In 2024/25, the Council received Capital funding totalling £766,498 through the Government's New Burdens Fund to support the implementation of food waste collections and fund the cost of vehicles and containers.
- 4.2 The Capital funding received is expected to fully meet the financial cost of containers and caddies required to operate the service to all residents. This is expected to be spent in full within the 2026/27 financial year as part of mobilisation for the new service, with unused assets to be stored securely for future use.
- 4.3 An annual revenue budget of £500,000 was allocated to the provision of Domestic Food Waste Collections from 2026/27 within the MTFP at Council on 27th January 2025, in the expectation that additional funding would be received from Central Government to support this "new burden".
- 4.4 The annual revenue cost of operating a full service that meets our statutory duties to provide a dedicated weekly food waste collection to every household is estimated at £876,311.
- 4.5 The table below summarises the modelled cost breakdown for the implementation of a food waste collection service to every household, and highlights the shortfall against the current approved funding within the MTFP.

4.6

	RBC
Staffing	£696,008
Maintenance	£80,000
Fuel	£42,755
Depot Operating Costs ²	£14,548
Depot Lease Costs	£35,000

² Estimate on Business Rates and Utilities.

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Liners	£8,000
Total	£876,311
Variance to Current Budget	£376,311

- 4.7 As such, a partial implementation of the food waste collection service can be implemented in 2026/27, in line with approved funding contained within the budget.
- 4.8 Under these proposals, the service will support approximately 66%/50% of households to receive a food waste collection service in 2026/27 and 2027/28 based on current funding within the MTFP.
- 4.9 To extend the service to support every household in the Council's area and fully deliver against the Council's statutory duty under the Environment Act 2021, will require additional ongoing funding of £376,311 be added to the MTFP³.
- 4.10 Whilst there is no additional funding factored into the MTFP to offset this funding shortfall, the Council is receiving payments from the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme (EPR)⁴, which started in 2025-26 providing local authorities with quarterly payments which "should be used to cover the net efficient costs your local authority incurs in the efficient management of household packaging waste"⁵.
- 4.11 In 2025/26 this funding was used to fund the existing dry recycling domestic waste collection service, and allow funds allocated from the MTFP for Waste collection to be used elsewhere within both authorities.
- 4.12 The MTFP has allocated Council funding for the provision of existing Domestic Waste collections in 2026/27 and 2027/28, and will receive further funding under the EPR scheme for 2026/27 of £1,402,082.83.
- 4.13 Whilst funding for 2027/28 has not been confirmed at this point, the Council has recently received details of proposed updates to the funding calculation to factor in additional recycling materials⁶ to the cost

³ Staffing costs have been calculated based on 3% pay award within the MTFP for 2027/28.

⁴ Effectively a tax on packaging manufacturers to offset the costs of collecting and managing that waste by Local Authorities. Managed by a scheme administrator (PackUK) who share funds based on net efficient costs of collecting household packaging waste.

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/payments-to-local-authorities-under-extended-producer-responsibility-for-packaging>

⁶ Foil and Plastic Tubes

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calculations that are now collected by our services as part of the Simpler Recycling requirements within the Environment Act 2021.

- 4.14 This funding is linked to the manufacture of recyclable packaging and will only fluctuate in line with the volume of packaging produced by the private sector. It is expected to remain a consistent funding stream moving forwards, although will be linked to our recycling quality in future, and could see deductions of up to 20% for poor performance from 2028. Full details of how this metric will be applied have not yet been provided.
- 4.15 £100,000 of this funding has already been allocated to support communication and engagement with residents on recycling quality related to the Council's existing green wheeled bin services, but the remaining funds could be utilised to release existing funding within the MTFP to meet the shortfall from 2027/28 onwards.
- 4.16 Whilst food caddies have been funded by Central Government for the initial launch of the service, and will provide an initial stock for replacement of lost/damaged caddies once the service has started, there will be a need for a future Capital Replacement budget to fund these.
- 4.17 This will be submitted as a budget bid at a later date once the Council has reviewed the volume of replacements required during Phase 1 implementation, so that the bid can truly reflect expected costs.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. The Environment Act 2021 sets out the legislative framework for Simpler Recycling which was launched in October 2023. The Council already meets many of the requirements, but is currently non-compliant regarding its statutory duties to provide a dedicated weekly food waste service to all households from April 2026.
- 5.2. The requirements under the Environment Act 2021 state that Waste Collection Authorities (WCA's) must collect segregated food waste at least once per week from 31 March 2026, with no qualification made for technical or economic practicability or the extent of any environmental benefit.
- 5.3. The Council has no statutory exemption via secondary legislation and is currently in breach of its obligations under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, as amended by the Environment Act 2021.
- 5.4. The statutory scheme does not provide for DEFRA and/or the Environment Agency as the frontline regulator to sanction WCAs directly

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for failure to comply with mandatory food waste collection requirements, and there is no provision for the prosecution of WCAs for non-compliance, leaving Judicial Review as the primary legislative risk.

- 5.5. The onus in this situation is on the authority to demonstrate it has taken all reasonable steps to perform the statutory duty, as Local Authorities cannot choose to be non-compliant with statutory legislation.
- 5.6. A Council cannot use a lack of funds as a justification to break the law, even if it causes severe financial strain, and this principle is well documented in case law.
- 5.7. This report details the mitigation of this risk, and a proposed path to achieve full compliance at the earliest opportunity, which would be 2027/28 subject to the date of funding approval and associated recruitment that would be required to deliver Phase 2 of the service.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS**6.1. Local Government Reorganisation**

- 6.1.1. Proposals to implement a phased introduction of domestic food waste collections will ensure financial stability, and secure the capital assets to support a full collection service for our current residents.
- 6.1.2. Whilst it is hoped that the service will be able to identify sufficient productivity and efficiency savings to implement a full service before LGR has been completed, any unutilised assets such as vehicles and caddies will transfer to the new Unitary Authority that will be created.
- 6.1.3. As part of LGR, it is expected that opportunities to combine resources to support more efficient services will be considered. There may be additional sites identified to support operational services beyond those the Council have access to currently.
- 6.1.4. Should a North Worcestershire Unitary Council be adopted, the funds received by Wyre Forest District Council from Central Government are expected to transfer across to the new Unitary Authority, and will most likely support investment and expansion of the existing Bromsgrove and Redditch Service alongside further route optimisation to make full use of existing Council depots to operate efficient services.
- 6.1.5. Should a single combined Worcestershire model be adopted, funds received and not yet assigned to a dedicated food waste service in

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Wychavon District will support expansion of any existing schemes, as well as provide access to their Pershore depot. This may support provision of services to residents without the need for leasing of private land to operate a food waste collection service from.

6.2. Relevant Council Priority

6.2.1. Environment/Green, Clean & Safe

6.3. Climate Change Implications

6.3.1. Food waste collections contribute to carbon reduction by diverting biodegradable waste from incineration and supporting anaerobic digestion processes which provide biogas and biomethane. These are used to generate electricity as well as support the national gas grid as a sustainable source of energy within the circular economy.

6.3.2. Waste composition analysis carried out in 2022 on a sample of residual waste bins showed that residents in Redditch Borough produced an average of 2.07kg per household per week. The average across Worcestershire was 2.17kg. This is on a par with a national average of 3KG per week publicised by WRAP.

6.3.3. It is therefore expected that if 50% of households each presented their food waste for collection, the Council could expect to collect approximately 1000 tonnes per year.

6.3.4. This will divert this waste from incineration within the existing residual waste service, to processing by anaerobic digestion which produces more sustainable energy generation as well as bio-digestate to return nutrients to the environment as part of the circular economy.

6.3.5. Diverting food waste from incineration to anaerobic digestion typically delivers a carbon saving of around 60–70 kg CO₂e per tonne⁷, which would result in a Carbon saving of 65 tonnes based on a 50% take-up of the service.

6.4. Community Impact

6.4.1. Implementing a food waste collection service is expected to deliver benefits to residents by reducing the carbon impact of their household waste on the environment.

⁷ based on WRAP's conversion factors for waste treatment options (CarbonWARM2)

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6.4.2. By collecting food waste on a weekly basis, it will improve hygiene and support public health by removing putrescible waste more frequently than the existing fortnightly collection service within the residual waste stream.

6.4.3. A dedicated food waste collection can help residents identify avoidable food waste, and influence changes in behaviour and/or shopping habits. This reduces the volume of waste produced and also typically saves money on household food bills.

6.5. Equalities and Diversity Implications

6.5.1. People with disabilities may require assistance in presenting their food waste caddy for collection. This will be provided as part of our existing assisted collection scheme, and will be publicised alongside the introduction of a new collection scheme as part of the information provided directly to every household when the caddies are delivered.

6.5.2. There could potentially be a negative impact on people from particular ethnic groups whose first language is not English and any subsequent misunderstandings about the correct food waste disposal instructions. Imagery will be used to help simplify the message as much as possible, and further assessment will be needed to identify the scale of this, and consider how to address these concerns through planned waste education and engagement with residents.

6.5.3. A full Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out prior to the launch of the new service in order to identify any additional elements and implement mitigation measures to support this.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT**7.1. Lack of a suitable site to operate a service**

7.1.1. Domestic Food Waste service cannot be operated without additional land and a formal extension to the Council's Operator's Licence.

7.1.2. Land has been identified and contract arrangements being progressed to secure and safeguard proposed timescales.

7.2. Operator's Licence requirements for operating a HGV fleet

7.2.1. The Council have now appointed a second Operators Licence Holder as part of the shared services with Redditch Borough Council, which

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increases the oversight capacity regarding the number of vehicles that the Councils can operate.

7.2.2. Whilst there is limited physical space to support increasing our capacity on existing sites, this increased oversight capacity will allow the Council to demonstrate how a satellite site can be operated as an extension to the existing Operator's licence.

7.2.3. Officers have commenced discussions with the Traffic Commissioner's office and DVSA to vary the existing licences, and/or set up a new licence as required for a satellite site. This typically can be approved within 6-8 weeks, although more complex arrangements can take up to 12 weeks.

7.3. Planning permission delays

7.3.1. The Planning Team will be consulted regarding proposed sites for a new satellite depot as part of the Council's mobilisation process to ensure compliance with all planning requirements.

7.3.2. Should Planning permission be required to support a change of use or specific works to make changes to a proposed depot site, these will be mitigated through early submission and pre-application engagement with the Planning Team as per standard processes.

7.4. Vehicle delivery delays

7.4.1. Vehicles have been ordered and are currently scheduled for delivery in December 2026. This can vary if there are delays in the manufacturing process.

7.4.2. Close coordination with the manufacturer will seek to ensure that any delays are identified at the earliest stage possible, and opportunities explored with the manufacturer and hire companies for the provision of alternate vehicles to allow services to commence as planned.

7.4.3. Any costs associated with putting interim arrangements in place will be considered against available budgets to ensure the service remains viable given the high financial cost and risk associated with minimum lease periods.

7.4.4. Contingency plans will form part of the mobilisation plan to ensure that staff can be redeployed or used to support other related waste and recycling duties that support education and awareness of recycling

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quality and waste minimisation should this not be achievable, and the start date need to be delayed.

7.5. Food Waste Caddy procurement and delivery delays.

- 7.5.1. Food Caddies are available through procurement frameworks, and quoted timescales support delivery in readiness for us to distribute to residents during Quarter 3 of 2026/27 in advance of service commencement in Quarter 4 2026/27. Current timescales support a 3–4-week buffer to accommodate any potential delays in manufacture, although experience supports this as a low-risk issue.

7.6. Low take up of the service

- 7.6.1. Food Caddies will be delivered with supporting information as a welcome pack regarding use of the service and the associated benefits. This will be supported by a wider Communications Plan based on dedicated resources developed by the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to support Local Authorities in implementing Food Waste Collections across the UK.
- 7.6.2. Any underutilised capacity within the service will be able to support more targeted engagement in initial launch areas, and then be utilised to support expansion of the service.
- 7.6.3. Collection Data will be monitored to track participation and associated tonnages to target messaging and resources proactively to support usage of the service.
- 7.6.4. This data will also support wider service planning regarding the future of household collections for residents. Coupled with waste composition analysis of the residual waste stream, this will provide evidence to support consideration of ways to pressurise the waste stream to encourage more residents to make use of the service in low performing areas.

7.7. Inability to secure disposal at modelled disposal point

- 7.7.1. Route planning has been based upon access to the Severn Trent Green Power Site, which has not been contractually secured by Worcestershire County Council (WCC).
- 7.7.2. Once a decision has been confirmed on the scale of services to be implemented, this should give security to support WCC in completing the contract. Close communication during the mobilisation period will ensure

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that any changes to the disposal point can be factored in, and services adjusted where appropriate. This may impact on the number of properties the service can collect from in a week with the proposed resource, requiring additional staff/vehicles/salary costs to support the additional travelling time for disposal.

7.8. Pace of implementation and expansion to meet the Council's full statutory duties

- 7.8.1. Implementation of food waste collection services will be managed and monitored using a structured mobilisation plan as set out in Appendix 1. This will be regularly updated to reflect any amendments or delays, and reviewed by the Waste Project Board to ensure timescales are managed and achieve the successful delivery of services.

7.9. Legal Sanctions

- 7.9.1. The Council has no statutory exemption from its statutory duty to provide food waste collections to all households, and is currently in breach of its obligations under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, as amended by the Environment Act 2021.
- 7.9.2. The statutory scheme does not provide for DEFRA and/or the Environment Agency as the frontline regulator to sanction WCAs directly for failure to comply with mandatory food waste collection requirements, and there is no provision for the prosecution of WCAs for non-compliance, leaving Judicial Review as the primary legislative risk.
- 7.9.3. Mitigation to date has been open dialogue with DEFRA regarding the impact of the withdrawal of promised Government revenue funding for the implementation of the service and the challenges facing implementation of the new service in this context.
- 7.9.4. Having a clear plan and timescale to launch a full service at the earliest demonstrable opportunity will help demonstrate reasonability in meeting our statutory responsibilities.

8. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Brandon Clayton	22/6/26

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Lead Director / Assistant Director	Guy Revans – Executive Director Simon Parry – Assistant Director Environmental Services & Housing Property	19/6/26 23/6/26
Financial Services	James Walton – Director of Finance (S151) Paul Earley – Financial Services Manager Maqsood Ahmed – Finance Business Partner	29/6/26 23/6/26 23/6/26
Legal Services	Claire Felton, Assistant Director of Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services	30/6/26
Climate Change Team (if climate change implications apply)	Matt Eccles, Climate Change Manager	18/6/26

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Executive****28th July 2026****Treasury Management Outturn Report 2025/26**

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

1. SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to set out the annual outturn for 2025/26 on the Council's Capital and Treasury Management Strategies, including all prudential indicators.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee is asked to:

- 1) Recommend the Council's Treasury performance for the financial year 25/26.
- 2) Recommend the position in relation to the Council's Prudential indicators.

3. BACKGROUND**Introduction**

- 3.1 The Authority has adopted the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's *Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice* (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Authority to approve, as a minimum, treasury management semi-annual and annual outturn reports.
- 3.2 This report includes the requirement in the 2021 Code, mandatory from 1st April 2023, of reporting the treasury management prudential indicators. The non-treasury prudential indicators are incorporated in the Authority's normal quarterly revenue report.

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- 3.3 The Authority's treasury management strategy for 2025/26 was approved in February 2025. The Authority has invested and borrowed substantial sums of money and is therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of risk remains central to the Authority's treasury management strategy.

External Context

- 3.4 **Economic background:** The financial year was largely dominated by two periods of significant uncertainty and volatility. The first being the US trade tariff 'Liberation Day' in April 2025 and the second was the US/Israel war with Iran at the end of February 2026.
- 3.5 After the initial fallout from US trade tariffs, the following months saw some improvements as equity markets made gains and bond yields eased modestly. However, in the UK this trend in bond yields reversed somewhat as an uncertain economic outlook together with concerns around the government's fiscal position and autumn Budget saw 'term premia' rise as investors demanded a higher return for holding gilts.
- 3.6 The Budget itself was more muted than had been expected. Despite a weak economic outlook, this helped UK markets perform better with gilt yields trending downwards, inflation easing, and expectations for cuts in Bank of England (BoE) Bank Rate increasing.
- 3.7 The end of February 2026 saw the start of the war between US/Israel and Iran. The conflict caused oil and other commodity prices to rise sharply as the shipping lanes in the region became effectively closed, restricting global oil supply. At the end of the period, the economic outlook remained highly uncertain in terms of its impact on inflation as well as countries' fiscal and monetary policy conditions around the globe.
- 3.8 Prior to the start of the war, headline UK consumer price inflation (CPI) inflation had generally been trending downwards, albeit the 3% in February 2026 was unchanged from January. Core CPI also stayed put at 3.1%. Inflation was expected to fall further over the coming months to the BoE's 2% target, but the war changed this. Inflation is now expected to rise again, but how quickly and by how much depends on the duration of the war and how long commodity prices are elevated.
- 3.9 The Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported the UK economy expanded by 0.1% in Q4 2025. This followed previous modest gains of 0.2% in Q2 and by 0.1% in Q3. Of the subsequent monthly figures, the ONS estimated that GDP showed no growth in January 2026. As this is from before the war started the impact on growth will not be seen formally in the data for a couple more months.

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- 3.10 While the most recent labour market figures were slightly better than expected, the general trend has been one of persistent weakness. In the three months to January 2026, the unemployment rate rose to 5.2% (from 5.1%), while the employment rate held at 75.1%. Despite inflation being expected to rise in the coming months, labour market conditions remain loose and so any upward pressure on wages from general inflation is likely to be tempered by the weaker labour market environment.
- 3.11 After cutting Bank Rate to 3.75% in December 2025, the BoE's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) voted 5-4 to hold rates in February 2026 and then unanimously to do so again in March. Until the war started, financial markets were expecting Bank Rate to be cut to 3.5% at the March meeting. However, the conflict in the Middle East quickly changed this. The MPC noted the risks to both inflation and growth and indicated they could move rates either up or down depending on the conditions. Financial markets quickly responded to this by pricing in rate hikes.
- 3.12 Following the March MPC meeting, Arlingclose, the authority's treasury adviser, revised its central interest rate view and now predicts Bank Rate will be held at 3.75%. However, the conflict makes the outlook for rates highly uncertain. In the short-term the risks are to the upside with the chance of higher Bank Rate should the MPC decide it wishes to quickly quash potential second-round effects from higher inflation. Further out, if Bank Rate is hiked quickly, the pace and magnitude of subsequent cuts could take it far lower than was previously anticipated as policymakers add significant stimulus to a much weaker economic growth outlook.
- 3.13 The US Federal Reserve had been cutting rates over the period, reducing Fed Funds Rate target range by 0.25% at its December meeting to 3.50%-3.75%. At the three subsequent meetings, the rate was held at the same range. Policymakers noted that while inflation was elevated, economic activity had been expanding but the war with Iran made the path of monetary policy highly uncertain. Despite this, the Fed still suggested that further rate cuts were likely in 2026 and 2027.
- 3.14 The European Central Bank (ECB) has kept its key interest rates on hold since June 2025, maintaining the deposit rate at 2.0% and main refinancing rate at 2.15%. At its March 2026 meeting, the ECB noted the war in the Middle East had significantly increased uncertainty, creating upside risks for inflation and downside risks for growth, leading it to revise up its forecasts accordingly.
- 3.15 **Financial markets:** After declining sharply early in the financial year following the announcement of US tariffs, sentiment in financial markets had improved but equity and bond markets remained volatile throughout. However, the latter part of the period was dominated by the US/Israel war with Iran, which saw equity markets fall sharply, and

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bond yields rise as concerns over the inflationary impact from sharply higher oil and other commodity prices outweighed the flight-to-quality into government bonds often seen in conflicts.

