



Executive Committee

Tue 21 Apr
2026
6.30 pm

Oakenshaw Community Centre,
Castleditch Lane, B98 7YB

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

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

Notes:

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

Agenda

Membership:

Cllrs:	Sharon Harvey (Chair)	Bill Hartnett
	Jane Spilsbury (Vice-Chair)	Jen Snape
	Juliet Barker Smith	Monica Stringfellow
	Juma Begum	Ian Woodall

1. Apologies

2. Declarations of Interest

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

3. Leader's Announcements

4. Minutes (Pages 5 - 30)

5. VAT Recovery Updated Position

The VAT Recovery Updated Position report will follow in a supplementary pack for this meeting.

6. Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Pages 31 - 44)

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

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

8. 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

9. Exclusion of the press and public

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

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

These paragraphs are as follows:

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

- Para 1 – any individual;
- Para 2 – the identity of any individual;
- Para 3 – financial or business affairs;
- Para 4 – labour relations matters;
- Para 5 – legal professional privilege;
- Para 6 – a notice, order or direction;
- Para 7 – the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime;
and may need to be considered as ‘exempt’.

10. HRA Business Plan Update to Enhance the Delivery of the Housing Improvement Plan (Pages 45 - 92)

MINUTES

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

104. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Jen Snape.

105. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

106. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record.

107. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader informed Members that the Joint Appointments Committee had recommended to Council that James Walton be appointed as the new Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer. It was explained that, subject to references and the completion of necessary checks, an offer of employment would be made. No objections were raised by any Members of the Committee.

The Leader drew Members' attention to the fact that this meeting was the Policy Manager's final meeting before leaving the Council.

Chair

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The Leader expressed thanks to the Policy Manager for her hard work and dedication throughout her long service at the Council.

Members were also asked to note that at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16th March 2026, Members had pre-scrutinised the following items:

- Minute Item no. 110 – Climate Change Strategy 2026 to 2031
- Minute Item no. 113 - Shared Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2026-2029
- Minute Item no. 115 - Introduction of Enforcement of littering from Vehicles
- Minute Item no. 116 - Revision of Environmental Crime Enforcement Policy

Following their discussions, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had endorsed the recommendations contained within the reports.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, the Leader thanked the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their hard work in pre-scrutinising these reports prior to their consideration that evening.

108. INCLUSIVE PLAY POLICY STATEMENT

The Assistant Director for Planning, Leisure and Culture Services presented a report on the Inclusive Play Policy Statement.

The purpose of the report was to set out proposals for installing inclusive play equipment at play areas across the Borough. Officers explained that two parks in Redditch had been identified as having the greatest potential to meet inclusive play requirements. Arrow Valley Country Park already benefitted from good access arrangements, including pathways, car parking and accessible toilet provision. Morton Stanley Park similarly offered facilities that made it a strong candidate for seeking Plan Inclusive Play Areas (PiPA) accreditation. It was, however, acknowledged that Morton Stanley Park was unlikely to achieve full PiPA accreditation, although every effort would be made to secure the highest standard possible for the site.

The distinctions between 'accessible' and 'inclusive' play spaces were highlighted, with it being noted that that inclusive play extended provision to meet the needs of children with a wide range of abilities and requirements.

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Members were advised that, for all other outdoor equipped play areas, the Council would seek to improve accessibility and inclusivity through use of an Inclusive Play Policy Assessment and Design Checklist. Play companies and contractors would be required to propose improvements using this checklist to ensure the highest achievable level of inclusivity.

Officers informed Members that funding had been allocated and proposed for the purpose of enhancing play areas to make them more accessible and inclusive. The recommendations sought delegated authority for the Assistant Director for Planning, Leisure and Culture Services to pursue the appropriate level of accreditation and to implement the new plans.

Members were advised that learning from the work at Arrow Valley Country Park and Morton Stanley Park would be applied to other outdoor play areas across the Borough, with the intention that even smaller local parks should include some equipment accessible to children with differing needs.

Following the presentation, Members had detailed discussion and commented on the following points:

- Thanks were expressed to the Leisure and Parks team for their work in producing the report.
- Members welcomed the policy, noting that play was essential for children and that many families had requested accessible equipment in local parks. Members were therefore pleased that the policy would support such provision.
- Members were pleased with the focus on inclusive rather than solely accessible play, recognising that this represented a more comprehensive approach to meeting all children's needs and ensuring barrier-free play environments.
- It was noted that the policy provided a clear and detailed explanation of how the proposals had been assessed against equality impact criteria.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Inclusive Play Policy Statement be adopted;**
- 2) the detailed audit of play provision at Arrow Valley Country Park (against the Plan Inclusive Play Areas [PiPA] accreditation criteria/checklist) be approved;**

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- 3) the proposals for Arrow Valley Country Park improvements will be implemented during 2026/27 and strategic and local sites by April 2028;
- 4) subject to completion of resolution 3 above, authority be delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services to apply for accreditation for the Arrow Valley Country Park play area against the PiPA standard;
- 5) authority be delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services to develop plans to make the play space in Arrow Valley Country Park a Borough wide exemplar for accessible and inclusive play;
- 6) authority be delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture to commission an assessment of Morton Stanley Park against the PiPA standard, which should include establishing the viability of gaining accreditation;
- 7) the Inclusive Play Policy Assessment and Design Checklist be approved as a tool for improving the accessibility and inclusivity of all other play areas in the Borough; and
- 8) To NOTE that a budget bid of £300,000 in the capital programme was approved by Council in March 2026 as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan 2026/27 to 2028/29 to pay for inclusive play improvements and for additional officer support.

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.

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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
- 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.

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

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

110. CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2026 TO 2031

The Climate Change Manager presented the Climate Change Strategy 2026 - 2031 report.

The proposed strategy sought to update and replace the previous Carbon Reduction Action Plan. Members were advised that the strategy provided a practical and affordable approach to keeping the Council on track to achieve Net Zero by 2040, with an interim target of a 50 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030. This remained aligned with, and ahead of, central Government's statutory target of Net Zero by 2050.

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Members were informed that emissions continued to decline, with Redditch recording 3.5 tonnes of CO₂ per capita in 2023, a figure below both the regional and national averages.

The Climate Change Manager drew Members' attention to several key highlights within the report:

- Investment into retrofitting housing stock. £1.81 million had been invested in social housing energy efficiency upgrades, alongside £260,000 for private home retrofits, with further funding streams expected to deliver £4.27 million of improvements to Council housing stock.
- Updates to the Council's fleet and fuelling options.
- Biodiversity improvements, including revised mowing processes and the introduction of battery-powered equipment.

Members were asked to note that this strategy covered every service area within the Council. Officers provided reassurance that the strategy was sufficiently adaptable to meet the requirements of Local Government Reorganisation and would place the Council on a strong footing ahead of the transition to a unitary authority.

Following the presentation, Members raised the following points:

- Members welcomed the fact that the strategy covered all Council service areas, demonstrating a whole-Council approach to tackling climate change.
- Practical actions had been set out, enabling the Council to contribute proactively to climate change solutions.
- Members emphasised the importance of communicating with residents regarding the importance of Net Zero.
- Members welcomed the long-term commitment to making Redditch a good place to live for future generations.
- Clear targets and outcomes had been established to enable ongoing monitoring of progress.
- A Member welcomed the proposal to install solar panels on commercial buildings; it was expressed that this would avoid disturbance to residential areas and the green belt.
- The commitment to utilising external funding as one of the capital sources to deliver the strategy.

- The positive impact the strategy would have on reducing fuel poverty and making Redditch more self-sufficient in producing its own energy.

RECOMMENDED that

1) The Council's Climate Change Strategy 2026–2031 be approved; and

2) an annual review of the Climate Change Strategy be reported to Council.

111. QUARTER 3 2025/26 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Policy Manager presented the Quarter 3 2025/26 Performance Monitoring Report.

Members were informed that there were thirty two corporate measures in place, aligned to the Council priorities as set out in the Council Plan.

In reviewing the quarterly performance breakdown, it was reported that fourteen measures were rated green, three amber and four red. The unclassified category reflected areas where no targets had been set due to the nature of the data.

It was noted that two new measures had been added for quarter three, which were the number of active environmental enforcement cases and environmental enforcement fixed penalty notices. Members were advised that additional new measures would be incorporated in future iterations of the report.

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

- Thanks were expressed to the Policy Manager and the Assistant Director for Corporate Services and Transformation for their work in preparing the report.
- Members welcomed the format of the update, stating that it increased transparency and was easy to understand.
- Members highlighted a number of positive statistics, including: a Council Tax collection rate of 82.52%, an increase in Business Rates collection, a significant reduction in the number of complaints, and a decline in incidents of anti-social behaviour.

- Members were pleased with the progress made overall, while acknowledging that further work was required to address the measures rated red and amber.
- A query was raised regarding data on completed penalties that had been issued by the Worcestershire Regulatory Service (WRS). Officers advised that WRS intended to publish notices and enforcement data on their website so Members and the public would be able to access the figures.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **The Quarter 3 Performance Report for the period October to December 2025 be noted.**

112. PERMISSION TO REVOKE THE FIRST HOMES POLICY

The Housing Development and Enabling Manager presented a report on the proposed revocation of the First Homes Policy.

Members were advised that the Government had introduced an affordable housing product, known as First Homes, which all local housing authorities had been required to provide from 28th March 2022 as 25 per cent of affordable housing on Section 106 sites. These homes were required to be sold at a discount of at least 30 per cent against open-market value.