- 3.16 Equity markets had been registering gains after the declines during the April sell-off, but the war reversed this and markets saw another sharp drawdown. Both the FTSE 100 and 250 fell by around 10% over the month from the start of the conflict to the end of the financial year.
- 3.17 The period saw significant volatility in gilt yields. The 10-year UK benchmark gilt yield started the year at 4.65% and ended at 4.86%. However, over this time the 10-year yield hit a low of 4.23% and a high of 4.95% in the space of a month. It was a similar picture for the 20-year gilt which started at 5.18% and ended at 5.45% with a low and high of 4.92% and 5.55% respectively. The Sterling Overnight Rate (SONIA) averaged 4.01% over the 12 months to 31st March.
- 3.18 **Credit review:** Arlingclose maintained its recommended maximum unsecured duration limit on most of the banks on its counterparty list at 6 months. The other banks remain on 100 days.
- 3.19 Earlier in the period, Fitch upgraded NatWest Group and related entities to AA- from A+ and placed Clydesdale Bank's long-term A- rating on Rating Watch Positive. Fitch later upgraded Clydesdale Bank and HSBC, but downgraded Lancashire CC and Close Brothers.
- 3.20 Moody's affirmed OP Corporate's rating at Aa3 In May 2025. Later in the period, Moody's upgraded Transport for London, Allied Irish Banks, Bank of Ireland, Toronto-Dominion Bank, DZ Bank, Nordea and HSBC and downgraded Close Brothers. In the last quarter of 2025 S&P upgraded Clydesdale Bank, Allied Irish Banks and Bank of Ireland, and assigned Warrington Council a BBB+ rating.
- 3.21 After spiking in April 2025 following the US trade tariff announcements, UK credit default swap (CDS) prices had trended down before picking up modestly in October and November. After declining again in December and into the new calendar year, they rose sharply once again when the war in the Middle East started. They were still elevated at the end of the period, but prices for all banks on Arlingclose's counterparty list remained within limits deemed satisfactory for maintaining credit advice at current durations.
- 3.22 Overall, European banks' CDS prices have generally been flatter and lower compared to the UK, as have Singaporean and Australian lenders while some Canadian bank CDS

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prices have remained elevated since the beginning of the period in part due to ongoing trade tensions with the US.

- 3.23 Financial market volatility is expected to remain, and CDS levels will be monitored for signs of ongoing credit stress. As ever, the institutions and durations on the Authority's counterparty list recommended by Arlingclose remain under constant review.

Local Context

- 3.24 On 31st March 2025, the Authority had net borrowing of £28.06m arising from its revenue and capital income and expenditure. The underlying need to borrow for capital purposes is measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), while balance sheet resources are the underlying resources available for investment. These factors are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Balance Sheet Summary

	31.3.25	31.3.26
	Actual	Actual
	£m	£m
General Fund & Regeneration CFR	25.24	43.05
HRA CFR	126.80	126.80
Total CFR	152.04	169.85
External borrowing**	103.93	115.93
Internal borrowing	48.11	53.92
Less: Usable reserves	-18.10	-20.96
Less: Working capital	-4.90	-4.90
Net borrowing	25.11	28.06

** shows only loans to which the Authority is committed and excludes optional refinancing

- 3.25 The treasury management position at 31st March and the change during the year is shown in Table 2 below.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Executive****28th July 2026**Table 2: Treasury Management Summary

	31.3.25 Balance £m	Movement £m	31.3.26 Balance £m	31.3.26 Rate %
Long-term borrowing				
- PWLB	-98.93	0.00	-98.93	3.31%
- LOBOs				
- Other	-5.00	0.00	-5.00	4.71%
Short-term borrowing	0.00	-12.00	-12.00	5.25%
Total borrowing	-103.93	-12.00	-115.93	
Long-term investments				
Short-term investments	4.20	-4.20	0.00	5.00%
Cash and cash equivalents				
Total investments	4.20	-4.20	0.00	
Net borrowing	-99.73	-16.20	-115.93	

Borrowing Strategy and Activity

- 3.26 As outlined in the treasury strategy, the Authority's chief objective when borrowing has been to strike an appropriate risk balance between securing lower interest costs and achieving cost certainty over the period for which funds are required, with flexibility to renegotiate loans should the Authority's long-term plans change being a secondary objective. The Authority's borrowing strategy continues to address the key issue of affordability without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio.
- 3.27 Gilt yields slightly decreased over most of the period; reflecting expectations of lower interest rates, a tepid economy and to some extent an improvement in the UK governments fiscal position following tax rises in the autumn budget. Subsequent to the war in the Middle East however, gilt yields saw a rapid rise to above the yield at the beginning of the financial year.
- 3.28 The PWLB certainty rate for 10-year maturity loans was 5.38% at the beginning of the period and 5.72% at the end. The lowest available 10-year maturity certainty rate was 5.13% and the highest was 5.88%. Rates for 20-year maturity loans ranged from 5.71% to 6.37% during the period, and 50-year maturity loans from 5.46% to 6.24%. The cost of short-term borrowing from other local authorities has been similar to or a little above

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Base Rate for most of the period, with interest rates between 4.0% and 4.5%. However, as is commonly seen, rates rose higher towards the end of the financial year, with rates of 5.0% - 7.0% being seen.

- 3.29 CIPFA's 2021 Prudential Code is clear that local authorities must not borrow to invest primarily for financial return and that it is not prudent for local authorities to make any investment or spending decision that will increase the capital financing requirement and so may lead to new borrowing, unless directly and primarily related to the functions of the Authority. PWLB loans are no longer available to local authorities planning to buy investment assets primarily for yield unless these loans are for refinancing purposes. The Authority has no new plans to borrow to invest primarily for financial return.
- 3.30 **Loans Portfolio:** At 31st March the Authority held £115.93m of loans, as part of its strategy for funding previous and current years' capital programmes. Outstanding loans on 31st March 2026 are summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Borrowing Position

	31.3.25 Balance £m	Net Movement £m	31.3.26 Balance £m	31.3.26 Weighted Average Rate %	31.3.26 Weighted Average Maturity (years)
Public Works Loan Board	98.93		98.93	3.31%	14
Banks (LOBO)					
Banks (fixed term)	5.00		5.00	4.71%	25
Local authorities (long-term)					
Local authorities (short-term)		12.00	12.00	5.25%	0.25
Total borrowing	103.93	12.00	115.93		

Treasury Investment Activity

- 3.31 The CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes (revised in 2021) defines treasury management investments as investments that arise from the organisation's cash flows or treasury risk management activity that ultimately represents balances that need to be invested until the cash is required for use in the course of business.

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- 3.32 The Authority does not hold any invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves held. During the period, the Authority's investment balances ranged between £0.3 and £12.0 million due to timing differences between income and expenditure. The investment position is shown in table 4 below.

Table 4: Treasury Investment Position

	31.3.25	Net	31.3.26	31.3.26
	Balance	Movement	Balance	Weighted Average Maturity
	£'000	£'000	£'000	days
Banks & building societies (secured deposits)				
Covered bonds (secured)				
Government				
Local authorities and other govt entities				
Corporate bonds and loans				
Money Market Funds	6.50	-6.50	0.00	24
Total investments	6.50	-6.50	0.00	

- 3.33 Both the CIPFA Code and government guidance require the Authority to invest its funds prudently, and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its treasury investments before seeking the optimum rate of return, or yield. The Authority's objective when investing money is to strike an appropriate balance between risk and return, minimising the risk of incurring losses from defaults and the risk of receiving unsuitably low investment income.
- 3.34 As demonstrated by the liability benchmark in this report, the Authority expects to be a long-term investor and treasury investments therefore include both short-term low risk instruments to manage day-to-day cash flows and longer-term instruments where limited additional risk is accepted in return for higher investment income to support local public services.
- 3.35 Bank Rate reduced from 4.50% to 4.25% in May 2025, followed by a further reduction to 4.00% in August 2025 and to 3.75% in December 2025. Short term interest rates have largely followed these levels. The rates on DMADF deposits ranged between 3.9% and

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4.45% and money market rates between 3.4% and 4.2%.

Non-Treasury Investments

- 3.36 The definition of investments in the Treasury Management Code now covers all the financial assets of the Authority as well as other non-financial assets which the Authority holds primarily for financial return. Investments that do not meet the definition of treasury management investments (i.e. management of surplus cash) are categorised as either for service purposes (made explicitly to further service objectives) and or for commercial purposes (made primarily for financial return).
- 3.37 Investment Guidance issued by the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and Welsh Government also includes within the definition of investments all such assets held partially or wholly for financial return.

Treasury Performance

- 3.38 The Authority measures the financial performance of its treasury management activities both in terms of its impact on the revenue budget and its relationship to benchmark interest rates, as shown in table 5 below.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Executive****28th July 2026**Table 5: Performance

	Actual £m	Budget £m	Over/ under
<i>PWLB Maturity Loan 1</i>	15.00		
<i>PWLB Maturity Loan 2</i>	25.00		
<i>PWLB Maturity Loan 3</i>	40.00		
<i>PWLB Maturity Loan 4</i>	18.93		
<i>Barclays Loan</i>	5.00		
<i>Local Authority Loans</i>	12.00		
Total borrowing	115.93		
<i>PFI and Finance leases</i>			
Total debt	115.93	175.00	-59.07
<i>Short-term Investments</i>	0.00	10.00	-10.00
Total treasury investments	0.00	10.00	-10.00

MRP Regulations

- 3.39 On 10th April 2024 amended legislation and revised statutory guidance were published on Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). The majority of the changes take effect from the 2025/26 financial year, although there is a requirement that for capital loans given on or after 7th May 2024 sufficient MRP must be charged so that the outstanding Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) in respect of the loan is no higher than the principal outstanding less the Expected Credit Loss (ECL) charge for that loan.
- 3.40 The regulations also require that local authorities cannot exclude any amount of their CFR from their MRP calculation unless by an exception set out in law. Capital receipts cannot be used to directly replace, in whole or part, the prudent charge to revenue for MRP (there are specific exceptions for capital loans and leased assets).

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Executive****28th July 2026****Compliance**

- 3.41 The Director of Finance and Section 151 officer reports that all treasury management activities undertaken during the year complied fully with the principles in the Treasury Management Code and the Authority's approved Treasury Management Strategy. Compliance with specific investment limits is demonstrated in table 6 below.

Table 6: Investment Limits

	2025/26 Maximum	31.3.26 Actual	Complied? Yes/No
Any single organisation, except the UK Government	£4m each	£0m	Yes
UK Central Government	Unlimited	£0m	Yes
Unsecured investments with banks and building societies	£2.5m in total	£0m	Yes
Loans to unrated corporates	£1m in total	£0m	Yes
Money Market Funds	£20m in total	£0m	Yes
Foreign countries	£5m per country	£0m	Yes
Real Estate Investment Trusts	£2.5m in total	£0m	Yes

- 3.42 Compliance with the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary for external debt is demonstrated in table 7 below.

Table 7: Debt and the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary

	2025/26 Maximum	31.3.26 Actual	2025/26 Operational Boundary	2025/26 Authorised Limit	Complied? Yes/No
Borrowing	175.00	115.93	170.00	180.00	Yes
PFI and Finance Leases	1.50	0	1.50	1.50	Yes
Total debt	176.50	115.93	171.50	181.50	

- 3.43 Since the operational boundary is a management tool for in-year monitoring it is not significant if the operational boundary is breached on occasions due to variations in cash flow, and this is not counted as a compliance failure

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Treasury Management Prudential Indicators

- 3.44 As required by the 2021 CIPFA Treasury Management Code, the Authority monitors and measures the following treasury management prudential indicators.

Liability Benchmark

- 3.45 This indicator compares the Authority's actual existing borrowing against a liability benchmark that has been calculated to show the lowest risk level of borrowing. The liability benchmark is an important tool to help establish whether the Council is likely to be a long-term borrower or long-term investor in the future and so shape its strategic focus and decision making. It represents an estimate of the cumulative amount of external borrowing the Council must hold to fund its current capital and revenue plans while keeping treasury investments at the minimum level of £2m required to manage day-to-day cash flow.

	31.3.25	31.3.26	31.3.27	31.3.28
	Actual	Actual	Forecast	Forecast
Loans CFR	149.26	169.85	158.21	160.58
Less: Balance sheet resources	-21.80	-29.12	-26.18	-24.86
Net loans requirement	127.46	140.73	132.09	135.72
Plus: Liquidity allowance	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20
Liability benchmark	127.66	140.93	132.29	135.92
Existing borrowing	103.93	115.93	110.93	120.93

- 3.46 Following on from the medium-term forecast above, the long-term liability benchmark assumes capital expenditure funded by borrowing of £11.10m, minimum revenue provision on new capital expenditure based on a 40 year asset life and income, expenditure and reserves all increasing by inflation of 2% p.a. This is shown in the chart below together with the maturity profile of the Authority's existing borrowing.

Maturity Structure of Borrowing

- 3.47 This indicator is set to control the Authority's exposure to refinancing risk. The upper and lower limits on the maturity structure of all borrowing were:

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	Upper Limit	Lower Limit	31.3.26 Actual	Complied?
Under 12 months	50%	0%	0%	Yes
12 months and within 24 months	50%	0%	0%	Yes
24 months and within 5 years	50%	0%	0%	Yes
5 years and within 10 years	50%	0%	0%	Yes
10 years and above	100%	0%	0%	Yes

- 3.48 Time periods start on the first day of each financial year. The maturity date of borrowing is the earliest date on which the lender can demand repayment.

Long-term Treasury Management Investments

- 3.49 The purpose of this indicator is to control the Authority's exposure to the risk of incurring losses by seeking early repayment of its investments. The prudential limits on the long-term treasury management limits are:

	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Limit on principal invested beyond year end	£1.0m	£0.5m	£0m
Actual principal invested beyond year end	0	0	0
Complied?	Yes	Yes	Yes

- 3.50 Long-term investments with no fixed maturity date include strategic pooled funds, real estate investment trusts and directly held equity but exclude money market funds and bank accounts with no fixed maturity date as these are considered short-term.

Additional indicators**Security:**

- 3.51 The Authority has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to credit risk by monitoring the value-weighted average credit rating of its investment portfolio. This is calculated by applying a score to each investment (AAA=1, AA+=2, etc.) and taking the arithmetic

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average, weighted by the size of each investment. Unrated investments are assigned a score based on their perceived risk.

	2025/26 Target	31.3.26 Actual	Complied?
Portfolio average credit rating	A	-	Yes

Liquidity:

- 3.52 The Authority has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to liquidity risk by monitoring the amount of cash available to meet unexpected payments within a rolling three-month period, without additional borrowing.

	2025/26 Target	31.3.26 Actual	Complied?
Total cash available within 3 months	£2.5m	£2.5m	Yes
Total sum borrowed in past 3 months without prior notice	Nil	Nil	Yes

Interest Rate Exposures:

- 3.53 This indicator is set to control the Authority's exposure to interest rate risk.

Interest rate risk indicator	2025/26 Target	31.3.26 Actual	Complied?
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>rise</u> in interest rates	500,000	0	Yes
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>fall</u> in interest rates	500,000	0	Yes

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3.54 For context, the changes in interest rates during the year were:

	1/4/25	31/3/26
Bank Rate	4.50%	3.75%
1-year PWLB certainty rate, maturity loans	4.82%	5.04%
5-year PWLB certainty rate, maturity loans	4.94%	5.28%
10-year PWLB certainty rate, maturity loans	5.38%	5.72%
20-year PWLB certainty rate, maturity loans	5.88%	6.23%
50-year PWLB certainty rate, maturity loans	5.63%	6.04%

3.55 The impact of a change in interest rates is calculated on the assumption that maturing loans and investment will be replaced at new market rates.

4. IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

4.1 A number of statutes governing the provision of services covered by this report contain express powers or duties to charge for services. Where an express power to charge does not exist the Council has the power under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 to charge where the activity is incidental or conducive to or calculated to facilitate the Councils statutory function.

Service / Operational Implications

4.2 Monitoring is undertaken to ensure that income targets are achieved, with Treasury Management activities taking place on a daily basis.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

4.3 The only impact of treasury transactions is in respect of ethical investment linked to the Councils investment counterparties. Presently the Council has a limited counterparty list based on financial risk to the Authority.

Local Government Reorganisation

4.4 The level of debt and investments the Council holds will transfer over to the new unitary on vesting day.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Executive****28th July 2026****Relevant Council Priority**

- 4.5 Financial resilience and good governance underpin the council's ability to meet all of its priorities.

Climate Change Implications

- 4.6 None directly as a result of this report.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 There is always significant risk in relation to treasury transactions, this is why Councils appoint Treasury advisors, which in the case of Redditch is Arlingclose. In addition, there is the requirement in this area to provide an Annual Strategy report containing indicators/limits that must be met, a quarterly update and closure report all of which must be reported to full Council.

6. COMMUNITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no Community implications as a result of this report.

7. APPENDICES

None

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

MTFP 2025/26 – February 2025 which contains the years Capital Strategy, Treasury Management Strategy and MRP Policy.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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Financial Outturn Report 2025/26

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Craig Warhurst
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Debra Goodall
Report Authors	Assistant Director of Finance and Customer Services Debra.Goodall@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Business Improvement Manager H.Mole@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	No
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	All
Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to set out the Council's Revenue and Capital Outturn position for the financial year April 2025 to March 2026. The Outturn Report is a management report that complements the quarterly financial monitoring reports, produced in a consistent format to aid review.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Executive is asked to RESOLVE:

- 2.1 To note the updated procurements position set out in Appendix D, with any new items over £0.200m to be included on the forward plan.

Executive is asked to RECOMMEND to Council:

- 2.2 The 2025/26 revenue outturn position is an overspend of £0.579m which will be funded by an allocation from the General Fund Balance.
- 2.3 The Ward Budget allocation for 2025/26 of £54,000 had approved allocations at £46,900 as at 31 March 2026, resulting in £7,100 which is transferred to General Fund reserves.
- 2.4 The General Fund Balance of £7.364m (as at 1 April 2025) being reduced to £6.792m as a result of the £0.579m overspend and the £0.007m net transfer from Ward Budget Reserves using the approach previously agreed with members
- 2.5 The outturn position in respect of the GF Earmarked Reserves is £20.957m and HRA Earmarked Reserves is £9.160m as at 31 March 2026.

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- 2.6 The 2025/26 capital outturn position is £8.154m spend against a total estimated programme of £31.847m. The net balance of £23.693m will be carried forward and included for review within the 2026/27 capital programme.
- 2.7 HRA net operating expenditure is £0.397m, broadly in line with the revised budget, and is break even after a small variance in planned use of balances at year end. Capital Expenditure is net £1.326m more than budget and the balance be carried forward and included in the 2026/27 HRA capital programme.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 This report sets out the draft financial outturn revenue and capital performance of the Council for 2025/26 against budget.
- 3.2 The £13.475m full year revenue budget included in the table below is the budget that was approved by Council in February 2026.
- 3.3 The Finance team have undertaken a review of the 2025/26 accounts since year end including:
- Accruals and prepayments,
 - Recharges have been made to and from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA),
 - Grants are applied to known expenditure and remaining balances are carried forward,
 - Reserves are applied to known expenditure,
 - Shared service recharges between Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District Councils where a shared service arrangement exists and
 - Transfers between the Collection Fund and the General Fund.

Revenue Position

- 3.4 The revenue outturn position is a £0.579m overspend as shown in Table 3 below. This shows a negative net £0.179m movement since the position reported at Q3. The movement from Q3 to Outturn is summarised in Table 4 and paragraph 3.5. Two key, year-end amendments that contribute to this movement were staff capitalisation and VAT adjustments; these are shown in tables 1 and 2 below.

A salary capitalisation exercise is completed at the end of year to identify staffing costs that should be correctly charged to the capital programme. In future years, an estimate of potential capitalisation will be built into projected spend as part of the quarterly monitoring. As at 31 March 2026, the Council recharged a proportion of time spent (salary) against the capital projects undertaken during the year (reducing revenue spend and increasing charges to the capital programme) as follows:

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Executive****28 July 2026****Table 1 – Staff Capitalisation**

RBC services	Net amount
Community and Housing Services	-16,665.00
Finance & Customer Services	-60,847.00
Environmental Services	-58,430.00
Regeneration & Property Services	-64,058.00
Grand Total (reduced revenue expenditure)	-200,000.00

There was also an impact on outturn following the submission of adjustments relating to monthly VAT returns as shown in the following table:

Table 2 – VAT Correction

RBC services	Net amount
Business Transformation & Organisation Development	8,189.95
Community and Housing Services	13,830.58
Corporate Services	2,139.16
Environmental Services	30,968.74
Finance and Customer Services	49,280.33
Regulatory Client	5,229.21
Rubicon Client	634.86
Legal and Democratic Services	3,973.40
Regeneration & Property Services	12,009.87
Planning and Leisure Services	83,212.33
Grand Total (increased revenue expenditure)	209,468.43

The subsequent Outturn position is as per Table 3 below:

Table 3 Overall Outturn Position

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Executive****28 July 2026**

	2025-26 Approved Budget	2025-26 Revised Budget	2025-26 Actual Spend	2025-26 Variance	Projected Variance Q3	Change in variance
Financial and Customer Services						
Business Transformation and Organisational Development	2,127,379	1,858,457	1,940,551	82,094	66,211	15,883
Community and Housing GF Services	2,911,457	2,121,737	2,340,996	219,258	396,470	(177,212)
Corporate Services	-4,322,576	-2,294,379	-2,965,759	(671,380)	232,148	(903,528)
Environmental Services	3,327,695	3,175,199	4,199,787	1,024,588	615,381	409,207
Financial and Customer Services	3,151,803	2,986,657	4,556,119	1,569,462	688,175	881,287
Legal & Democratic services	1,213,796	1,084,233	1,138,922	54,689	(19,465)	74,154
Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services	1,272,841	980,173	912,629	(67,544)	(290,999)	223,455
Regeneration & Property	2,213,443	1,983,761	2,369,892	386,131	210,251	175,880
Regulatory Client	711,638	711,638	703,860	(7,778)	21,019	(28,797)
Rubicon Client	867,481	867,481	993,322	125,841	129,391	(3,550)
Starting Well	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grand Total	13,474,957	13,474,957	16,190,317	2,715,360	2,048,582	666,778

	2025-26 Approved Budget	2025-26 Revised Budget	2025-26 Actual Spend	2025-26 Variance	Projected Variance Q3	Projected Variance Q3
Corporate Financing	(13,474,957)	(13,474,957)	(15,610,851)	(2,135,894)	(1,648,634)	(487,260)
	(13,474,957)	(13,474,957)	(15,610,851)	(2,135,894)	(1,648,634)	(487,260)

TOTALS	0	0	579,466	579,466	399,948	179,518
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- 3.5 The overall variance of £579,466 results from an overspend of £2.715m against service spending, offset by an underspend of £2.136m from corporate financing due to additional s31 grant funding of £1.596m and increased investment interest income received of £0.540m. Against a budget of £13.475m, the service overspend represents a variance of 20.2%. The service spending moved from Q3 £2.049m to £2.715m at year end, a negative movement of £0.666m due to the net impacts of the capitalisation recharge (-£0.200m), VAT correction (+£0.209m) noted above plus an increase in spending of £0.657m at year end. The movement between Q3 and Outturn is summarised in the following table:

Table 4 Movement from Quarter 3 to Outturn

	Service Expenditure (£)	Corporate Financing (£)	Net position (£)
Position at Q3	2,048,582	-1,648,634	399,948
Capitalisation of Salary Costs (Q4)	-200,000	0	-200,000
Impact of VAT Error Correction Notice in year	209,468	0	209,468
Variances to Q3 projections at Q4 (see supplementary tables below)	657,310	-487,260	170,050
Position at Outturn	2,715,360	-2,135,894	579,466

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Executive****28 July 2026****Business Transformation & Organisational Development overspend****Supplementary Table 3a**

Key Variances	Variance (£'000)	Explanation
ICT	+137	£80k for server costs and £57k for other ICT purchases.
Apprenticeship Levy	+20	Corporate contributions to the apprenticeship levy were 20k over-committed in the year. There was a pressure bid put in 25/26 to increase the budget to avoid overspend in the 26/27 financial year.
Training	-50	Savings within the training budget of £50k due to cost being split between both authorities reducing pressure on Redditch. HR savings on salaries of £20k and other small savings of £5k split across services
Salaries	-20	Savings on salaries across Business Transformation & Organisational Development of £20k
VAT Impact (Table 2)	+8	Minor VAT adjustments
Other Variances	-13	Other small savings of £5k split across services
Outturn Position	82	

Community and Housing GF Services overspend**Supplementary Table 3b**

Key Variances	Variance (£'000)	Explanation
Dial a Ride	+104	There has been a £104k overspend within Dial-a-Ride arising from the Council's decision to reduce fares income by 50%, together with higher maintenance costs associated with the ageing vehicle fleet. These costs are ongoing and will be reviewed as part of the MTFP for 2027/28.
Housing	+92	Unachieved efficiency savings target of £36k and costs write off costs relating to housing of £56k, Both of these are one off.
Shopmobility	+125	Shopmobility has incurred an overspend of £70k following its relocation to new premises, including

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		higher electricity, service charge and advertising costs. This was compounded by reduced income leading to an overspend of £55k, as customer numbers have not returned to pre-COVID levels, reflecting a national trend. These costs are ongoing and will be reviewed as part of the MTFP for 2027/28.
Homelessness Prevention	-57	Saving in Homelessness Prevention due to £57k less grants and contributions paid because of falling demand
VAT Impact (Table 2)	+14	£6k relating to domestic Abuse Services and £5k relating to Community Transport contracts which were both deemed to be subject to VAT and other minor VAT adjustments.
CCTV	-45	£45k savings within CCTV on Salary Allowances and Furnishings.
Other Variances	-14	Minor savings amounting to £14k
Outturn Position	219	

Corporate Services underspend**Supplementary Table 3c**

Key Variances	Variance (£'000)	Explanation
Vacancy Management, Inflation and Utilities	-575	Within Corporate Services there is a £575k over achievement on vacancy management, corporate efficiencies other savings in inflation and utility budgets across the whole Council. These savings are one off.
Bad Debt Provisison	-227	There was a one off reduction of bad debt provision of increasing the underspend by £227k
Grants	+108	One-off repayment of COVID grant of £108k to Government, to reach a final settlement position
VAT	+13	A HMRC fine of £13k relating to VAT
Pension Costs	+26	Lump Sum Pension Deficit payment of £26k relating to pensions
VAT Impact (Table 2)	+2	Minor VAT adjustments.
Other Variances	-18	Minor savings amounting to £18k
Outturn Position	-671	

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Executive****28 July 2026****Environmental Services overspend****Supplementary Table 3d**

Key Variances	Variance (£'000)	Explanation
Fleet	+343	Expenditure on our Fleet within the Environmental Services overspent, with costs exceeding budget by £343k. The ageing refuse fleet generated additional maintenance costs and required hire vehicles when vehicles were off the road for repairs, but this has now been addressed with the receipt of new refuse vehicles that went into service during Q4 and have already reduced our maintenance bill. Alongside the ongoing wider replacement of fleet across the Place Teams and other services, this will continue to reduce demand on the workshop and associated costs from outsourcing maintenance. However, lack of capacity in our workshop due to staffing pressures and difficulties recruiting or sourcing trained HGV mechanics through Agencies resulted in significant outsourcing of repairs and routine maintenance at inflated costs. This will remain a pressure in 2026/27; however, two new development roles are being created to train in-house mechanics, strengthening future capacity and supporting both financial and operational sustainability.
Bereavement Services	+511	Bereavement Services is reporting a £375k income shortfall, as the income budget is above the level the service can currently achieve, a growing issue over several years. This has been compounded by ONS death rate data showing the lowest level for five years. Further pressures include a £53k increase in business rates and an £83k rise in cremator servicing and maintenance costs. The 2026/27 Medium Term Financial Plan includes

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		ongoing additional provision of £50k for business rates and £43k for cremator maintenance. The service is also seeking to mitigate income pressures through the introduction of a new pet cremation service in 2026/27 and the development of enhanced memorial options. The overarching position will be reviewed in 2026/27 and reset, as appropriate, for the 2027/28 financial year.
Hedge Cutting	+93	The Hedge Cutting Service has incurred £93k in agency costs, reflecting the continued outsourcing of this service over the last five years. The 2026/27 MTFP includes £90k of additional ongoing funding to meet this cost.
Tree Service	+90	The Tree Service has also incurred one-off legal costs of £90k relating to a tree subsidence case.
VAT Impact (Table 2)	+32	£22.8k relating to the annual grass cutting contract (this may be subject to reversal) and £8k relating to Bereavement Services which were classed as VATable by our VAT advisors and other minor VAT adjustments.
Other Variances	-45	There were some minor underspends of 45k across the service.
Outturn Position	1,024	

Financial and Customer Services overspend**Supplementary Table 3e**

Key Variances	Variance (£'000)	Explanation
Housing Subsidy Loss	+1,197	A review of the Housing Subsidy budgets was carried out in year and this identified a shortfall against the grant expected of £1.197m.
Agency Costs	+354	There is a nationwide staffing shortage of qualified finance personnel and there were costs of £354k on Agency staff due to cover for vacancies. A review of the structure with an aim to

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		recruit any interim posts on a permanent basis.
VAT Reconciliation exercise	+175	Additional spend of £175k was incurred due to PS Tax as part of the support for the completion of the VAT returns to HMRC.
Insurance	-180	£180k saving on insurance costs.
VAT Impact (Table 2)	+49	Several minor VAT Adjustments across the service
Other Variances	-26	Other minor variations totalling £26k
Outturn Position	1,569	

Legal, Democratic and Elections Services overspend**Supplementary Table 3f**

Key Variances	Variance (£'000)	Explanation
Efficiency Savings	+20	Variance results from unmet efficiency saving of £20k.
Professional Advice	+8	External legal advice on recruitment & procurement
Land Charges	+13	There was a shortfall in income from land charge searches in 25/26, a budget bid was submitted for this difference.
Software Licence	+21	£21k overspend in Electoral Services due to the licence for the Civica system, a budget pressure was submitted for 26/27.
VAT Impact (Table 2)	+4	Minor VAT adjustments.
Other Variances	-11	Savings split across different areas.
Outturn Position	55	

Planning and Leisure Services underspend**Supplementary Table 3g**

Key Variances	Variance (£'000)	Explanation
Development Control	-116	There has been additional Development Control income of £116k due to high value planning applications received
	-19	Arts and Development income £19k due to additional grant received in year..

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VAT Impact (Table 2)	+83	£73k relating to planning fees (will be reversed as should not be VATable) and other minor VAT adjustments.
Other Variances	-16	Other various small overspends within Parks and Events.
Outturn Position	-68	

Regeneration and Property Services overspend**Supplementary Table 3h**

Key Variances	Variance (£'000)	Explanation
Parking Enforcement	+59	There are costs relating to Wychavon District Council of £59k for Parking enforcement officers, this has been addressed by a budget bid for 26/27.
Fire Alarm System	+165	As reported earlier in the year, there are costs relating to the replacement of a fire alarm system in the Town Hall amounting to £165k, which is also a one-off cost in year.
Greenlands	+4	The service has pressures relating to building and maintenance cost for Greenlands of £36k and other minor works cost overruns of £21k. This was offset by insurance claim income of £53k.
Income	+2	Market income shortfalls and costs of £9k and a full review of the Market is expected. Additional roundabout sponsorship income of £7k,
Economic Development	+16	There are other Economic Development pressures of £16k.
Property Rental	+92	Shortfall in rental income of £92k across several properties.
Efficiency Savings	+60	Efficiency savings proposed to be delivered through vacancy management.
Insurance	+64	One-off additional insurance claim costs of £64k. A reserve has been set up to meet the insurance costs going forward.
Vacancy Management Savings	-64	£64k in vacancy management savings across services and projects

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VAT Impact (Table 2)	+12	Minor VAT adjustments.
Other Variances	-24	Various other savings
Outturn Position	386	

Regulatory Client underspend**Supplementary Table 3i**

Key Variances	Variance (£'000)	Explanation
Efficiency Savings	-11	Efficiency savings of £11k
VAT Impact (Table 2)	+5	Minor VAT adjustments.
Other Variances	-2	Various other savings
Outturn Position	-8	

Rubicon Client overspend**Supplementary Table 3j**

Key Variances	Variance (£'000)	Explanation
Insurance	+40	Increased Maintenance and Insurance costs of £40k due to Rubicon client not having an insurance budget for buildings,
Efficiency Savings	+15	Efficiency savings of £15k that will not be met.
VAT Returns	+57	There was a £57k fine from HMRC relating to VAT returns.
VAT Impact (Table 2)	+1	Minor VAT adjustments.
Other Variances	+13	Additional overspends of £13k split across the service.
Outturn Position		

Corporate Financing underspend**Supplementary Table 3k**

Key Variances	Variance (£'000)	Explanation
Grant	-1,596	Additional Section 31 Grant Income
Interest Income	-540	Investment Income received
Outturn Position	-2,136	

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Executive****28 July 2026****Capital Position**

- 3.7 A capital programme for 2025/26 of £8.082m was approved by Council in February 2025.
- 3.8 Many of these schemes were already in partial delivery in the 2025/26 financial year. Net unspent budget was carried from 2024/25 to supplement the 2025/26 capital programme as shown in table 5 below. A review of the Capital Programme in 2026/27 will be undertaken to review all projects, budgets, funding historic coding conventions and spend since project inception.

Table 5 Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2029/30

Year	Original Budget (£)	Carried Forward from previous year (£)	Revised Budget (£)
2025/26	8,082,320	23,765,697	31,847,017
2026/27	5,254,963	23,692,985	28,947,948
2027/28	2,315,118		
2028/29	2,064,490		
2029/30	2,321,958		

3.9 Included in this funding the Council also have the following Grant Funded Schemes which are being delivered in 2025/26:

The Town Deal schemes – the Innovation Centre and Public Realm improvements which are funded via £15.6m of Government Funding.

- For the Innovation Centre
 - Speller-Metcalf have been appointed as the design and build contractor up to Stage 4 design with an option to extend into delivering the development in full. Stage 4 design work is now complete and work packages have been used to competitively source quotes from sub-contractors.
 - Final cost position is very close to being agreed with Speller-Metcalf in line with the available construction budget.
 - MHCLG have confirmed the deadline to spend Town Deal funding has been extended until end of March 2028, providing additional time if needed.
 - Planning permission was granted on December 11th. We are now working through pre-commencement and other conditions as needed.

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- The final business case for GBS LEP funding was signed off by Birmingham City Council (BCC) on 20 January 2026. The grant funding agreement for £2.425m has been returned to BCC for sealing.
- For the Public Realm Scheme
 - All works to Unicorn Hill and Church Green West have been completed. The new traffic regulation order (TRO) came into place on the 14 August. Public comms around the new TROs have been circulated on social media and local papers. Additional public realm works have been paused so that remaining Town Deal funding can be utilised for the Innovation Centre.
- In December 2024, the Government announced that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) would be extended by 6 months. No additional funding has been provided but the deadline for spending 2025/26 allocation of £818,536 (of which £152,000 is capital) is 30/9/26.

3.10 The outturn spend on capital as at 31 March 2026 was £8.154m against a revised capital budget of £31.847m. Details of spend and variances are provided in Appendix A. The net underspend of £23.693m will be carried forward to 2026/27. Within this figure certain schemes have overspent by £2.426m offsetting a larger underspend of £26.119m across remaining schemes. A review of the capital programme in 2026/27 will be completed to ensure the revised programme is fully funded.

Housing Revenue Account

- 3.11 The table below details the financial position for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the financial year April 2025 – March 26. The major variances are due to the following:
- Dwelling Rents – a higher than anticipated purchase of properties under the Right to Buy scheme has reduced the income level. This was due a backlog of approvals.
 - Repairs and Maintenance – The service faced a £0.3m overspend, largely due to mounting budget pressures, including higher material costs and increased fleet maintenance expenses. Although the initial phase of fleet replacement commenced near the end of the financial year and will extend through 2026/27, these costs have played a significant role in the overall overspend. Despite considerable recruitment efforts within the Service, several positions remained unfilled. To compensate for these vacancies, agency staff were engaged, including additional personnel responsible for completing work to reduce the value of outsourced works to contractors.
 - Supervision and Management – the variance is predominantly due to vacant posts as a consequence of a service review within Housing Services. A new structure will be implemented and recruitment campaign instigated.