It was reported that First Homes had become increasingly expensive due to rising new-build house prices, meaning that they were often unaffordable for local residents. Members were informed that shared ownership properties offered a more accessible route into affordable home ownership for residents.

Officers explained that meetings had taken place with several Registered Providers, who had indicated that reducing the proportion of shared ownership units in favour of First Homes compromised the viability of Section 106 sites.

In terms of operational issues, Members were advised that administering the First Homes scheme placed a significant burden on local authorities, as it required detailed processing and approval of applications from prospective purchasers. Removing the requirement for First Homes would therefore reduce this administrative burden.

Regarding financial implications, the Committee was informed that while Councils charged £508 for administering variations to Section 106 agreements, this cost would be offset by the developer not

having to obtain valuation reports for First Homes properties from a RICS-qualified valuer.

Officers advised that revoking the First Homes Policy would support residents on lower incomes in accessing affordable home ownership and strengthen the viability of Section 106 sites for Registered Providers.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing thanked the Housing Development and Enabling Manager for the report. He highlighted that none of the sites with First Homes requirements had yet been built out and, as a result, no First Homes properties had been sold. He stated that revoking the policy would be a positive step to help lower-income households onto the housing ladder while also reducing the administrative demands placed on officers. It was hoped that developers would welcome the change, as it would make sites more viable and ultimately lead to the delivery of more homes for residents.

Members commented that they were keen to see more effective use of Section 106 agreements.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Council's First Homes Policy be revoked with immediate effect;**
- 2) and that any development sites that currently include an element of First Homes provision is offered an opportunity to revert to shared ownership and other forms of affordable home ownership.**

113. SHARED HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2026-2031

The Housing Development and Enabling Manager presented a report on the Shared Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2026-2029.

The Committee was advised that the Council had undertaken a review of all forms of homelessness over the previous six months and had been working closely with partner agencies. A consultation event had been held on the 30th September 2025 with partners and stakeholders to consider housing from both a strategic and client-based perspective. The event was attended by a range of partners from a range of statutory and voluntary organisations.

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Members were informed that central Government had published a National Plan to End Homelessness in October 2025, and that the new Shared Homelessness Strategy aligned with the five pillars of that plan.

The strategy set out how the Council would invest in early intervention and support systems designed to prevent homelessness before it occurred. It aimed to strengthen cross-service collaboration to ensure that risks were identified at an early stage.

The Committee was advised that the Crisis Resilience Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments would be used to support individuals struggling with their income or facing unexpected financial pressures. Residents experiencing sudden income shocks would receive holistic advice and support.

It was noted that Government would be providing nearly £3.5 billion in funding for homelessness prevention and rough sleeping services for the period 2026/27–2028/29.

It was proposed that the Executive Committee should consider whether to approve the draft strategy for public consultation and, following the consultation and subject to any feedback, the final version would need be submitted to Council for approval at a later date.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing highlighted that the strategy would no longer be delivered on a county-wide basis, as Worcestershire had chosen not to participate in the partnership. The strategy nevertheless covered support for rough sleepers, victims of domestic violence and care leavers. The Portfolio Holder suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee might wish to receive a progress report once the consultation had concluded and funding had been confirmed.

Following the presentation, Members held detailed discussions and commented on the below points:

- Members welcomed the measures aimed at preventing homelessness before it occurred, emphasising that early intervention was crucial and preferable to responding in crisis situations.
- The commitment to supporting care leavers was highlighted, along with the importance of providing support for those with neurodivergence and other protected characteristics.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the draft Shared Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2031 and action plan be approved for public consultation for six weeks starting 13th April 2026.**

114. RENTERS RIGHT ACT 2025

The Private Sector Housing Manager presented a report on the Renters Right Act 2025.

Members were advised that the Act had received Royal Assent on 27th October 2025, with reforms being introduced through a phased approach. New investigatory powers came into effect from 27th December 2025, and Phase 1 of the reforms was scheduled to commence on 1st May 2026.

The report outlined the key reforms that would affect residents in Redditch. It was estimated that the private rented sector in the Borough comprised approximately 5,318 homes.

Members were informed of the three phases of implementation and the elements included within each stage:

- Phase 1 – Key reforms included the abolition of Section 21 “no fault” evictions, limits on rent increases and making it illegal to discriminate against renters.
- Phase 2 – Scheduled for late 2026, this phase would introduce the regional landlord and local council database, along with the establishment of the new Ombudsman service.
- Phase 3 – Expected to come into effect between 2026 and 2027, this phase would introduce a new Decent Homes Standard for the private rented sector.

Officers noted that an increase in demand for support was anticipated, including higher volumes of enquiries to the Private Sector Housing team, an initial rise in homelessness, and some landlords leaving the sector. To prepare for this, the team had been expanded from three to five officers, with training and upskilling underway. Funding had also been secured for a new case-management system to ensure statutory deadlines could be met.

Following the presentation, Members had detailed discussion and commented on the following points:

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- Members welcomed the increased support for those renting in the private sector, including the introduction of assured tenancies and a ban on rental bidding.
- It was highlighted that the Council would have strengthened enforcement powers to address rogue landlords who were not providing a good service to their tenants.
- Members expressed that everyone deserved to live in a decent home, and this policy would improve the living conditions for many residents across Redditch.
- A query was raised regarding the level of new burdens funding that had been awarded and how costs would be met. Officers advised that the funding was intended to support Councils in preparing for the reforms and that income from fines would be reinvested into the Private Sector Housing team. The Council would also receive a portion of the fees paid by landlords registering on the regional database. Members noted that expenditure would need to be monitored as the service developed.

It was proposed that the new burdens funding of £20,057.95 be noted, rather than recommending to Council that the 2026/27 Medium Term Financial Plan be updated.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The update provided in the report in respect of the Renters Rights Act 2025 be noted.**
- 2) The new burdens funding of £20,057.95 be noted.**

RECOMMENDED that

- 3) The Scheme of Delegations be amended to incorporate new powers under the Renters Rights Act 2025 in accordance with the wording as set out below.**

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2. Private Sector Housing			
Subject	Detail	Delegated by:	Delegated to:
Power of entry	To exercise the powers of Authorised Officers in respect of entry, inspection and investigation in relation to housing conditions as specified in any legislation the enforcement of which is delegated to Director of Leisure, Environment and Community Services	Executive Committee	[Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services] / [Housing Strategy Manager] / [Private Sector Housing Team Leader] / [Housing Strategy C Enabling Team Leader] / [Private Sector Housing Officer]
Service of Notices and obtaining warrants Housing legislation = regulatory powers	To exercise <u>all the powers in respect of entry, inspection, investigation, service of notices and other functions of</u> Authorised Officers for the purposes of the legislation listed below, serve notices and obtain warrants of entry from a Justice of the Peace for the purposes of the <u>following at</u> legislation: -	Executive Committee	[Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services] / [Housing Strategy Manager] / [Private Sector Housing Team Leader] / [Housing Strategy C Enabling Team Leader] / [Private Sector

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	<p><u>Renters Rights Act 2025 sections 114 to 132 (investigatory powers) and section 110 (reporting to government)</u> <u>Housing Act 1985 (as amended)</u>, <u>Housing Act 2004 (as amended)</u></p>		<p>Housing Officer]</p>
<p>2. Private Sector Housing</p>			
<p>Subject</p>	<p>Detail</p>	<p>Delegated by:</p>	<p>Delegated to:</p>

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	<p>Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation Regulations 2006</p> <p>Licensing C Management of HMO C other Houses (Miscellaneous Provisions) (England) Regulations 2006</p> <p>Environmental Protection Act 1990</p> <p>Building Act 1984</p> <p>Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Acts 1976, 1982</p> <p>Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949</p> <p>Public Health Act 1961</p> <p>Licensing and Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (additional provisions) (England) Regulations 2007</p> <p>Mobile Homes Act 2013</p> <p>Caravan Sites C Control of Development Act 1960</p>		
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2. Private Sector Housing			
Subject	Detail	Delegated by:	Delegated to:
<u>Renters Rights Act 2025 - Discrimination in rental market/ requirement to state rent</u>	<u>To undertake investigations into potential offences under sections 33, 34, 39 and 56 of the Renters Rights Act 2025</u>	<u>Executive Committee</u>	<u>[Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services] / [Housing Strategy Manager] / [Private Sector Housing Team Leader] / [Housing Strategy C Enabling Team Leader] / [Private Sector Housing Officer]</u>

4) Authority be delegated to the Assistant Director of Community & Housing to spend the new burdens funding for Renters Rights Act 2025 preparations.

115. INTRODUCTION OF ENFORCEMENT OF LITTERING FROM VEHICLES

The Principal Officer from Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) presented a report on the introduction of enforcement measures for littering from vehicles.

It was explained that littering was currently enforced as a criminal offence. However, it was often difficult to prove beyond reasonable doubt who had committed the offence. Officers were therefore seeking delegated authority to issue Litter Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs).

Members were advised that the PCNs would be issued to the registered keeper of the vehicle, in the same way that parking charges were administered.

Officers reported that this approach would enable the Civil Enforcement Team to use their time proactively while undertaking their parking-enforcement duties.