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Table 6 Housing Revenue Account

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)								
REVENUE 2025/26 FINAL OUTTURN								
		2025/26 Original Budget £'000	2025/26 Working Budget £'000	2025/26 Budget Apr -Mar £'000	2025/26 Actual + comm Apr -Mar £'000	2025/26 Variance Apr -Mar £'000	2025/26 Projected Outturn £'000	2025/26 Projected Variance £'000
INCOME								
Dwelling Rents	DR	-28,169	-28,169	-28,169	-27,907	262	-27,907	262
Non-Dwelling Rents	NDR	-534	-534	-534	-507	27	-507	27
Tenants' Charges for Services & Facilities	CSF	-695	-795	-795	-827	-31	-827	-31
Contributions towards Expenditure	CTE	-155	-155	-155	-178	-23	-178	-23
								0
Total Income		-29,553	-29,653	-29,653	-29,418	235	-29,418	235
EXPENDITURE								
Repairs & Maintenance	R&M	7,844	8,011	8,011	8,317	306	8,317	306
Supervision & Management	S&M	9,249	9,387	9,387	8,750	-637	8,750	-637
Rent, Rates, Taxes & Other Charges	RRT	576	576	576	872	296	872	296
Provision for Bad Debts	BDP	517	519	519	221	-298	221	-298
Depreciation & Impairment of Fixed Assets	DEP	7,296	7,296	7,296	7,471	175	7,471	175
Interest Payable & Debt Management Costs	INT	4,179	4,179	4,179	4,183	4	4,183	4
Total Expenditure		29,662	29,968	29,968	29,815	-154	29,815	-154
Net cost of Services		109	315	315	397	82	397	82
Net Operating Expenditure		109	315	315	397	82	397	82
		0	0					
Interest Receivable	IR	-211	-211	-211	-76	136	-76	136
Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay	RCCC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Planned use of Balances	UB	103	-104	-104	321	425	-321	-217
Transfer to Earmarked Reserves	TER	0		0	0	0	0	0

Table 7 HRA Capital Programme

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Project		2025/26 Full Year Budget £	2025/26 Outturn £	2025/26 Variance £
Various	Project Description			
100050	Housing 1-4-1 Purchases/Build	3,000,000	2,342,227	(657,773)
100053	Asbestos General	125,000	147,246	22,246
100054	Structural Repairs	15,000	165,004	150,004
100055	Electrical Upgrade	200,000	367,665	167,665
100056	Boiler Replacement	720,000	662,131	(57,869)
100058	Window Replacement	500,000	431,339	(68,661)
100059	Disabled Adaptations	500,000	313,114	(186,886)
100060	Environmental Enhancement	100,000	28,877	(71,123)
100061	FRA Works	-	2,140	2,140
100062	Stock Condition Survey	150,000	68,600	(81,400)
100063	Housing Management System		228,586	228,586
100066	Capitalised Salaries	750,000	749,848	(152)
100067	Door Entry/CCTV	350,000	288,846	(61,154)
100068	HRA Hard Wire S	200,000	126,583	(73,417)
100074	Balcony Replacement	300,000	302,474	2,474
100081	HRA Fire Safety	-	-	
100083	HRA Compartmentation	1,500,000	1,038,877	(461,123)
100084	Major Voids Works	1,000,000	3,087,321	2,087,321
100098	HRA-Energy Efficiency	1,000,000	2,193,055	1,193,055
100115	HRA Stock Remodelling	275,000	127,164	(147,836)
100116	HRA Estates Garages	300,000	11,000	(289,000)
110001	Internal Refurbishment	3,000,000	2,291,190	(708,810)
110003	High Trees Project	800,000	1,076,853	276,853
110004	Disrepair Cases	100,000	888,922	788,922
110005	External Refurbishment	500,000	196,441	(303,559)
110006	Community Safety	-	-	0
110042	Lift Replacement	150,000	153,317	3,317
110045	Vehicle Replacement	900,000	472,136	(427,864)
		16,435,000	17,760,955	1,325,955

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- 3.12 Across the HRA Capital Investment Programme issues have arisen that require variances to the budget lines for the following reasons.

Housing 1-4-1 Purchases – These occur on a reactive basis and as such budget estimating can be difficult, in the current year we have identified £2.4m of Persimmon properties together with buybacks.

Structural Repairs – Throughout the year, several properties were identified as requiring significant structural repairs. While some issues arose through routine repairs and maintenance requests, others only became apparent after problems had emerged, requiring a reactive response.

Electrical Upgrades - A growing number of properties identified through stock condition surveys required electrical rewiring to maintain compliance with current regulations and safeguard residents. Completing these upgrades was essential to meeting statutory requirements while supporting resident safety and well-being.

Disabled Adaptations - There was an underspend because improvement works, including level access showers, were delivered by the internal Aids and Adaptations teams, reducing the need to outsource work to contractors. Some backlog – larger jobs going to contractor

Fire Compartmentation - There were delays in completing projects and buildings within the programme due to contractor performance issues. These works were completed at the start of 2026/27. To provide additional capacity and accelerate the programme of improvements during 2026/27, an additional contractor has been procured.

Energy Efficiency - The Council has been successful in securing significant external funding through Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund Wave 2.1 and Wave 3 to improve the energy efficiency of its council housing stock. These programmes provide an important opportunity to invest in measures that will enhance the quality, sustainability, and performance of existing homes while helping residents reduce energy consumption and household fuel costs. The funding will support energy efficiency improvements to eligible properties, including insulation, heating, and ventilation upgrades. These works will improve the energy performance of council homes, reduce carbon emissions, and support the Council's climate objectives. Although contractor performance issues delayed the completion of works under Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund Wave 2.1, good progress has been made under Wave 3, with delivery continuing positively. The programme of improvements will continue over the coming years, with the Council working closely with delivery partners to maximise the benefits of the funding and achieve the greatest possible impact for residents and local communities. A potential risk remains around the timing of grant funding receipts, as the Council is required to fund completed works upfront before submitting claims for reimbursement.

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High Trees - Following the removal of the roof covering, unforeseen structural issues were identified relating to the integrity of the balcony support beams, requiring additional investigation and remedial works. The project has now been completed successfully.

Housing Management System – Residual costs as the end of the project is imminent. Additionally, there are Keyfax costs of £56k.

Major Voids Works – Over the past year, the acquisition of 20 additional properties through the Buy Back process has led to a significant increase in the number of void properties requiring extensive upgrades to meet the Decent Homes Standard. In response, a comprehensive review is underway to assess both the number of affected properties and the scope of works required, with the aim of achieving a better alignment between project demands and available budgets. The Council's Housing Growth Programme has also changed its approach. Rather than prioritising Buy Back acquisitions, the focus has shifted towards purchasing new-build properties and developing new homes on council-owned land. This revised strategy is intended to streamline delivery and support more sustainable growth of the housing stock.

Disrepair Cases – The Council regularly receives disrepair claims from solicitors acting on behalf of council housing tenants. In response, detailed property inspections and surveys are carried out to identify defects and maintenance issues requiring attention. The Council is then responsible for undertaking the necessary remedial works to ensure properties meet the required standards of safety, compliance, and habitability. Due to the legal nature of disrepair claims, the Council must work within strict statutory and court-imposed timescales. Resources are therefore prioritised to ensure identified works are completed promptly, reducing risks to residents, meeting legal obligations, and minimising the potential for additional costs resulting from delays. Carried out works to meet decent homes standard – identified issues need to modernise improve rather than going back twice.

Vehicle Replacement - During the latter stages of the financial year, the first phase of the replacement housing fleet was received. This programme will continue throughout 2026/27, with the remaining vehicles being replaced.

General Fund Earmarked Reserves

- 3.13 The level of earmarked reserves held by the Council at the beginning of the 2025/26 financial year was reported to Council in February 2025 as part of the 2025/26 – 2027/28 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). This is shown at Appendix B and was £17.763m as at 31 March 2025 (and therefore as at 1 April 2025) after adjustments in year for the actual 2024/25 Outturn position (which was only estimated based on Q3 monitoring information at the time of the MTFP). All reserves were reviewed for their requirement in 2025/26 and additional reserves were set up. At the 31 March 2026 the net position has

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improved, and the Council currently holds £20.967m of Earmarked Reserves for the 2026/27 financial year. Details are provided in Appendix B.

General Fund Balance

- 3.14 The adjusted opening General Fund Balance as at the 1 April 2025 was £7.364m. The closing balance, after taking account of the overspend identified in this report, will reduce to £6.792m as shown in Table 6 below.

Table 8 General Fund Balance

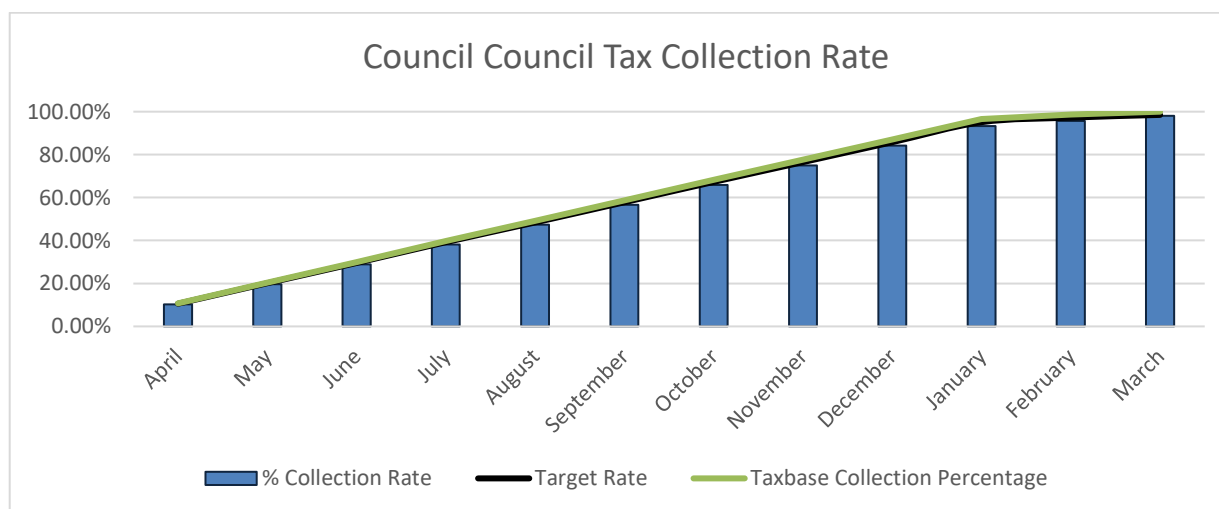
GENERAL FUND	£m
Opening Balance	7.364
Movement in Year	
Ward Budgets underspend 2025/26	0.007
Year End Outturn	(0.579)
Closing Balance	6.792

Financial Performance

- 3.15 Council Tax collection rate data for the financial year 2025/26 is set out in the following tables. Overall, collection at 96.5% was 0.5% below in year target of 97.0% although collection continues after year-end.

Nationally, Council Tax collection rates have fallen compared to 2024/25 and since their post pandemic high in 2022/23. Average Collection rates nationally were 95.6% and for Shire Districts were 97%.

Figure 1 Council Tax Collection Rate (April to March 2025/26)



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Figure 2 Monthly Council Tax Variance to Target (April to March 2025/26)

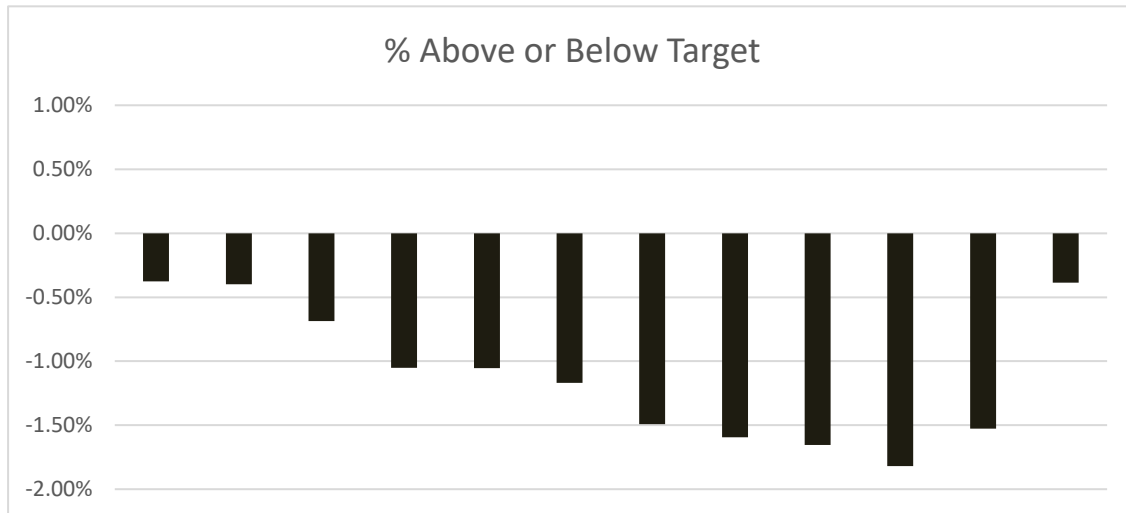
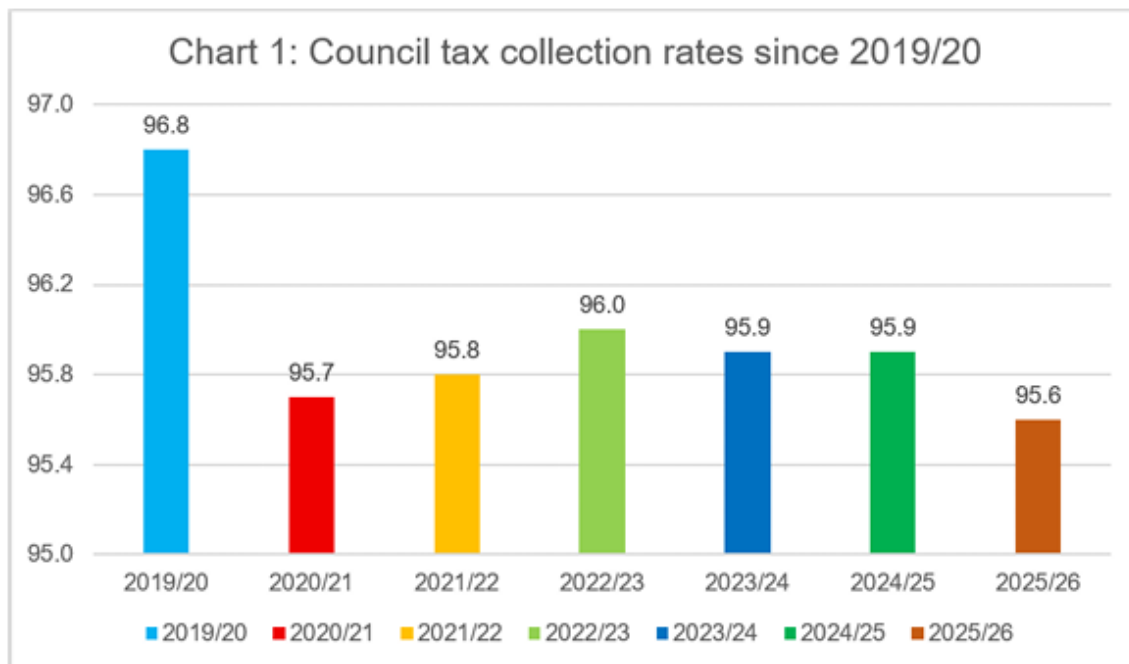


Figure 3 National Council Tax Collection Rates



- 3.16 Non-Domestic Rates collection rate data for the financial year 2025/26 is set out in the following tables. Overall, collection at 93.6% 3.6% below the in-year target of 97.2%. Collection rates for non-domestic rates are below target due to a complex rating dispute relating to the application of liquidation expenses for empty retail premises. The council is taking legal advice on the eligibility for exemption and the recoverability of the disputed

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amounts and continues to negotiate with legal representatives for the owners of the relevant premises.

Nationally, Non-Domestic Rates collection rates have fallen compared to 2024/25, their post pandemic high. Average Collection rates nationally were 96.8% and for Shire Districts were 97.3%.

Figure 4 Non-Domestic Rates Collection Rate (April to March 2025/26)

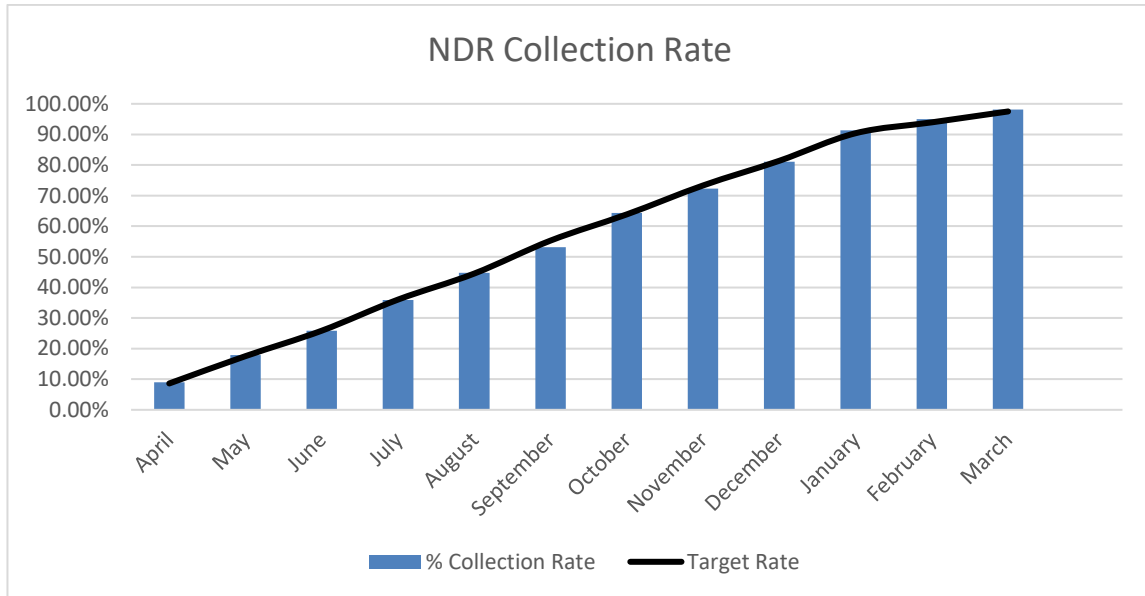


Figure 5 Monthly Non-Domestic Rates Variance to target (April to March 2025/26)

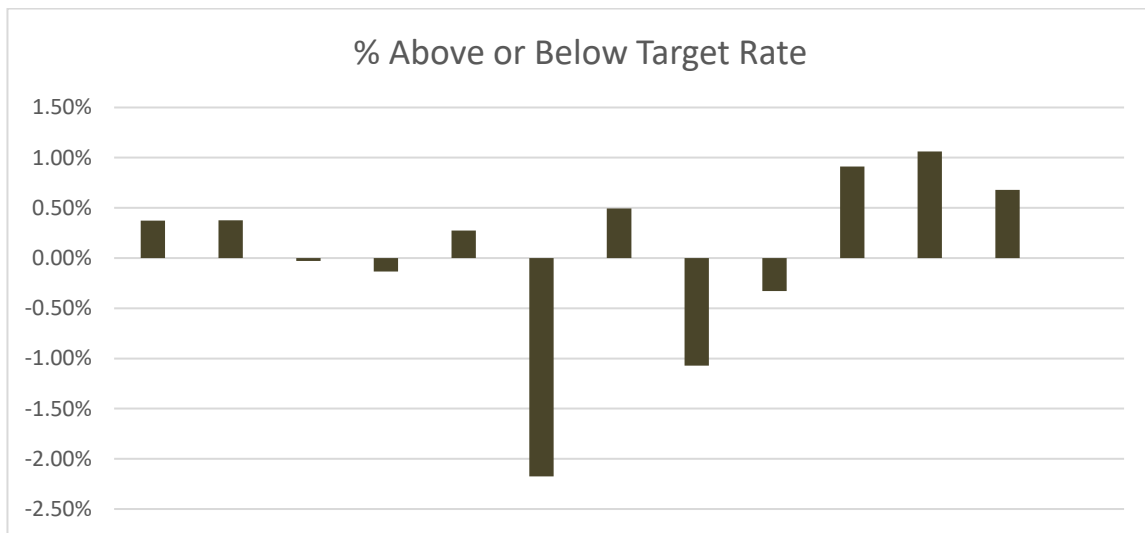
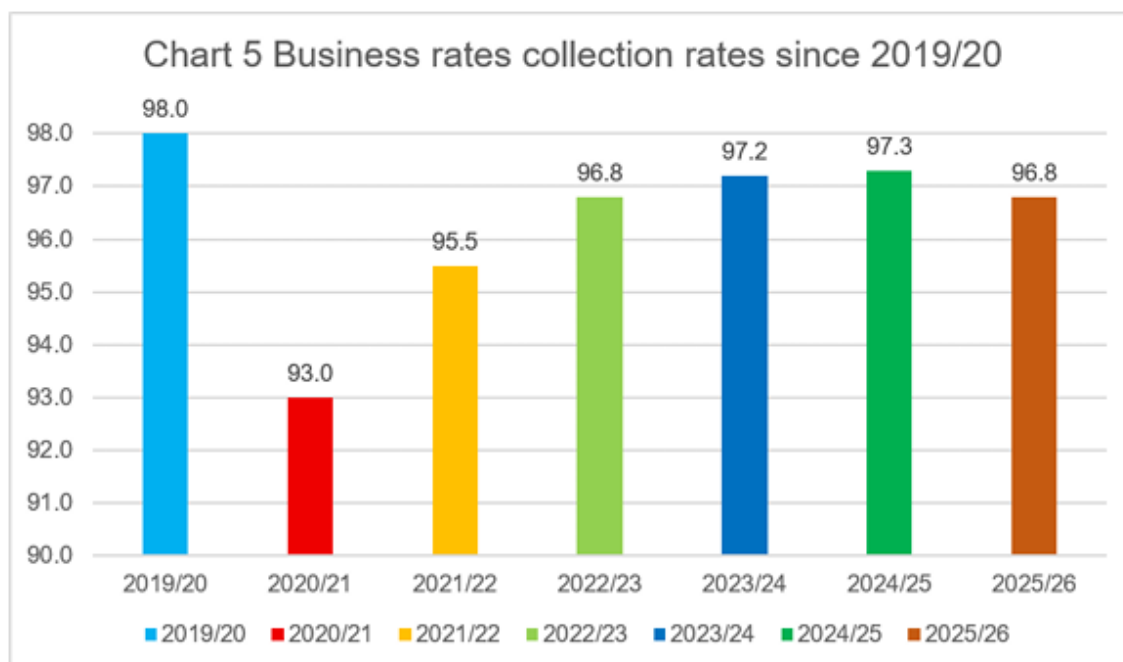


Figure 6 National Business Rates Collection Rates

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4. Legal Implications

4.1 Local Government Reorganisation

The level of debt and investments the Council holds will transfer over to the new unitary on vesting day.