Members welcomed the report and commented that it was important to provide officers with appropriate enforcement tools, which they hoped would contribute to behaviour change around littering.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) Civil enforcement of Littering from Vehicles be introduced.**
- 2) The Civil Enforcement Team be given delegated authority to issue Litter Penalty Charge Notices.**
- 3) The parking administration team be authorised to deal with appeals and enforcement matters in respect of Litter Penalty Charge Notices.**
- 4) The Penalty Notice Charge be set at the level set by Council for Criminal offences where a Fixed Penalty Notice is served for Depositing Litter (section 87/88 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990) which for 2026/27 subject to Council approval are proposed to be set as:
 - a) £250; and**
 - b) £125 for prompt payment (within 14 days).****
- 5) Authority be delegated to the Assistant Director Regeneration & Property to issue Penalty Notice Charges for Littering from Vehicles under The Littering From Vehicles Outside London (Keepers: Civil Penalties) Regulations 2018.**

116. REVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME ENFORCEMENT POLICY

The Principal Officer, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS), presented the Revision of Environmental Crime Enforcement Policy report.

The purpose of the report was to introduce an update on the existing joint environmental enforcement strategy. Members were advised that the revised policy would mirror the WRS policy already

in operation for environmental health and licensing enforcement across the six Worcestershire districts for which WRS delivered environmental crime functions on behalf of. The updated policy also ensured that the most current procedures and enforcement options were clearly set out in a transparent manner.

Following the presentation, Members discussed the report and made the following comments:

- Members welcomed the strategy and the clarity it would provide to the public regarding enforcement processes.
- A query was raised about the policy for abandoned and nuisance vehicles. Officers advised that responsibility for these matters remained with the Council's Environmental Services team.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The Redditch and Bromsgrove Enforcement Policy be adopted and replace the current Joint Environmental Enforcement Policy.**

117. PRIDE IN PLACE PROGRAMME GOVERNANCE MODEL

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund Manager presented a report on the Pride in Place Programme Governance Model.

The Committee was advised that an area covering parts of Greenlands and parts of Woodrow had been selected to receive Pride in Place funding, which was the Government's flagship communities programme.

It was reported that the programme would be community-led, with funding decisions made by a Neighbourhood Board following extensive consultation with local residents. Redditch Borough Council's primary role would be to act as the accountable body, ensuring that funding was distributed fairly and transparently and that all legislative requirements were met.

Members were informed that the Council was required to appoint an independent Chair, alongside the local Member of Parliament (MP). The Chair would need to have a strong connection to the local area, and officers proposed that the recruitment process should commence immediately after the local elections in May 2026. A full-scale promotional campaign was being planned to ensure that candidates represented a broad cross-section of the community.

Shortlisting and interviews would be carried out by a panel comprising a senior officer, the MP, a Member for the Greenlands and Lakeside ward, and a Member for the Matchborough and Woodrow ward. A Community Panel of local residents would also be invited to provide views on the shortlisted candidates, and other ward Members for the relevant areas would have the opportunity to meet candidates before the final appointment.

Following the appointment of the Chair, they would lead the recruitment of the remaining Board members, with a requirement for a minimum of eight members in total. It was highlighted that representation from the MP was mandatory, and at least one ward Member must also sit on the Board, although officers would recommend two Members to ensure representation from both wards.

Members were advised that the deadline for submitting the final Board membership to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for approval was 17th July 2026.

Following the presentation, Members discussed the report and made the following comments:

- It was clarified that the Chair could not be an elected representative.
- Members noted that there was a prospectus which set out guidance on spending and emphasised the importance of ensuring that Board decisions reflected community priorities while adhering to due diligence requirements.
- The wider implications for residents in surrounding areas. For example, any new facilities would be available for all to use.
- Members welcomed the clear timescales outlined in the report to support strong community engagement.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Authority to recruit and appoint an independent chair of the Greenlands and Woodrow Pride in Place Neighbourhood Board be delegated to the Assistant Director Regeneration & Property following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Environmental Services and in agreement with the MP for Redditch and the Villages;**
- 2) Authority to approve the final membership of the Greenlands and Woodrow Pride in Place Neighbourhood Board be**

delegated to the Assistant Director Regeneration & Property following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Environmental Services and in agreement with the MP for Redditch and the Villages; and

3) The Council agrees to act as Accountable Body for the Pride in Place Programme and adopt programme governance arrangements.

118. REDDITCH COUNCIL PLAN UPDATE REPORT

The Policy Manager presented the Redditch Council Plan Update Report.

The purpose of the report was to provide an update on the Council Plan that had been adopted in Spring 2025. Members were reminded about the development process for the Council Plan, which had been considered by the Executive Committee in March 2025.

The report summarised progress from April 2025 to January 2026, highlighting areas of work that had contributed to delivering the priority objectives, projects and vision of the Council Plan.

Following presentation of the report, Members discussed the below points:

- Members were pleased to note the progress made against the Council's priorities. While acknowledging that some targets had not been met, Members recognised that delays were often due to external or unforeseen circumstances.
- Visitor numbers to Redditch had increased to 199,556.
- Members expressed that the report served as an opportunity to celebrate the hard work of officers across the organisation.
- Members welcomed that residents would be able to see clear improvements in service delivery, for example with Dial a Ride and improvements to the Housing and Environmental Services teams. It was expressed that this demonstrated good value for money and showed that residents were receiving a fair deal.
- The report contributed to greater transparency and openness within the Council.
- Improvements within the Housing Department were highlighted, including increased Tenant Satisfaction Survey

responses, progress with the house-building programme, empty homes being brought back into use, the establishment of the Damp and Mould team, and improvements to the Caretaking team.