5. Strategic Purpose Implications

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 5.1 The Strategic purposes are included in the Council's corporate plan and guides the Council's approach to budget making ensuring we focus on the issues and what are most important for the borough and our communities. Our Financial monitoring and strategies are integrated within all of our Strategic Purposes.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 The green thread runs through the Council plan. The Financial monitoring report has implications on climate change and these will be addressed and reviewed when relevant by climate change officers to ensure the correct procedures have been followed to ensure any impacts on climate change are fully understood.

6. Other Implications

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

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- 6.1 None as a direct result of this report.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 Managers meet with finance officers to consider the current financial position and to ensure actions are in place to mitigate any overspends.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 Items identified in the Financial Outturn report for 2025/26 link to several Corporate Risks as listed below. Many of the Council's Corporate Risks have an indirect link to the council's financial position. The mitigations to these risks are set out in the Risk Report, of which the Quarter 4 Report was reported to Audit, Governance and Standards Committee on 11 June 2026:
- COR002 - Financial Resilience of the Council and ability to manage financial shocks
 - COR026 - Risk of Cash Flow Strain
- 7.2 In future monitoring reports, financial risk will be reviewed with regular reporting against direct and indirect financial risk drivers.

8. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Capital Outturn
Appendix B – Reserves Position
Appendix C – Ward Budgets
Appendix D – Procurement Pipeline

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REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Executive****28 July 2026****Appendix A -Capital Outturn**

Capital Project	Description	2025/26 Total (Original) (£)	Carried Forward from 24/25 (£)	2025/26 Total (Incl C/Fs) (£)	2025/26 Spend (£)	Variance (£)
	Large Schemes - Towns Fund					
200053	Innovation Centre	1,000,000	6,091,046	7,091,046	70,126	7,020,920
200053	Innovation Centre	1,948,000	0	1,948,000		1,948,000
100133	Digital Manufacturing & Innovation Centre Digital Manufacturing & Innovation Centre	0	-159,306	-159,306		-159,306
200054	Library	0	2,320,634	2,320,634		2,320,634
200055	Public Realm	0	3,777,926	3,777,926		3,777,926
200055	Public Realm	0	439,000	439,000		439,000
100108	Town Hall Redevelopment		5,123,121	5,123,121	2,574,212	2,548,909
						0
	Schemes Agreed to Continue in Tranche 1					0
100004	Car Park Maintenance	150,000	62,672	212,672	66,600	146,072
110036	Footpaths	75,000	-27,736	47,264	70,855	-23,591
100007	Disabled Facilities Grant	1,185,745	146,595	1,332,340	209,470	1,122,870
100008	Energy & Efficiency Installs.	0	209,345	209,345		209,345
100009	GF Asbestos	0	75,467	75,467	20,058	55,409
100014	Improved Parking Scheme (includes locality funding)	0	400,000	400,000		400,000
100026	Morton Stanley Play, Sport and Open Space Improvements (General)	0	1,500	1,500	99	1,401
100032	Public Building	250,000	-110,676	139,324	445,150	-305,826
100035	Fleet Replacement new line	0	1,960,669	1,960,669	2,919,965	-959,296
100037	Removal of 5 weirs through Arrow Valley Park	0	414,000	414,000		414,000
100040	Sports Contributions to support improvements to Outdoor facilities at Terry Field	0	3,000	3,000		3,000
100043	Wheelie Bin purchase	100,000	110,635	210,635	104,919	105,716
100044	New Digital Service	0	-119,732	-119,732		-119,732
100088	Improvement Holly trees children's centre	0	6,000	6,000		6,000
100089	Greener Homes	0	-8,925	-8,925		-8,925
100010	Grassland Mitigation measures- recreating and monitoring grassland habitats in MS and AVCP	5,864	5,863	11,727		11,727
100011	Hedgerow Mitigation measures by restoration and hedge laying with associated fencing and gates at AVP SHM and AVP	0	21,500	21,500	10,565	10,935
100012	HMO Grants	25,000	61,500	86,500		86,500
100013	Home Repairs Assistance	40,000	120,000	160,000		160,000
100018	Improvement to original Pump Track at AVCP	0	56,364	56,364		56,364
100045	Replacing 3 fuel pumps and upgrading tank monitoring equipment	0	25,000	25,000		25,000
110018	Cisco Network Update	47,339	5,934	53,273		53,273
110019	Server Replacement Est(Exact known Q2 2022)	18,500	177,500	196,000	136,276	59,724
110020	Laptop Refresh	5,000	32,775	37,775	4,909	32,866
100140	Cyber Security Updates	25,000	25,000	50,000		50,000

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Executive****28 July 2026**

Capital Project	Description	2025/26 Total (Original) (£)	Carried Forward from 24/25 (£)	2025/26 Total (Incl C/Fs) (£)	2025/26 Spend (£)	Variance (£)
100141	Morgan Stanley Footpaths	0	16,500	16,500		16,500
110021	New Cemetery Provision-Ipsley road	195,000	440,963	635,963		635,963
100127	Provide the Crossgate Depot site with a new and Compliant Deisel Fuel	0	56,000	56,000		56,000
100097	Widen access road to Arrow Valley Country park	0	-9,074	-9,074		-9,074
100136	Lifeline Improvements	0	120,000	120,000		120,000
100144	PRS Housing ICT System	0	30,000	30,000		30,000
100119	Play Areas - Surface Replacement	10,000	-89,994	-79,994	11,515	-91,509
100147	AVCP - Parking Bays near Visitor Centre	0	12,000	12,000		12,000
100121	AVCP - Car Park Extension 25 Spaces	0	-15,745	-15,745		-15,745
100148	Increased Building Maintenance Costs	150,000	150,000	300,000	37,081	262,919
100134	Arrow Valley Car Park	0	63,840	63,840		63,840
100135	Arrow Valley park Visitor Centre Improvements	0	193,251	193,251	780,441	-587,190
100143	Fleet Costs	26,000	585,000	611,000		611,000
100137	Final Play Area Changes	191,477	244,099	435,576	160,700	274,876
100139	Movement of ICT Cyber Capital Works Forward	0	-50,000	-50,000		-50,000
100142	Hedge and Shrub Removal	40,000	40,000	80,000		80,000
110007	Forge Mill and Bordesley Open Space Improvements	0	5,859	5,859		5,859
110009	MUGA at Greenlands Sports Pitches. 2018/169/FUL Land off Green Lane	0	43,078	43,078		43,078
110012	Play Area improvements at Birchfield Road./Headless Cross Rec Ground. 17/00737/FUL	0	7,575	7,575		7,575
110013	Play area (£34,583.39), Open space (£12,001.36) and Sport (£8,516) improvements at Mayfield's	0	1,172	1,172		1,172
100001	Arrow Valley Country Park - Play, Open Space and Sports Improvements.	0	-4,500	-4,500		-4,500
100146	Play Area Changes - Pre Audit	0	382,000	382,000		382,000

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Executive****28 July 2026**

Capital Project	Description	2025/26 Total (Original) (£)	Carried Forward from 24/25 (£)	2025/26 Total (Incl C/Fs) (£)	2025/26 Spend (£)	Variance (£)
100148	Play Audit funding	191,447	263,386	454,833		454,833
100020	Improvement to Sports Pitches infrastructure in Morton Stanley Park	0	23,002	23,002		23,002
100112	Fire compartmentation works in Corporate buildings	250,000	-9,843	240,157	331,091	-90,934
110044	New Food Waste Collection - DEFRA Funding	766,498	19,457	785,955		785,955
	Abavus Software Integration	30,000	0	30,000		30,000
	Abavus Licensing	10,200	0	10,200		10,200
	Update Town Hall Fire Wall	16,250	0	16,250		16,250
	Replacement Track - Abbey Stadium	300,000	0	300,000		300,000
	Energy Performance Certificate Requirements	100,000	0	100,000		100,000
	Abbey Stadium Roof Replacement	250,000	0	250,000		250,000
	Abbey Stadium - refurbish indoor Changing Rooms and Toilets	300,000	0	300,000		300,000
	Forge Mill - New outdoor Kiosk and Toilet	90,000	0	90,000		90,000
	PitcherOak, refurbish Male Changing and rebuild 2nd Green	90,000	0	90,000		90,000
	Salary Capitalisation	200,000	0	200,000	200,000	0
	Grand Totals	8,082,320	23,764,697	31,847,017	8,154,032	23,692,985

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Appendix B - Earmarked Reserves

	Balance at 31/3/25	Transfers in 2025/26	Transfers out 2025/26	Balance at 31/3/26	Transfers in 2026/27	Transfers out 2026/27	Balance at 31/3/27	Transfers in 2027/28	Transfers out 2027/28	Balance at 31/3/28
General Fund	7,364	7	(579)	6,792	60		6,852			6,852
General Fund Earmarked Reserves:										
Business Improvement District	209			209			209			209
Business Rates Retention Scheme	4,560		(202)	4,358			4,358			4,358
Community Development	74			74			74			74
Community Safety	211	450		661			661			661
Corporate Services	2,594		(1,937)	657			657			657
Council Tax Benefit	605			605			605			605
Covid-19 (Collection Fund)	55		(55)	0			0			0
Covid-19 (General)	2,435		(2,435)	0			0			0
Customer Services	183			183			183			183
Economic Growth	841			841			841			841
Electoral Services	63			63			63			63
Environmental Vehicles	29		(29)	0			0			0
EPR Funding Allocation	0	2,062		2,062			2,062			2,062
Equipment replacement	25			25			25			25
Essential Living Fund	135			135			135			135
Financial Services	460			460			460			460
General Risk reserve	45		(45)	0			0			0
Gypsy and Traveller Assessment	67		(67)	0			0			0
Hardship Fund	0	80		80			80			80
Homelessness	12			12			12			12
Homelessness Prevention	519			519			519			519
Housing Benefit Implementation	270	38		308			308			308
Land Charges	9			9			9			9
Land Drainage	129			129			129			129
Local Plan Fund	0	539		539			539			539
Mortgage Rescue Scheme	24		(24)	0			0			0
Parks & Open spaces	8		(8)	0			0			0
Pensions	201		(201)	0			0			0
Planning Services	272		(272)	0			0			0
Redditch Town Hall Fire Alarm	0	165		165			165			165
Regeneration & Property	602	176	(68)	710			710			710
Restarts Grant	2,924		(2,924)	0			0			0
Starting Well	0	178		178			178			178
Town Centre	7		(7)	0			0			0
Transformational Growth	123		(123)	0			0			0
Ukrainian Support	0	232		232			232			232
Universal Credit	56		(38)	18			18			18
Ward Budgets	0	180	(60)	120		(60)	60			60
Warmer Homes	16			16			16			16
New Reserves - MTFP 2026										
Health and Safety Capital Works	0	603		603			603			603
Town Hall Works Reserve	0	1,000		1,000			1,000			1,000
Library Work - Town Hall Write Off	0	667		667			667			667
Planning Reserve for planning applications	0	100		100			100			100
Insurance costs for non-adopted roads	0	100		100			100			100
Risk and Resilience Reserve	0	2,500		2,500			2,500			2,500
LGR Reserve	0	1,000		1,000			1,000			1,000
Community Investment Fund	0	1,600		1,600			1,600			1,600
Legal Costs for Skerry, Boultons Lane	0	19		19			19			19
Total General Fund Earmarked Reserves	17,763	11,689	(8,495)	20,957	0	(60)	20,897	0	0	20,817
HRA										
Housing Capital	9,160			9,160			9,160			9,160
Total General Fund Earmarked Reserves	26,923	11,689	(8,495)	30,117	0	(60)	30,057	0	0	29,977

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**Executive****28 July 2026****Appendix C - Ward Budgets**

Activity	Spend (£)	Balance (£)
Cllr Joe Baker	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Juliet Barker-Smith	1,950.00	50.00
Cllr Juma Begum	1,700.00	300.00
Cllr William Boyd	1,450.00	550.00
Cllr Brandon Clayton	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Claire Davies	1,700.00	300.00
Cllr Matthew Dormer	1,500.00	500.00
Cllr James Fardoe	750.00	1,250.00
Cllr Andy Fry	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Bill Hartnett	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Sharon Harvey	1,950.00	50.00
Cllr Chris Holtz	1,750.00	250.00
Cllr Joanna Kane	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Sid Khan	0.00	2,000.00
Cllr Wanda King	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Alan Mason	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Sachin Mathur	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Gemma Monaco	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr David Munro	1,900.00	100.00
Cllr Rita Rogers	1,500.00	500.00
Cllr Gary Slim	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Jen Snape	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Jane Spilsbury	1,550.00	450.00
Cllr Monica Stringfellow	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Craig Warhurst	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Ian Woodall	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Paul Wren	1,200.00	800.00
TOTAL	46,900.00	7,100.00

The Wards budget was approved by Council for three years from 2025/26 (£2,000 per ward (£54,000) in total) plus £6,000 per annum administration costs = £60,000 per year and therefore £180,000 to 2027/28). Total costs charged to the Wards Reserve for 2025/26 are £60,000 incorporating the £46,900 spend in the table above, the £7,100 underspend and the £6,000 administration cost.

Appendix D - Procurement Pipeline

Title	Council	Contract Description	Department	Value	Current Contract Expiry Date	Procurement Start Date	Contract Start Date	Contract Length (years)	Extension
Abbey Stadium Changing Room Refurbishment	Redditch	Refurbishment contract - works	Properties	500k		16/03/26	20/04/26	0.5	No
Arrow Valley Sewer	Redditch	Design and installation works of new sewer required at AVVC (I thought already added onto the pipeline but I can't view this). Waiver agreed and submitted 26.11.25	Properties	365k		26/11/25	15/12/25	1	N/A
Building Consultancy Services	Redditch	Consultancy Services including but not limited to Architectural, Structural Surveys, Cost Planning, Fire Risk Assessments and Stock Condition Surveys.	Housing Capital	1,400k		01/07/26	01/07/26	3 years plus 1	Yes
Cyclical painting "Internal and External areas" including repairs	Redditch	Internal and external decoration to council housing assets, including repairs.	Housing Property Services - Capital Team	625k		01/07/26	01/10/26	3 +1 +1	N/A
Disrepair Legal Services	Redditch	Legal services required for the incoming Disrepair claims	Housing Capital	750k	19/05/26	20/04/26	01/05/26	2	Yes
Domestic Servicing, Maintenance and Responsive Repairs for Renewable Heating Systems	Redditch	This contract covers the Domestic Servicing, Maintenance and Responsive Repairs including the provision for ad-hoc installation works as specified by the council Year 1 Â£100,000 + Year 2 Â£100,000 = Â£200,000 lifetime value	Property Services	200k		10/04/26	11/05/26	1 Year + 1 Year	Yes
HOUSING - Commercial Heating Systems RM	Redditch	EEM0026 LOT2: Commercial Heating Systems Servicing, Maintenance, Repairs and Installations (Within Housing Property Services, Redditch Borough Council housing stock only)	Property Services	200k	27/05/26	10/04/26	27/05/26	1 Year + 1 Year	Yes
Housing Development Programme Packages 1 & 2	Redditch	To direct award a developer for the Housing Development Programme Packages 1 and 2 through PFH framework, with break clauses at key stages.	Community Services	12,500k		01/08/26	01/08/26	3	Yes

Internal Refurbishment - Kitchens and Bathrooms	Redditch	Planned refurbishment of Kitchens, Bathrooms including rewires and Boilers and associated works	Housing Capital	4,800k		01/07/26	01/11/26	3	No
Kitchen Supply Contract	Redditch	The supply of Kitchen materials	Housing Capital	400k		18/05/26	01/06/26	3 + 1	Yes
Microsoft Licensing	Redditch	Microsoft Licensing for Azure, Windows and Office365 etc	Business Transformati on	438k	30/06/26	13/02/26	01/07/26	3	N/A
Scaffold Contract	Redditch	To supply and install scaffolding to enable works to RBC Housing	Housing Capital	2,400k		18/05/26	01/08/26	3	No
Storage Contract	Redditch	Supply and installation of storage facilities i.e Bins, bike, scooters	Housing Capital	600k		01/06/26	01/07/26	2	No
Supply and Installation of Aluminium Security Doors, including servicing and repairs	Redditch	Supply and Installation of Aluminium Security Doors, including servicing, repairs and associated works to new and existing security doors specified by Redditch Borough Council	Property Services	1,750k	29/06/26	29/05/26	30/06/26	2 + 1 + 1 + 1	Yes
Supply of Building Materials & Associated Services	Redditch	Supply of building materials & associated services	Environment al Services	5,000k	30/09/26	03/03/26	01/07/26	3 years	Yes
Supply of glazing	Redditch	Glazing and Associated Materials	Environment al Services	300k		03/03/26	11/05/26	3	Yes
Supply of ironmongery	Redditch	Supply of ironmongery	Environment al Services	450k		03/03/26	01/06/26	3	Yes
TOTAL				32.678m					

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MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), Councillor Craig Warhurst (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Brandon Clayton, Wanda King and Ashley Monk

Officers:

Eve Davies, Lyndsey Berry, Jonathan Elger, Claire Felton, Rob Foster, Helen Mole, Simon Parry, James Walton and Judith Willis

Democratic Services Officers:

Eve Davies

31. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Gemma Monaco.