- Thanks were expressed to the Shopmobility and Dial-a-Ride teams for their hard work despite the challenges they had faced.
- Members noted that a designed, public-facing version of the report would be produced to support accessibility and engagement.

RECOMMENDED that

1) The Council Plan report and update table be noted.

119. QUARTER 3 2025/26 FINANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Interim Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer presented the Quarter 3 2025/26 Finance Monitoring Report.

The report set out the key highlights for Quarter Three. Members were reminded that the Council had recently approved the 2026/27 budget, which had taken into account the pressures outlined within the report. The forecast position was noted to be within £19,000 of the position reported in the previous quarter.

The Interim Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer drew Members' attention to capital expenditure. Capital spending stood at £6.776 million against an original budget of £8.082 million, which had been revised with carry forwards to £19.921 million.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance acknowledged the pressures identified within the Quarter Three report and advised that mitigations had been implemented. In particular, reference was made to pressures within the Housing Revenue Account relating to expenditure on fire doors, which represented a Health and Safety requirement. Earmarked reserves had been factored into the following year's budget, and savings targets were reported to be close to being met. The Portfolio Holder also reminded Members that some ward budgets remained underspent.

Members commented on the following points:

- Members were asked to review any allocations made from ward budgets, and options for making donations to local charities were discussed.

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- A Member queried whether capital spending should be included on the Corporate Risk Register. Officers clarified that this would depend upon the individual circumstances and status of particular projects. Reassurance was provided that the financial position had already been anticipated within the new budget and that additional resources had been identified to support capacity.

RESOLVED that

- 1) There is a forecast revenue overspend position of £399k at Q3 be noted.**
- 2) The current Capital spending of £6.776 million against an original budget of £8.082 million revised with carry forwards to £19.921 million be noted.**
- 3) The current savings delivery is £1.751 million against an annual target of £2.342 million for 2025/26 be noted.**
- 4) Forecast Earmarked Reserves at 31 March 2026 are £17.294 million be noted.**
- 5) The Ward Budget allocation position to date is 21 approved allocations at £32,100, leaving a balance of £21,900 to be allocated before year end be noted.**
- 6) There is an updated procurements position, with any new items over £200,000 to be included on the forward plan be noted.**
- 7) The position on Council Tax and Business Rates be noted**
- 8) The position on benefits processing be noted.**

RECOMMENDED that

- 9) That the Balance Sheet Monitoring Position for Q3 is noted – which is the Treasury Monitoring Report and required to be reported to Council.**
- 10) The Medium-Term Financial Plan is amended to include the Pride in Place Fund Allocation which is confirmed as £19,660,000 (capital £12,470,000 and revenue £7,190,000) over 10 years and includes the current year's capacity fund of £150,000, which has already been received.**

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120. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting which took place on 17th February 2026 were noted.

121. 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.

122. 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 for discussion at the meeting.

123. GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY BODIES AWARDING OF GRANTS

The Assistant Director for Community and Housing Services presented the Grants to Voluntary Bodies Awarding of Grants report.

The purpose of the report was to outline the applications that had been received and the grants to be awarded to voluntary sector organisations as determined by the Grants Panel. It was noted that during their consideration of the applications, the Grants Panel had expressed a desire to improve the scoring criteria in future rounds to give greater priority to local Redditch organisations whose projects were based within the Borough.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Spaces and Voluntary Sector thanked the Assistant Director and the Grants Panel for their work in scrutinising the large number of applications received.

RESOLVED that

- 1) grants be awarded to voluntary sector organisations as set out below:**

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Organisation	Funding Recommended	Project
Acorns	£10,000	Specialist palliative care for children from Redditch
Astwood Bank Community CIC	£10,000	Astwood Bank Carnival
Carers Careline	£10,000	Carers Careline support for unpaid carers
P&E Sports CIC	£10,000	Matchborough Positive Activities for Young People
Primrose hospice	£9,225	Volunteer and Befrienders Wellbeing
Redditch Nightstop	£10,000	Safe Accommodation & Support Project
Where Next	£10,000	Where Next Redditch Core Costs
YMCA	£9,184	Church Hill Youth Wellbeing & Mentoring Support
New Starts	£5000	Local People Helping Local People
Oasis	£5000	Christians Against Poverty Debt Centre
Total	£88,409	

- 2) the additional wording in bold set out below, be added to paragraph 9.5 of the Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Policy in order to allow scoring to support smaller and local charitable organisations:

“There will be no pre-determined demographic allocation of funds but **priority will be given to local Redditch organisations whose projects are based in Redditch and**

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funding will be used only for the benefit of Redditch residents, this is compared to larger national charities”

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 8.27 pm

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 16th March, 2026

MINUTES

Present:

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

Officers:

Judith Willis, Toni Ainscough, Matthew Bough, Mark Cox, Amanda Delahunty and Matthew Eccles

Democratic Services Officers:

M Sliwinski

82. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Fardoe.

83. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of party whip.

84. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 17th February 2026 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17th February 2026 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

85. PUBLIC SPEAKING

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

Chair

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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86. CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2026 TO 2031 - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Climate Change Manager presented a report on the Climate Change Strategy 2026-2031 and in doing so recapped that the Council had declared a climate emergency in 2019 and had committed to place climate considerations at the centre of its decision-making.

The Strategy for 2026-2031 appended to this report updated and replaced the previous Carbon Reduction Action Plan and set out the pathway for the Council's own operations to achieve a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions of 50 per cent by 2030 and to achieve net zero by 2040. It was highlighted that current modelling suggested the Council was on course to achieve net zero by 2040.

The carbon emissions context was provided for Redditch. It was noted that the latest official data, for 2023, showed Redditch achieving emissions of 3.5 tCO₂e per capita, below both the regional and the national averages.

Information on the Council's initiatives for reducing greenhouse gas emissions had been provided. This included the £1.81 million invested by the Council in its social housing stock to provide energy efficiency upgrades alongside £260,000 for private home retrofits, expansion of electric vehicle (EV) charging across the Borough, and biodiversity improvements, for example through Council's mowing regimes and ways of treating weeds. It was highlighted that there was ongoing work to improve performance monitoring through the dashboard and expand reach of the Council's initiatives to the community and businesses.

Following the presentation of the report, a Member expressed disappointment that the report did not consider the environmental impact of the introduction of the Council's dedicated Pet Cremation Service at the Abbey Crematorium and, in particular, the proposed introduction of a capital budget of £50,000 to purchase a Pet Cremator Machine and ancillary plant equipment, as approved at the full Council meeting on 2nd March 2026.

The Member clarified that her concerns related to the Pet Cremator Machine being proposed for purchase would be fuelled by diesel. Although there were options to operate the proposed machine on natural gas or biofuel in the future, the Member highlighted that this was a missed opportunity for adoption of electric technology which would prevent emissions at source. The Member further stated that

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the Pet Cremation report suggested the potential switch to electric-powered cremators would not be considered by the Council until its next planned replacement window in approximately eight years. The Member commented that this contradicted the urgency for the Council to meet its net zero targets and improve local air quality.

Several other Members argued that the Pet Cremation Service would provide a good source of revenue for the Council and at the current state of technology, in industries such as cremation, electric machines were significantly less efficient than the fossil fuel powered counterparts. Some Members argued that consideration had to be given to emissions produced in the manufacturing of electric machines, such as from the production of batteries.

A Member questioned the lack of noticeable decline in tCO_{2e} following the declaration of the climate emergency by the Council in 2019, both in Redditch and across Worcestershire. The Climate Change Manager responded that there could be several reasons behind this including the initial focus of carbon reduction being on areas where emissions reductions could be easily achieved and subsequent difficulties in keeping the previous rates of decrease in emissions. Also highlighted was the difficulty for the Council in quantifying its scope 3 emissions, which were the indirect emissions created through Council's supplier operations and procurement decisions. It was noted that the Council would be undertaking a review and proportionate environmental impact assessments of key suppliers to identify scope 3 emissions hotspots. The Strategy aimed to provide a way to accelerate the rate of decline in Council's carbon (and other greenhouse gas) emissions over the next few years.

The lack of mention of the Council's relationship with key regional stakeholders in addressing environmental issues, such as North Worcestershire Water Management, was highlighted. It was clarified that although the Strategy did not directly reference some regional agencies, the Council would collaborate with these agencies when required. The Climate Change Manager explained that the Strategy focused not only on carbon emissions but also on the wider living environment and biodiversity. It was highlighted that when addressing these challenges, wider solutions would be explored, rather than simply technological solutions.

A further comment was made by a Member regarding the Worcestershire County Council's environmental campaigns such as 'Let's Waste Less Worcestershire'. It was asked whether local campaigns/initiatives organised or supported by the Borough

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Council would be protected during the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). It was responded that the ambition was for the Climate Change Strategy and initiatives and plans detailed in this to be continuing through the LGR. However, it was highlighted that the Strategy was designed to be also adaptable to new local government arrangements that would be in place post-LGR.