32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

33. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements on this occasion.

34. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 28th July 2026 be approved.

35. REDDITCH TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY

The Economic Growth Manager presented a report on the Redditch Town Centre Strategy.

The Committee was advised that the Strategy set out a clear vision and framework to guide the future development and management of Redditch Town Centre, helping to ensure that activity across the town centre was aligned around a shared set of principles.

Members were informed that the Strategy responded to the changing role of town centres and sought to enhance Redditch's appeal as a destination for residents, visitors and businesses. The Strategy aimed to strengthen the town centre's identity, culture and

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heritage; support regeneration, business growth and a more diverse economy; adapt to changes in retail and the night-time economy; improve public spaces, movement and connectivity; and encourage collaboration, participation and community use.

The Committee noted that the Strategy would promote investment and partnership working and was intended to be a strategic document rather than a detailed delivery plan. It would also help to inform future projects and decision-making relating to the town centre.

Following the presentation of the report, Members had detailed discussion regarding the Strategy.

Members highlighted the opportunity to use the Innovation Centre and other developments to promote Redditch more effectively, increase footfall and attract external investment. It was noted that encouraging new businesses, including cafes, bars and restaurants, would help support both the daytime and evening economy. Members also commented on Redditch's connectivity to Birmingham and the potential to market the town as an attractive location for commuters, businesses and investors.

In response, the Committee was advised that officers were working with economic development colleagues and partners, including the Business Improvement District (BID) and the Kingfisher Shopping Centre, to develop a joined-up approach to inward investment and promotion. Feedback from stakeholder workshops had indicated that existing information needed to be communicated more effectively.

Members expressed that they were keen for the Council to learn from the experiences of other local authorities that had already undergone this process and received external funding. It was reported that the Strategy would bring together existing initiatives within a clear framework while retaining flexibility for future projects and opportunities.

Finally, Members acknowledged that there were ongoing challenges within the town centre and stressed the importance of continued efforts to drive improvement. It was recognised that, although the Council could not address every issue directly, it would continue to utilise its available powers where appropriate to support improvements and maintain standards.

RESOLVED that the Redditch Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan be approved.

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36. HOUSING DECANT POLICY

The Neighbourhood and Tenancy Manager presented a report on the Housing Decant Policy.

Members were advised that the Policy set out how the Council would support tenants and leaseholders where it was necessary to move them into temporary accommodation. The Policy outlined the arrangements that would apply in different circumstances, including the Council's financial and legal obligations. It also detailed the compensation available to tenants who were permanently displaced as a result of demolition or major refurbishment works, referred to under home loss and disturbance payments.

The Committee was informed that decants were currently most commonly required on a short-term basis, for example following damp and mould issues, fire or flood incidents. The Policy had been developed to provide greater detail than was previously contained within the Housing Management Policy and reflected the increased requirements arising from Awaab's Law. The updates to legislation placed stricter expectations on landlords to address hazards within properties and, where necessary, to move tenants to alternative accommodation while works were undertaken.

The Leader advised Members that the report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the previous evening.

RESOLVED that

1) The Housing Decant Policy be approved.

2) Authority be delegated to the Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services and Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to agree any revisions to the Housing Policies following the consultation and in line with any legislative or government guidance updates.

37. QUARTER 1 2026/27 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Business Improvement Manager presented the Quarter One 2026/27 Performance Report.

Members were informed that key performance highlights included the continued delivery of UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) grants, with seventy-four per cent of funding either spent or committed. Strong performance had also been achieved within Planning, with one hundred per cent of major applications and

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ninety-two point nine per cent of other applications determined within the relevant timescales, both exceeding Government targets.

The Committee was advised that Council Tax and Business Rates collection rates remained on target and that homelessness prevention activity had increased. It was reported that, despite an increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation, no families had been placed in bed and breakfast accommodation for longer than six weeks. Increased enforcement activity was also reported, while levels of fly-tipping had remained broadly stable. Updates were additionally provided in respect of Building Control performance and work being undertaken to address anti-social behaviour hotspots.

The Committee noted the positive overall performance position for Quarter One.

Following the presentation of the report, Members commented on the below points:

- Members expressed concerns regarding enforcement activity relating to fly-tipping as well as anti-social behaviour (ASB) and parking enforcement. It was acknowledged that Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) was responsible for dealing with some of these issues. The importance of ensuring adequate resources were available to address these problems was emphasised.
- The Committee discussed performance in Homelessness and Housing Solutions Services and noted that complaints performance was significantly below target. Officers recognised this and advised that this was in respect of homelessness complaints. Members were advised that recruitment and staffing challenges had contributed to capacity pressures, although action was being implemented to improve the service, including the recruitment of a Homelessness Manager. Members recognised the challenging nature of homelessness work and the difficult circumstances faced by both service users and staff. The importance of supporting and retaining staff within the service was highlighted.
- In respect of temporary accommodation, Members were informed that, whilst the Council was a lower achiever in respect of the number of households with children placed in temporary accommodation, the remaining homelessness

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performance measures remained higher or comparable with neighbouring authorities.

- Concerns were raised regarding a reported increase in ASB incidents in the Winyates area. Members supported a multi-agency approach involving the Council, Police, Housing Services and other partners to address identified hotspots. The Committee was advised that a number of partnership initiatives were already underway in Winyates, including community walkabouts, consideration of CCTV and improvements to stairwells. Whilst incidents had increased, officers confirmed that the issue was being actively monitored and addressed.
- Members discussed fly-tipping trends and the importance of understanding the types of waste being illegally dumped in order to inform targeted interventions. Officers advised that data on locations and the nature of incidents was collected and shared with WRS to support enforcement activity and identify patterns.
- The Committee also discussed opportunities to reduce fly-tipping through greater promotion of the Council's bulky waste collection service and by publicising enforcement action as a deterrent. Members noted the importance of encouraging residents to dispose of waste responsibly while highlighting the consequences of fly-tipping.

RESOLVED that the overview of Quarter 1 performance for the period April to June 2026 against the Council Plan priorities be noted.

38. RBC EQUALITY STRATEGY 2026-2028 (INCLUDING ENGAGEMENT POLICY)

The Business Improvement Manager presented the RBC Equality Strategy 2026-2028 (including Engagement Policy) report.

Members were advised that the Strategy would be considered by Full Council for final approval. It was explained that the document did not introduce new initiatives but instead built on existing work already underway across the Council, applying a clear equality focus to service delivery and decision-making. The Strategy also aimed to ensure that communications and engagement activities were fair, accessible and effective for all residents.

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The Committee was informed that the Strategy built on the progress achieved under the previous Equality Strategy, including the delivery of Council housing at Church Hill, improvements to the housing allocations system, the successful redevelopment of the Town Hall as a community hub and investment in skills and public spaces.

The Strategy was based around four equality objectives: continuing to deliver fair and accessible services; strengthening inclusive engagement and communication; improving understanding of communities and supporting inclusion; and supporting an inclusive and representative workforce.

The accompanying Engagement Policy set out how the Council would engage with residents, community groups and partners in an inclusive and meaningful manner, ensuring equality considerations were embedded at an early stage and that feedback was reported transparently.

Officers confirmed that the report would be amended to update the references to Local Government Reorganisation before submission to Full Council.

RECOMMENDED that the Equality Strategy 2026 – 2028 (including the Engagement Policy) be approved.

39. QUARTER 1 2026/27 HOUSING PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

The Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services presented the Quarter One 2026/27 Housing Performance and Improvement Plan Update.

Members were advised that the report provided an update on both housing performance during Quarter One and progress against the Housing Improvement Plan (HIP). It was explained that the Council had reviewed and expanded its performance indicators during the previous financial year to provide greater oversight of key strategic and operational areas, including rent collection, void properties, tenancy audits and tenant profiling, enabling services to be tailored more effectively to residents' needs.

The Committee was informed that positive performance had been recorded in a number of areas, including building safety compliance, gas safety, lift safety and electrical safety. Strong performance in relation to void properties was also reported, with the Council performing in the upper quartile when benchmarked

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against neighbouring local authorities. Complaint handling performance remained positive overall within the Housing Service.

Members noted that staffing vacancies within the service had impacted performance during the quarter. However, a new Housing Property Services Manager and Business Support Manager had now been appointed, providing additional leadership and capacity within the service. The Committee was advised that repairs performance continued to improve and that the Total Mobile system was scheduled to go live on 13th October 2026.

Further updates were provided on fire safety improvement works, including progress on fire door replacement schemes following increased investment in the service. A second contractor had also been appointed to increase the capacity to bring void properties back into use. Rent arrears had been introduced as a new financial performance indicator and it was reported that actions were being taken to address responses to damp and mould cases.

In respect of the Housing Improvement Plan, the Committee was advised that thirty actions had been completed, forty-eight were on track to be completed and six were behind schedule, with the exceptions highlighted within the report.

After the presentation of the report, Members had detailed discussion and raised the following points:

- Members sought an update on progress against the regulatory judgement. Officers advised that the Housing Improvement Plan had been designed to address areas identified against the consumer standards. It was explained that progress was being closely monitored and, once the required improvements had been delivered, the Council would seek reinspection with the aim of achieving a C1 grading.
- It was confirmed that the inspection process applied not only to local authorities with housing stock but also to registered providers with more than 1,000 properties.
- Concerns were raised regarding rent arrears and the potential impact on both tenants and the Council if cases were not addressed promptly. Members emphasised the importance of early intervention to prevent arrears escalating and placing tenants at risk of financial hardship or eviction.
- In response to concerns regarding rent arrears, officers advised that performance had been affected by staffing

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shortages, with a number of experienced staff leaving the service over a relatively short period. Members were informed that recruitment activity was underway, including interviews for Rent Officers, and that efforts had been made to improve the promotion of vacancies and attract candidates from a wider range of sectors. Officers highlighted that the Council remained a positive employer, offering agile working and other benefits, although recruitment within local government remained challenging.

- It was further noted that the tenancy sustainment service had been expanded to provide additional support to tenants, including assistance with accessing the correct benefits and identifying pathways into employment. Officers expressed confidence that these actions would help improve performance against the rent arrears target and advised that the Council was considering joining House Mark to enable benchmarking against other housing providers and identify further opportunities for service improvement. A comprehensive service review was also scheduled to commence in October 2026 to assess performance and explore additional improvements.
- Members discussed the high level of void rent loss and queried whether the target turnaround time was realistic. Officers explained that routine voids were performing well and achieving upper-quartile performance, while the longer turnaround times related primarily to more complex capital voids requiring extensive works and specialist contractor input.
- In relation to voids, the Committee was advised that contractor performance was being managed more robustly, additional capacity had been introduced and a review was underway to assess performance against sector benchmarks.
- Members expressed concern regarding the length of time some capital void properties remained empty and the associated loss of rental income. It was noted that, whilst many voids could be returned to use relatively quickly, the most complex cases often required extensive refurbishment works and presented significant challenges. Members suggested that these cases may require the procurement of additional specialist expertise and emphasised the importance of exploring all available options to bring properties back into use as quickly as possible. The

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Committee highlighted that prolonged void periods were not sustainable and requested that a strong focus be maintained on reducing turnaround times, ensuring value for money and considering alternative approaches where refurbishment works were no longer economically viable.

RESOLVED that

1) The Council's Quarter 1 2026/27 Housing Performance be noted.

2) The Housing Improvement Plan Quarter 1 2026/27 Update be noted.

40. QUARTER 1 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT 2026/27

The Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer presented the Quarter One Financial Monitoring Report 2026/27.

Members were advised that, as at the end of June 2026, a projected revenue overspend of £0.738 million had been identified, as set out within the report. The Committee was informed that the report detailed the forecast variances across each service area.

In relation to the Capital Programme, it was reported that an expenditure of two million pounds had been incurred against an approved budget of twenty-nine million pounds.

The Committee was advised that a review of budget allocations across service areas was currently being undertaken and that many of the identified variances were expected to be addressed by Quarter Two. Members also noted that more detailed information regarding the Capital Programme would be provided in future monitoring reports, following completion of a wider review of the Capital Programme.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance acknowledged that a detailed review of budgets would be undertaken. He further commented that, whilst savings had been delivered, significant budget pressures remained, including those associated with the Innovation Centre and the Town Hall. The importance of closely scrutinising expenditure, understanding ongoing spending commitments and ensuring the delivery of a balanced budget was emphasised.

RESOLVED that

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- 1) The full year forecast revenue position for 2026/27 is an overspend of £0.738m which will be funded from the General Fund Balance at year end if the position remains as an overspend.
- 2) The 2026/27 actual capital position at Q1 is £2.011m against a total approved programme of £28.948m.
- 3) The Ward Budget allocation for 2026/27 of £54,000 had approved allocations at £11,490 as at 30th June 2026.
- 4) The General Fund Opening Balance of £9.986m, adjusted in year to £9.248m as a result of the overspend.
- 5) To note the forecast position in respect of the GF Earmarked Reserves is £20.957m and HRA Earmarked Reserves is £9.160m as at 30th June 2026.
- 6) To note the updated procurements position set out in Appendix A to the minutes, with any new items over £200k to be included on the forward plan.

Appendix A - Procurement Pipeline

41. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Members considered the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 27th July 2026.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 27th July 2026 be noted.

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

There were no minutes or referrals from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or any of the Executive Advisory Panels on this occasion, other than those already detailed.

43. 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

There was no urgent business on this occasion.

The Meeting commenced at 6.01 pm
and closed at 6.54 pm

Appendix A – Procurement Pipeline

Title	Council	Contract Description	Department	Current Contract Expiry Date	Procurement Start Date	Contract Commencement Date	Contract Length	Extension	Contract Value (anticipated Lifetime Value)
Building Consultancy Services	Redditch	Consultancy Services including but not limited to Architectural, Structural Surveys, Cost Planning, Fire Risk Assessments and Stock Condition Surveys.	Housing Capital		01/07/2026	01/07/2026	3 years plus 1	Yes	1,400,000.00
Cyclical painting "Internal and External areas" including repairs	Redditch	Internal and external decoration to council housing assets, including repairs.	Housing Property Services - Capital		01/07/2026	01/10/2026	3 + 1 + 1	N/A	625,000.00
Disrepair Legal Services	Redditch	Legal services required for the incoming Disrepair claims	Housing Capital	19/05/2026	20/04/2026	01/05/2026	2	Yes	750,000.00
Housing Development Programme Packages 1 & 2	Redditch	Direct award a developer for the Housing Development Programme Packages 1 and 2 through PFH framework, with break clauses at key stages.	Community Services		01/08/2026	01/08/2026	3	Yes	12,500,000.00
Internal Refurbishment - Kitchens and Bathrooms	Redditch	Planned refurbishment of Kitchens, Bathrooms including rewires and Boilers and associated works	Housing Capital		01/07/2026	01/11/2026	3	No	4,800,000.00
Kitchen Supply Contract	Redditch	The supply of Kitchen materials	Housing Capital		18/05/2026	01/06/2026	3 + 1	Yes	400,000.00
Lift maintenance Contract 2026-2029	tbc	Service and Inspection of Lifts for Redditch , including Housings and Rubicon Sites and BDC	Property and regeneration		26/06/2026	01/09/2026	3	Yes	225,000.00
Scaffold Contract	Redditch	To supply and install scaffolding to enable works to RBC Housing	Housing Capital		18/05/2026	01/08/2026	3	No	2,400,000.00
Storage Contract	Redditch	Supply and installation of storage facilities i.e Bins, bike, scooters	Housing Capital		01/06/2026	01/07/2026	2	No	600,000.00
Supply and Instal of Security Doors,	Redditch	Supply and Installation of Security Doors, including servicing, repairs and associated works to new and existing security doors specified by RBC	Property Services	29/06/2026	29/05/2026	30/06/2026	2 + 1 + 1 + 1	Yes	1,750,000.00

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Executive

8th September 2026

Equality Strategy 2026-2028 (inc. Engagement Policy)

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Matthew Dormer (Leader)
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Assistant Director	Hannah Corredor
Report Author	Job Title: Performance & Improvement Manager Contact email: h.mole@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881685
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Council Priority	High-Quality Services
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 Equality Strategy 2026 – 2028 (including the Engagement Policy) be approved.****2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Council previously operated under an Equality Strategy covering the period 2022-2026 and an Engagement Strategy from 2022 to 2025. These strategies have helped embed equality considerations across service delivery, decision-making, engagement and workforce practices. As those strategies have now reached the end of their intended timeframe, an updated Equality Strategy, which includes the Engagement Policy as an appendix, have been developed for 2026-2028.
- 2.2 Progress and achievements from the previous strategies will be reported through the Councils' annual reporting arrangements alongside future updates on delivery of the new strategy.
- 2.3 The Equality Strategy is supported by an Action Plan, which brings together activity taking place across Council services to deliver the authority's equality objectives. The Action Plan enables more consistent monitoring of progress under each objective and enables the Council to demonstrate to residents how equality considerations are being embedded within the authority's work.
- 2.4 The refreshed Engagement Policy is included as an appendix to the Equality Strategy, demonstrating how effective equality work depends on high-quality insight and an understanding of the needs and experiences

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of different communities. It sets out how the Council will undertake inclusive and meaningful engagement so that the insight gathered from residents, community groups, partners, and staff can inform Equality Impact Assessments, service improvement activity and wider decision-making.

- 2.5 Housing Services has a dedicated Engagement Strategy for Redditch tenants which aligns with and complements the corporate approach, whilst also meeting the specific requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing

3. OPERATIONAL DETAIL

- 3.1 Both documents build on the Council's existing equality and engagement work and reflect learning from residents, community groups, partners, and staff over the four-year period of the last strategy. They provide an updated framework for ensuring equality, accessibility and community insight from approval until unitarisation in 2028.

- 3.2 The strategy sets out four equality objectives for 2026-2028:

- Continue to deliver fair and accessible services.
- Strengthen inclusive engagement and communication.
- Improve understanding of communities and support inclusion.
- Support an inclusive and representative workforce.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications. However, where future actions arising from the Equality Action Plan or engagement activity require additional resources, these will need to be considered through the relevant service planning, budget setting or decision-making process.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Equality Strategy supports the Council in meeting the authority's responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Duty requires local authorities to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different groups.
- 5.2 Approval of these documents will provide a clear framework for demonstrating that equality, accessibility and community engagement are embedded within policy development, service delivery and decision-making across the Council.

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

- 6.1 Both documents recognise the importance of maintaining a consistent approach to equality, accessibility and community engagement during the upcoming transition through Local Government Reorganisation into a North Worcestershire unitary council.

Relevant Council Priority

- 6.2 The Equality Strategy and Engagement Policy contribute to the delivery of high-quality services.
- 6.3 Together, they help ensure services are informed by the needs and experiences of residents, support continuous improvement and promote fair, effective, and inclusive service delivery across the Council.

Community Impact

- 6.4 The strategies will have a positive impact on local communities by helping the Council to better understand local needs, support inclusion and ensure that services and decisions are informed by the views and experiences of residents. This contributes to community well-being and cohesion across the Borough.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.5 There are no direct climate change implications arising from the approval of the Equality Strategy and Engagement Policy. The documents do not commit the Council to any specific projects, developments or operational activities that would directly affect greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption or climate adaptation measures.
- 6.6 However, the principles set out within the Equality Strategy and Engagement Policy support inclusive decision-making and engagement, which can help ensure that the impacts of climate change and environmental changes on different communities are better understood. This is particularly relevant for groups who may be disproportionately affected by extreme weather, fuel poverty, poor housing conditions or other climate-related risks.
- 6.7 Future actions, policies or projects developed under the framework of these documents will continue to be considered on their individual merits and, where appropriate, will be subject to separate assessment of climate change implications.

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Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.8 The subject matter of this report is directly concerned with equality, diversity and inclusion.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 Without an up-to-date Equality Strategy and Engagement Policy, there is a risk that the Council cannot clearly demonstrate how equality and engagement considerations are embedded. This could increase the risk of inconsistent practice across services and reduce assurance that the Council is meeting its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 7.2 The approved documents will help mitigate these risks by providing a clear and consistent framework for considering equality impacts, engaging with residents and communities and supporting informed decision-making. The Action Plan will also support the delivery and monitoring of identified priorities over the life of the Strategy.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix A - Equality Strategy 2026-2028
Appendix 1 - Engagement Policy 2026-2028

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Matt Dormer (Leader)	July 2026
Lead Director / Assistant Director	Hannah Corredor	03/08/26
Financial Services	Paul Earley	04/08/26
Legal Services	Claire Felton	05/08/26
	Emily Payne	N/A

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Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	Engagement & Equalities Advisor Helen Mole Business Improvement Manager	as authors
Climate Change Team (if climate change implications apply)	Matt Eccles, Climate Change Manager .	04.08.26

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Redditch Borough Council Equality Strategy 2026-2028

Title	Redditch Borough Council Equality Strategy 2026-2028
Description	This Strategy sets out our commitment for progressing equality over the next two years.
Created by	Engagement and Equalities Advisor
Date created	May 2026
Maintained by	Engagement and Equalities Advisor
Next Review Date	April 2028

Version number	Modified by	Modifications made	Date modified	Status

If you need this information in another language or format, please contact us and we will do our best to help.

Email: equalities@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Phone: 01527 548284

Foreword

Redditch is a borough with proud communities, diverse experiences and a strong sense of place. As a Council, we want everyone to feel valued, respected and able to access the opportunities, services and support they need to thrive.

This Equality Strategy sets out our commitment to ensuring fairness, dignity and inclusion remain central to everything we do between 2026 and 2028. For our Council, equality means fair treatment and fair access for all residents. It builds on the progress already made across the Council and reflects what we have learned through working with residents, community organisations, partners and staff.

Equality is not a standalone activity. It is part of how we design services, make decisions, engage with communities and support our workforce. This strategy provides a practical framework for continuing that work while recognising the changing environment in which local government operates while recognising the changing environment in which local government operates.

We know there is always more to do. By listening to people, understanding different experiences and considering the impact of our decisions, we can continue to improve services and strengthen community cohesion across the borough.

With Local Government Reorganisation now underway, it is essential that Redditch continues to place fairness, inclusion and a clear understanding of community needs at the heart of decision-making and service delivery.

This strategy will help ensure that equality continues to inform the way we plan services, engage with residents and support our workforce throughout this transition and beyond.

I am pleased to support this strategy and look forward to working with residents, community organisations, businesses, partners and colleagues to help deliver its objectives.

Councillor Matt Dormer
Leader of Redditch Borough Council

1. Purpose

At Redditch Borough Council, we want everyone to be treated with fairness, dignity and respect. This Equality Strategy sets out how we will continue to do that between 2026 and 2028.

Over recent years, we have listened to residents, community groups and staff to better understand the different needs, experiences and barriers people face. This learning has helped shape how services are delivered, how decisions are made and how we work as an employer. While positive progress has been made, we recognise that there is more to do.

This strategy builds on existing learning and sets a clear direction for continuing to embed equality into everyday Council activity. Our aim is to support a borough where people from all backgrounds can live, work and participate fully, and where individuals and communities feel valued, respected and included.

The strategy will also support the Council during a period of organisational change. By maintaining a clear focus on equality, we can better understand how decisions may affect different people and communities, helping to ensure services remain fair, accessible and responsive to local needs throughout the transition to new local government arrangements.

2. Scope

This strategy applies to everyone who lives in, works in or visits Redditch. It covers all Council services and functions, the Council's workforce and Elected Members.

It reflects the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 and supports a consistent approach to equality across all areas of Council activity, including during periods of change.

3. Our Legal Duties and Responsibilities

The Equality Act 2010 provides the legal framework for our work on equality. It protects people from discrimination based on nine protected characteristics and places duties on public bodies.

As a local authority, the Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty. This requires us to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity

- foster good relations between different groups

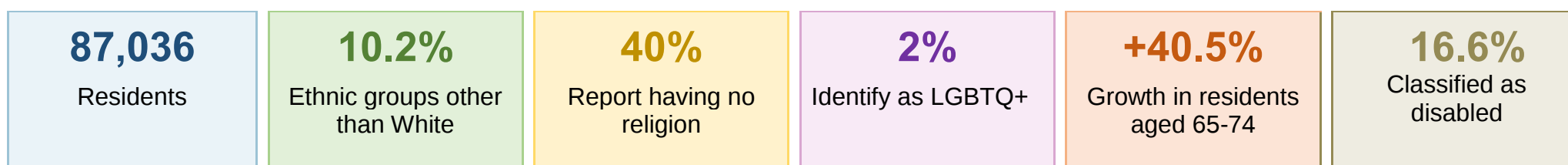
While publishing this strategy helps meet our legal responsibilities, it also reflects our broader commitment to fairness and inclusion. We also recognise that poverty and socioeconomic disadvantage can significantly impact people's lives and opportunities. Although not a protected characteristic in law, this remains an important consideration in how we understand inequality locally.

4. Understanding Redditch Borough

Redditch is a diverse and evolving borough, home to over 87,000 residents, an increase of 3.4% between 2011 and 2021, living across a range of communities and neighbourhoods. Feckenham is the only parish within the Borough, providing a distinct rural community alongside the town's predominantly urban population.

Understanding who our residents are, how the population is changing and where different groups may experience barriers or inequalities is essential to delivering fair, accessible and inclusive services.

Here we have provided an overview of Redditch's population and communities, highlighting key demographic trends and equality-related characteristics. It draws together evidence on age, diversity, disability, caring responsibilities and wider inequalities to help inform decision-making, service planning and the Council's commitment to advancing equality of opportunity across the borough.



Ethnicity and culture

Redditch is becoming more diverse, with more than 1 in 10 residents identifying with ethnic groups other than White. This diversity contributes to the borough's vibrant communities and reflects a range of cultural experiences, languages and perspectives that form an important part of community life.

Faith, belief and identity

A sizeable proportion of residents report having no religion, alongside a range of faith communities, with 48.9% of residents identifying as Christian. This diversity of faith, belief and worldview forms an important part of Redditch's identity and community life.

Sexual orientation

Around 2.0% of residents aged 16 and over identify as LGBTQ+, while 8.1% preferred not to state their sexual orientation or did not answer the question. LGBTQ+ residents form an important part of Redditch's communities and contribute to the diversity of the borough.

Age and life stage

Redditch is home to people at all stages of life, with a median age of 40. The 40.5% increase in residents aged 65 to 74 highlights the borough's ageing population and the importance of accessibility, digital inclusion and wellbeing.

Disability, health and caring

Disability, long-term health conditions and caring responsibilities are an important part of many residents' lives. Redditch is home to 7,562 unpaid carers, representing 9.1% of residents aged 5 and over, with 2.9% providing 50 hours or more of care each week, supporting family members, friends and neighbours.

Socio-economic inequality

While Redditch has many strengths, opportunities and outcomes are not experienced equally across the borough. Differences in income, deprivation, housing, health and digital access can affect people's life chances, with some communities facing greater barriers than others.

Source: ONS Census 2021 dataset via Nomis

While Redditch benefits from diverse communities, strong local identities and a growing population, the data also demonstrates the importance of understanding how age, disability, caring responsibilities, ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation and wider socio-economic factors can influence people's experiences and opportunities. This evidence provides an important foundation for delivering fair, inclusive and accessible services and for shaping the priorities of the Equality Strategy.

5. Equality in Practice: What We Have Learned

Between 2022 and 2026, equality considerations increasingly informed how services were designed, delivered and reviewed across Redditch. Insight from residents, partners and staff supported improvements in access, fairness and service responsiveness.

The examples below show how equality has been embedded across key service areas, demonstrating a practical and joined-up approach rather than isolated initiatives.

5.1 Housing, Regeneration and Local Development

The Council made significant progress in improving access to affordable, secure and good quality homes while regenerating key community assets. This included the delivery of 19 new Council homes in Church Hill, providing accessible and affordable housing for families, older residents and those with the greatest need.

The transformation of the Town Hall into a modern community hub will bring NHS services, Council departments and community spaces together in one accessible location, reducing barriers to essential services and supporting joined-up delivery. A three-year financial plan protected key services and enabled continued investment in regeneration during periods of economic uncertainty.

Improvements to the Redditch Homes allocations system, including clearer guidance and eligibility criteria, strengthened fairness, transparency and access for vulnerable applicants.

5.2 Economy, Skills and Innovation

Investment in skills and innovation supported more inclusive economic growth. The Council secured over £16 million for the development of the Digital Manufacturing Innovation Centre, contributing to job creation, business growth and skills development for young people and small and medium-sized enterprises.

The introduction of a new Council Plan, with priorities focused on community, housing, green and safe spaces and prosperity, guided improvements to public spaces, access to skills and employability opportunities, particularly benefiting residents who face barriers to work or economic participation.

5.3 Community Engagement, Planning and Participation

The Council strengthened community voice through accessible engagement opportunities. The Local Plan roadshow, delivered across nine locations alongside an online platform, enabled residents to play an active role in shaping development up to 2043 and broadened participation among people less able to engage in traditional consultations.

Free family events, including the Arrow Valley Lights Trail, created inclusive opportunities for residents of all ages and backgrounds to participate in community life, supporting social cohesion and accessible leisure.

5.4 Cost of Living Support and Financial Resilience

Recognising the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, the Council delivered a coordinated response to provide accessible support and guidance. Through a multi-channel approach, including partnership leaflets, online resources, community outreach and work with local voluntary and community organisations, the Council helped residents, including those who may be digitally excluded, to access financial and practical support.

The Government's Household Support Fund (HSF), which operated until March 2026, provided targeted assistance to residents experiencing financial hardship. Working with Citizens Advice Bromsgrove and Redditch and local voluntary and community sector organisations, the Council helped distribute almost £348,000 of support during the final phase of the programme, including £124,000 through local community organisations and £220,000 in direct payments to eligible households. Support was delivered through a range of initiatives including foodbanks, food pantries, warm spaces and household support schemes, helping residents most affected by rising living costs.

Although HSF has now ended, the Council continues to work with Worcestershire County Council and local partners to help residents access support through the Crisis and Resilience Fund and other available assistance programmes.

5.5 Voluntary, Community and Partnership Support

The Council continued to champion voluntary and community organisations, recognising their vital role in promoting equality and supporting residents facing disadvantage. The Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Programme was expanded, offering grants of up to £10,000 to organisations including carers' services, debt advice providers, food pantries, older people's support and family services. Ring-fenced funding for smaller grassroots organisations improved equitable access to funding and ensured groups supporting protected and under-represented communities were not disadvantaged.

5.6 Health, Leisure and Inclusion

The Council worked to maintain and improve access to inclusive leisure and wellbeing services. The Council has continued to support and enhance access to inclusive leisure and wellbeing services. Through the Redditch Play Audit and Investment Strategy, work is underway to improve inclusive and accessibility across all play areas where possible, with Arrow Valley achieving elements of the PiPA (Plan Inclusive Play Areas) accreditation. Through Rubicon Leisure the Council offers a range of inclusive health and wellbeing activities including Cancer Rehab, Escape Pain and Exercise on Referral and offers financial inclusivity through the Active Redditch Card providing reductions up to 100%.

5.7 Workforce Development and Organisational Culture

The Council continues to promote a working environment based on fairness, dignity and respect. Learning and leadership activity, including Dignity at Work training, supports a culture where equality is part of everyday practice and service delivery. Further detail on the Council's approach as an employer is set out in section 8.

5.8 Impact and Learning

Taken together, this work shows how Redditch Borough Council has continued to embed equality, inclusion and fairness into everyday practice. The activity delivered between 2022 and 2026 reflects learning from previous strategies, engagement with residents, community organisations and staff, and a growing understanding of what helps people access services, opportunities and support in different ways.

This work demonstrates how equality considerations are increasingly embedded in how the Council plans, delivers services and works with partners.

The learning from this period provides a strong foundation for the Equality Objectives set out below and will continue to inform how the Council develops its approach in a proportionate and practical way.

6. Equality During Change

Redditch Borough is entering a period of significant change as preparations continue for the transition to a new unitary authority in North Worcestershire from April 2028. Throughout this period, equality will remain an important consideration in how services are planned, reviewed and delivered. Understanding how different residents and communities experience change will help ensure decisions are informed by local evidence, community insight and an awareness of potential barriers.

We recognise that change can affect people in different ways. Factors such as age, disability, health, caring responsibilities, income, language and digital access can influence how people access services, information and opportunities to participate in community life and local decision-making. Considering equality impacts at an early stage helps us better understand these differences and supports fair, accessible and inclusive outcomes.

We will continue to work with residents, community organisations, partners and staff to understand lived experiences and identify emerging issues as plans develop. This will help ensure that the diverse needs of Redditch's communities continue to be understood and considered throughout the transition, while ensuring local insight helps inform future planning and decision-making.

Equality will also remain an important consideration for our workforce. As organisational arrangements evolve, we will continue to support staff through fair processes, clear communication and access to appropriate wellbeing, learning and development opportunities.

The Council will continue to make appropriate use of digital technology to support service delivery and decision-making. Where digital tools are used, they will be applied in a proportionate and transparent way, with appropriate safeguards, human oversight and consideration of accessibility and inclusion.

7. Equality in Service Delivery

The Council aims to deliver services that are fair, clear and accessible. This involves taking a proportionate and practical approach to equality when services are designed, reviewed and delivered, building on the learning outlined earlier in this strategy.

7.1 Thinking about Equality in Decisions

The Council has an established Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process to help ensure equality considerations are taken into account when developing policies, reviewing services and making decisions. Equality Impact Assessments help the Council understand how proposals may affect different people and communities, identify potential barriers and consider opportunities to promote equality, inclusion and accessibility.

Equality Impact Assessments form part of the Council's decision-making framework and are completed for key decisions taken by Executive and Council, as well as for other proposals where there may be a significant impact on residents, communities or employees. The level of assessment undertaken will be proportionate to the scale, nature and potential impact of the proposal being considered.

The Council provides equality guidance, supporting templates and access to advice to help officers consider equality impacts in a practical and proportionate way. Rather than taking a rigid, one-size-fits-all approach, officers are expected to be able to explain how equality has been considered, drawing on available evidence, engagement findings, local knowledge and professional judgement where appropriate.

This reflects the Council's legal duties while recognising the realities of service delivery and decision-making. Equality considerations are particularly important when services are reviewed, redesigned or reduced, and as Local Government Reorganisation progresses. Considering equality at an early stage helps the Council understand potential impacts on residents, communities and the workforce and ensures these are reflected in planning, decision-making and service delivery.

7.2 Using Equality Information and Learning

The Council publishes equality information each year to show how equality is being considered across its work. This includes information about the Council's workforce, such as the gender pay gap and, where appropriate, people who use its services.

Reviewing this information helps build understanding of how different groups experience employment and access services, and where barriers may exist. Equality monitoring also highlights gaps in understanding and where further insight could be helpful. Monitoring activity remains proportionate and focused on supporting learning and improvement rather than meeting targets for their own sake.

7.3 Equality in Commissioning and Procurement

Many services are delivered by partner organisations, and the way services are bought and commissioned can influence people's experiences. When procuring goods and services, whether delivered directly by the Council or on its behalf, the Council considers equality, fairness and accessibility in a proportionate way.

Suppliers and partners are expected to share a commitment to inclusive and respectful practice and to meet their responsibilities under equality law. By being clear about expectations and encouraging fair access to opportunities, including for local businesses and community organisations, the Council seeks to ensure public money is used responsibly and supports positive outcomes for people who live, work or visit the borough.

8. Equality as an Employer

Our workforce plays a vital role in delivering services. Creating an inclusive working environment helps staff feel respected, supported and able to do their best work.

As the Council prepares for the transition to a new unitary authority, we will continue to support staff through fair processes, clear communication, opportunities to engage with change and access to wellbeing and development support. We recognise that organisational change can affect people differently and will continue to consider equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the transition. This learning-based approach will help support staff wellbeing, resilience and fair decision-making.

Embedding equality within workplace culture helps ensure the Council remains a place where people feel respected, valued and supported to work collaboratively, contribute their skills and experience, and deliver inclusive, high-quality services for our communities.

8.1 Equality in Everyday Employment Practice

The Council has a range of employment policies that apply to all staff and prospective employees. These policies set shared expectations around behaviour, fairness, support and accountability, helping to create a working environment that is inclusive and respectful.

Rather than being viewed as stand-alone documents, these policies support everyday practice — guiding how people are treated, how issues are addressed and how decisions are made. They cover areas such as equality of opportunity, dignity at work, flexible working and work–life balance, and provide a framework for preventing and addressing discrimination, bullying and harassment. The Council keeps these policies under review to ensure they continue to reflect how the organisation works and evolves.

8.2 Learning and Support for an Inclusive Workplace

An inclusive working culture relies on people having the confidence, awareness and understanding to apply equality principles in their roles. Equality learning supports this by encouraging reflection on how behaviours and decisions affect colleagues and the communities the Council serves.

The Council's approach to learning is shaped by its wider values and culture, and is embedded through a range of activity, including Dignity at Work training, induction, refresher learning, targeted workshops and access to guidance and resources. This supports a consistent approach across the organisation, in the same way that equality learning informs service design and delivery.

This approach helps to:

- promote fair and respectful behaviour at work
- support inclusive leadership by managers and Members
- recognise and value different perspectives and experiences
- build confidence in addressing issues such as discrimination, bullying or harassment
- maintain a working environment where people feel safe, valued and supported

Supporting an inclusive workplace will remain important throughout the transition to a new unitary authority. We will continue to provide staff with learning, guidance and support that helps them understand and apply equality principles in their day-to-day roles. Maintaining a positive and inclusive culture will help support staff wellbeing, resilience and fair decision-making, while ensuring employees feel respected, valued and able to continue delivering high-quality services for our communities.

9. Engagement and Listening

Listening to residents, staff, service users and partners helps the Council make informed and inclusive decisions. Engagement is about learning what matters to people and understanding how Council decisions may affect them. By hearing from a wide range of voices, the Council can build a better picture of local needs and use this insight to help shape services, policies and partnership work where appropriate.

9.1 How We Approach Engagement

The Council's Engagement Policy sets out how engagement is planned and delivered. It reflects learning from previous consultation activity and supports an approach that is flexible, proportionate and suited to different communities.

Engagement is planned based on who the Council needs to hear from and the most appropriate ways to involve them. In practice, this means the Council seeks to:

- plan engagement proportionately and make effective use of available resources
- encourage participation from a wide range of people, including those less likely to take part

- provide suitable opportunities for involvement, recognising different needs and circumstances

Good engagement is not just about collecting feedback. It is also about being open and realistic about what can be influenced, and using what people tell us to improve understanding over time. The Council seeks to be clear about why engagement is taking place and how feedback will be used to help manage expectations.

Where appropriate, engagement insight is considered alongside other information to help inform decisions within available resources. Over time, this approach supports stronger relationships with communities and more meaningful ongoing conversations.

For Council tenants, engagement is supported through the Housing Services Tenant Engagement Policy and dedicated tenant engagement arrangements, which provide opportunities to influence housing services and decisions that affect them. These arrangements complement this Strategy and Engagement Policy, supporting the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing. Alongside wider engagement activity, these arrangements help ensure that tenants' experiences and perspectives continue to inform service development and improvement.

By listening to people and learning from their experiences, we can continue to develop services and policies that are responsive to the communities we serve.

10. Measuring Progress

Measuring progress helps the Council understand how well it is meeting its commitment to equality, accessibility and inclusion. We use information, feedback and insight to understand how people experience our services, identify areas of good practice and highlight where further action may be needed. Sharing this information helps support openness, learning and informed decision-making.

The Equality Strategy 2026-2028 builds on the learning, achievements and experience gained through the Council's Equality Strategy 2022-2026, while responding to current priorities and future challenges.

An annual update on progress against this strategy will be provided through the Council's reporting arrangements. This will include key achievements from both the current and previous Equality Strategy, helping to demonstrate the difference this work is making, support accountability and identify opportunities for further improvement.

As the strategy is implemented, we will continue to review and strengthen our activities in response to feedback, emerging needs, changing legislation and best practice. In terms of measuring success, we will develop a performance evaluation and reporting framework which will align with the priorities set out in the strategy.

11. Equality Objectives 2026-2028

The Council publishes equality objectives to guide its approach to equality, diversity and inclusion over the period 2026 to 2028. These objectives provide a clear focus for how the Council will continue to embed equality in its work, particularly as it operates within a changing local government context.

Objective 1: Continue to Deliver Fair and Accessible Services

The Council will continue to ensure services are as fair and accessible as possible by identifying and addressing barriers where reasonable and proportionate to do so. Services will be kept under review to ensure they remain responsive to the needs of local communities.

Objective 2: Strengthen Inclusive Engagement and Communication

The Council will continue to develop its approach to engagement and communication so that people can stay informed and share their views. This will be delivered in line with the Council's engagement approach (Section 9), supporting fair opportunities for residents to participate in local decision-making.

Objective 3: Improve Understanding of Our Communities and Support Inclusion

The Council recognises the diversity of people, experiences and backgrounds within the borough. Building on existing insight, partnerships and community relationships, the Council aims to improve its understanding of how different people experience services and community life. This will help support inclusion, promote respect and strengthen community cohesion, contributing to a borough where people feel welcomed and valued.

Objective 4: Support an Inclusive and Representative Workforce

The Council will continue to support a working environment where employees feel respected, supported and able to contribute, promoting fairness across recruitment, development and progression and maintaining an inclusive workplace culture.

12. Equality Action Plan

The Equality Action Plan translates these objectives into practical actions. It focuses on continuing to embed equality into everyday work, supporting learning and preparing for future change. The plan will be kept under review to ensure it remains relevant, proportionate and effective.

13. Contact Us

We welcome feedback and involvement from residents, partners and community groups.

Email: equalities@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Phone: 01527 548284

If you need this information in another format or language, please contact us and we will do our best to help.

Equality Action Plan 2026 - 2028		
Theme	What we will continue to do	Examples of how these are being delivered
Understanding Our Communities Better <i>(Supports Objectives 1, 2 & 3)</i>	- Use available information (including service feedback, engagement, complaints and partner insight) to understand how people experience services and identify any differences between groups - Apply this understanding to inform service planning, review and improvement - Where analytical tools or AI-supported insight are used, remain mindful of limitations and potential bias, and balance this with professional judgement and local knowledge. - Use available evidence to consider equality impacts linked to service change, including work associated with the Local Government Reorganisation.	Equality Impacts: Equality considerations built into quarterly performance and service monitoring reports to support informed decision-making. Service Feedback and Complaints Data: Using feedback and complaints data to identify recurring themes and improve services, including understanding differing experiences across groups. Equality Data and Evidence: Using available data proportionately to inform service planning, policy development and Local Government Reorganisation activity. Family Hub Services: Using tools such as pre and post questionnaires to measure the outcomes, understand impact and improve delivery Using Insight to Inform Strategy: Applying consultation findings and local evidence to inform strategies including in our Shared Homelessness Strategy.
Making Our Services Easier to Access and Use <i>(Supports Objectives 1 & 2)</i>	- Apply the Council's approach to equality (Section 7) within service design and policy development. - Use feedback and insight to identify and address barriers to access where reasonable and proportionate - Communicate clearly with residents about service changes, including those connected to the Local Government Reorganisation.	Inclusive Play Audit: Improving accessibility in public spaces by identifying and addressing barriers to access. Town Hall Refurbishment: Improving physical access, including face to face reception desk, to services following the reopening of the Town Hall.

	- Where reasonably practicable, ensure public-facing information reflects accessibility guidance and good practice. - Keep services under review to help understand how changes may affect different residents and communities over time.	Equality in Decision-Making: Equality considerations embedded within committee reports to support transparent and informed decisions. Consultation and Service Design: Engagement activities such as the Local Plan consultation used to shape services and policies based on resident feedback. Clear and Accessible Communication: Providing information in plain English and accessible formats when services or policies change. Family Hubs: Offering tailored approaches e.g. 1:1, home visits to ensure services are accessible to a wider range of residents.
Listening to People and Supporting Their Involvement <i>(Supports Objectives 2 & 3)</i>	- Deliver engagement activity in line with the Council's approach (Section 9), providing opportunities for people to be involved in local decision-making - Work with voluntary, community, cultural and faith organisations to support dialogue and improve understanding - Where appropriate, use accessible communication tools to help widen participation. - Consider engagement findings alongside other information to help inform decisions and service development over time.	Responsible Landlord: Maintaining safe, secure and well-managed Council homes, while working with tenants through engagement activity, tenant satisfaction surveys and improvements to housing services and allocations processes to better understand and respond to need, supporting sustainable tenancies and fair access to housing. Community Engagement Activity: Delivering engagement linked to major programmes such as town centre regeneration, housing and service planning. Inclusive Engagement Methods: Using a mix of digital and non-digital approaches (e.g. online surveys, paper forms, face-to-face engagement) to reach diverse communities. Corporate and Service Surveys: Using surveys such as the annual Places and Budget Survey's and Tenant Satisfaction Surveys to inform service improvements. Partnership Working: Collaborating with voluntary, community, cultural and faith organisations (e.g. Redditch Community Wellbeing Trust, Family Hub Network). Community Collaboration: Working with residents and groups (e.g. allotment associations) to co-design services and improve local spaces.

Bringing Communities Together and Valuing Differences <i>(Supports Objectives 2 & 3)</i>	• Support inclusion and community cohesion through partnership-led activity, where resources and capacity allow. • Maintain awareness of hate crime reporting processes and use available information to help understand local issues and trends. • Continue to engage with voluntary and community sector organisations during periods of change. • Ensure Council communications are respectful and inclusive, including where AI-supported tools are used	Pride in Place: Delivering long-term investment in Greenlands and Woodrow to improve community facilities, regenerate spaces and support inclusive, resident-led change. Community Grants: Supporting voluntary and community sector activity through local grant funding. Community Safety and Prevention: Delivering coordinated programmes to support inclusion and safety, including prevention activity, awareness campaigns, Designing Out Crime initiatives and partnership working through the Safer Redditch Partnership. Neighbourhood Services and Local Environment: Providing visible reassurance through Neighbourhood Wardens, helping to reduce anti-social behaviour and improve local environments, supported by Environmental Visual Audits. Hate Crime Awareness and Reporting: Promoting awareness, improving reporting and ensuring accessible systems through engagement and campaigns. Community Engagement and Involvement: Delivering events, outreach and engagement activity to raise awareness, alongside supporting volunteering, community-led initiatives and groups (including SEND networks) with resources, venues and connections.
Supporting our Workforce and Building an Inclusive Workplace <i>(Supports Objective 4)</i>	• Use workforce equality information to understand staff experiences and identify patterns over time • Support managers and Elected Members to apply fair and inclusive leadership in practice • Build on existing learning and development activity to promote inclusive ways of working, support wellbeing and encourage fair treatment at work. • Where new technology is used in workforce-related processes, consider potential equality implications and maintain appropriate human oversight.	Workforce Data and Insight: Improving equality data within HR systems to better understand staff experiences and inform workforce planning. Training and Development: Delivering equality, diversity and inclusion training to staff, managers and Members to support inclusive leadership. Wellbeing Support: Promoting the Employee Assistance Programme and wider wellbeing support to staff. Inclusive Policies: Ensuring HR policies reflect inclusive practice and support fairness.

	Continue to promote awareness of wellbeing support and encourage a working environment where staff feel able to seek support when needed.	Staff Engagement: Delivering the annual Staff Survey and using findings to improve workplace culture and staff experience.
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Please note that, following approval, this document will be formatted and branded by the Graphics team.



Redditch Borough Council

Engagement Policy

2026-2028

Title	Redditch Borough Council Engagement Policy 2026-2028
Description	This policy sets out the Council's approach to delivering inclusive and meaningful community engagement over the period 2026–2028.
Created by	Engagement and Equalities Advisor
Date created	May 2026
Maintained by	Engagement and Equalities Advisor
Next Review Date	April 2028

Version number	Modified by	Modifications made	Date modified	Status

If you need this information in another language or format, please contact us to discuss how we can best meet your needs. Email: equalities@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk or Phone: 01527 548284

1. Purpose

At Redditch Borough Council, we want people to feel informed, heard and able to influence decisions that affect their lives. Engagement plays an important role in helping us understand what matters to people, how services are experienced and how decisions may affect different communities. This insight strengthens the evidence we use and supports fair, practical and responsive decision-making.

This Engagement Policy builds on the work we have already delivered, and the learning gained from previous engagement activity. Over recent years, we have developed a more consistent and inclusive approach, improving how we involve residents, communities and partners in shaping local services and decisions. This experience has helped us create a more practical and joined-up way of working, which this policy now sets out and strengthens for the period 2026 to 2028.

As we continue to develop our approach, we are focused on making it easier for people to take part in engagement and maintaining the relationships we have built with communities and partners. We will continue to listen carefully, particularly to underrepresented voices, and be open about how feedback is used. By doing this consistently, we aim to strengthen trust and ensure engagement is meaningful and valued.

This policy also supports the Council through one of the most significant periods of change in local government in Worcestershire. Following the Government's decision to replace the existing county and district councils with two new unitary authorities from April 2028, engagement will play a vital role in ensuring residents, communities, businesses and partners remain informed, involved and able to influence how services and local priorities develop. By maintaining a clear, consistent and inclusive approach to engagement, we will help ensure local voices continue to inform decision-making throughout the transition and beyond

2. Scope

This policy applies to all consultation and engagement activity undertaken or commissioned by Redditch Borough Council between 2026 and 2028, where we are seeking to understand views, inform decisions or improve services. Activity may range from statutory consultation to more informal engagement and may take place at a corporate, service, or local level.

Engagement may be undertaken to meet statutory requirements or to support service improvement and community involvement. It plays an important role in understanding views and informing policies, priorities, services, budgets, and decision-making, including supporting Equality Impact Assessments.

This policy applies to external consultation and engagement activity only. It does not cover internal consultation within the organisation, such as matters relating to employee pay and conditions, which are managed separately through Human Resources. Consultation on planning applications, the Local Plan, and Traffic Regulation Orders is also outside the scope of this policy.

Across all engagement activity, the Council will take a coordinated and proportionate approach. This includes using established engagement channels and partnerships, encouraging participation from a wide range of people, and using a mix of methods to reflect different needs and circumstances. The Council will be clear about what can be influenced and will ensure that feedback is considered alongside other relevant evidence when making decisions.

3. Building on our Successes

Engagement activity in recent years has helped us better understand how people want to take part and what makes engagement effective. We have delivered a range of engagement activity across the Council, including:

- borough-wide consultations such as the Local Plan roadshows, combining face-to-face events with online engagement
- targeted engagement with tenants and service users to inform housing and community safety services
- partnership work with voluntary and community organisations to reach underrepresented groups
- use of surveys, drop-in sessions and community events to support service improvements

We have learned that:

- people are more likely to take part when engagement is clear, relevant and easy to access
- using a mix of online and in-person approaches helps reach a wider range of people
- working with community groups improves reach and trust
- clear communication about what can and cannot change helps manage expectations
- engagement is most effective when it takes place early and is linked to decision-making

This learning shapes how we will continue to develop and improve our approach.

4. Our Responsibilities

National responsibilities

The Council has a responsibility to involve residents and communities in its work. This includes requirements under legislation such as the Equality Act 2010, Local Government Acts and national guidance. We follow established principles of good consultation (the Gunning Principles), ensuring engagement is fair, timely and allows people to give informed views. Alongside this, our approach reflects a wider commitment to being open, transparent and accountable.

What this means locally

In Redditch, engagement supports the Council's priorities and the Equality Strategy and Action Plan. It helps us understand lived experience and consider how decisions may affect different communities. We will continue to strengthen how we:

- reach underrepresented communities
- use insight to inform decisions
- link engagement with equality considerations

A mix of digital and non-digital methods will continue to be used to ensure engagement remains accessible and flexible.

Local Government Reorganisation

The Council recognises that Local Government Reorganisation will bring significant change as Worcestershire transitions to two new unitary authorities from April 2028. During this period, engagement will be an essential tool for understanding the needs, priorities and concerns of residents, communities and stakeholders. We are committed to providing clear opportunities for people to participate in conversations about the future of local services and places, ensuring that community insight helps inform planning and decision-making throughout the transition. By taking an open, accessible and coordinated approach, we will support meaningful involvement and help maintain trust during a period of change.

5. Our Approach to Community Engagement

What we mean by community engagement

Community engagement is about listening to people, understanding their experiences, and involving them in decisions that affect their lives. It builds on ongoing engagement activity across the Council and can range from sharing information through to working more closely with communities to shape solutions. The approach taken will depend on the issue and what we are trying to achieve, ensuring engagement is both appropriate and meaningful.

Why engagement matters

Engagement helps the Council understand what matters to people, design better and more accessible services, and make informed and balanced decisions. It also supports the development of stronger relationships and helps build trust over time.

For communities, engagement provides an opportunity to have a voice in local decisions, influence services and priorities, and build confidence and understanding. It also helps people see how their views contribute to outcomes and shape future services.

Good engagement is clear, meaningful and takes place early enough to influence decisions. Taking a thoughtful and proportionate approach helps ensure engagement is both effective and valued by those taking part.

What we mean by community

People may identify with communities in different ways, including where they live, shared interests or experiences, and aspects of identity or background. These connections are not always fixed, and individuals may belong to more than one community at the same time.

Our approach recognises this and reflects the different ways people experience community life. We continue to build on existing relationships while also seeking to reach new and less-heard voices, ensuring a broader and more inclusive understanding of our communities.

6. Who is Involved and How We Work Together

Community engagement is a shared responsibility across the Council. Understanding people's experiences and views is essential to delivering services that work well and reflect local needs.

Engagement should be part of everyday activity and link with policy, communication, equality work and service delivery.

Across the Council engagement is coordinated to reduce duplication, make best use of resources and ensure insight is shared and used effectively.

Service areas lead engagement relevant to their work, supported by the Performance and Improvement Team. This includes designing inclusive engagement, choosing appropriate methods and using findings to inform decisions.

Elected Members play an important role in representing community views and supporting engagement locally. Scrutiny processes help ensure community insight is considered in decision-making.

7. Putting this into Practice

Community engagement will continue to develop as part of how the Council works day to day, building on existing practice.

Embedding engagement in everyday work

Engagement will be built into how the Council plans, designs and reviews its work. This includes policy development, service design and improvement, budget setting and priority-setting, as well as Equality Impact Assessments. Bringing engagement into these core areas helps ensure that decisions are informed by a combination of data, insight and lived experience, supporting stronger and more balanced decision-making.

A proportionate and inclusive approach

We recognise that not all decisions require the same level of engagement, and that people experience different barriers to taking part. Our approach will reflect the scale and impact of each issue, ensuring that engagement is proportionate and meaningful. We will use a mix of methods and make reasonable adjustments where needed so that people can take part in ways that work for them.

Working alongside the Equality Strategy

Engagement plays an important role in supporting the delivery of the Equality Strategy and its action plan. It helps us hear from underrepresented communities, understand different experiences and identify potential impacts of decisions. This insight informs Equality Impact Assessments and strengthens how equality is considered across the Council's work.

Tenant engagement

Engagement with Council tenants is an important and distinct area of activity.. Housing Services has a dedicated Engagement Strategy for Redditch tenants which aligns with and complements the corporate approach, whilst also meeting the specific requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing

Engagement during change

As Redditch Borough moves towards the new unitary authority arrangements, engagement will remain central to how we understand and respond to local needs. We will continue to listen to

residents, communities, businesses and partners, using their insight to help inform future service design, priorities and decision-making. Alongside providing opportunities for participation, we will communicate openly about developments and be clear about how feedback is considered, helping to ensure local voices continue to be heard throughout the transition to the new councils.

Working with partners and communities

We will continue to work closely with community groups and partners. This includes building on existing relationships, reaching a wider range of people and making the best use of local knowledge. Working in partnership also helps reduce duplication and supports more effective and long-term engagement.

8. Monitoring and Learning

We will take a data-led approach to engagement so that it helps improve outcomes for residents and supports the delivery of the best possible services. For each engagement exercise, we will set clear aims linked to the decision, service or outcome being considered, including who we need to hear from, the level of take-up we are seeking and how we will monitor whether the approach is reaching a broad and representative range of people. Where appropriate, this will include reviewing participation data, representation and the effectiveness of the methods used. We will use this learning to strengthen future engagement and improve service design and delivery.

9. Get Involved and Contact Us

You can find out about current consultations and engagement opportunities on the Council website www.redditchbc.gov.uk/council/strategy/consultations/

We welcome feedback and involvement from residents, partners and community groups.

Email: equalities@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Phone: 01527 548284