The Vice-Chair stated that the Council needed monitoring of the monetary costs (or savings) of achieving the reductions in tCO₂e through the Climate Change Strategy. It was suggested that monitoring the Strategy should include a graph to monitor the Council's CO₂ emissions from its own operations against the cost/saving achieved. In response, the Officers explained that the Climate Change Strategy covered all Council departments and that the cost and environmental impact of each initiative, programme or procurement decision that the Council was proposing to undertake would be considered as part of every report that was considered by Members. The Committee was reassured that climate change implications had to be considered as part of a business case submitted by service areas/departments for every new proposal.

Before the Committee deliberated on the recommendations set out in the report, it was clarified that this Climate Change Strategy was due to be further considered by both the Executive Committee in March 2026 and by full Council in May 2026.

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

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) The Council's Climate Change Strategy 2026-2031 be approved; and**
- 2) An annual review of the Climate Change Strategy be reported to Council.**

87. SHARED HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2026-2031 - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Shared Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2031 report was presented for Members' consideration. It was explained that the Homelessness Act 2002 required all housing authorities to have a homelessness strategy in place based on a review of all forms of homelessness in their local authority area.

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It was noted that the Government published 'The National Plan to End Homelessness' in October 2025 which provided a vision that homelessness should be rare, brief and non-recurring and that people who become homeless should receive support quickly and effectively. Local authorities were expected to move from crisis to prevention. A key requirement of the Plan was for greater collaboration across government departments. There were 5 pillars to the Plan as stated in the report.

In developing the local Strategy, as submitted in the report, a comprehensive assessment was undertaken across the authorities in Worcestershire that would be sharing this Strategy. It was explained that this new Shared Homelessness Strategy had been developed by the five district authorities in Worcestershire: Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Wychavon, Wyre Forest, and Redditch. The sixth district authority in the county, Worcester City Council, would be developing its own strategy separately.

The Shared Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2031 set out how the Council would invest in early intervention and support systems to stop homelessness before it happens. The Strategy also covered how the authority would work to eliminate use of bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation beyond statutory short stays (above 6 weeks) and improve the quality of temporary accommodation (TA). Further strands to the Strategy included focus on eliminating negative impact of staying in TA on children and how the structural causes of homelessness would be tackled through building more affordable and social homes and through reform to the private rented sector.

It was stated that in terms of Government grant funding to local authorities, from April 2026 a Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) would replace the previous emergency welfare schemes including Household Support Fund (HSF) and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). The CRF allocation would be used to provide welfare support to those who had experienced short-term emergency problems, such as an income shock or unexpected bill. Local authorities were required to look at person's circumstances holistically when making decisions on allocating funding.

Furthermore, the Government funding streams had been amalgamated into a new Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant. It was explained that this consolidation of funding into a single grant over a three-year period (April 2026-March 2029) provided greater stability for local authority's partners to prioritise local needs. Officers noted that the grant award to the

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Council was circa £30,000 higher than anticipated. It was clarified that this consolidated grant would bring together the previous separate grants of: Prevention, Relief and Staffing element of the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG), Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant (RSPARG), Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP), and Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Grant.

In response to a question, it was clarified that the Council was required to adhere to statutory duties when an eligible homeless applicant presented to the Council. The Prevention Duty provided that when a person was eligible and at risk of homelessness the Council was required to provide advice and assistance to prevent such a person from becoming homeless within 56 days' period. The Relief Duty applied when a person was eligible and homeless in which case the Council was required to assist the person to take 'reasonable steps' to secure accommodation to end their homelessness. This could include assisting the person to find their own accommodation, or in some cases, the local authority providing the person with accommodation.

The Council had no statutory duty to provide support beyond the two 56-day periods above in line with the legislation. Officers would, however, continue working where necessary to assist in finding housing solutions for people beyond this statutory period, albeit there was no duty on the Council to do so.

There was a further question about supported housing and the use of Government grants to undertake retrofits in those properties. It was explained that the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 introduced a new statutory duty for local authorities to formulate and publish a Local Supported Housing Strategy. It was noted that for Redditch this would necessitate the Council undertaking a supported housing needs survey, with the Government providing funds to undertake this over 12 months. This was before this grant could be accessed. It was noted that Redditch Borough Council would be a licensing authority for supported housing purposes.

Clarification was sought about access to Council's homelessness support. It was clarified that only individuals with 'recourse to public funds' had access to homelessness support from local authorities. People who did not meet national immigration conditions had 'no recourse to public funds' and could not access homelessness support from local authorities other than general advice. It was noted that applicants for homeless support were required to have a

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local connection to Redditch in order to access the Council's help, although there would be circumstances where people from outside the area were also eligible.

A Member requested that paragraph 3.3.8 of the draft Shared Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy be corrected with regard to the number of days' notice to quit Home Office accommodation after asylum is granted. The Officers undertook to correct this within the final version of the Strategy to be submitted following the public consultation.

Members sought assurance that the 'duty to collaborate' for key public services, (planned for future legislation) would be followed through at the local level in Redditch. It was responded that this was recognised by all partners at the local level and efforts were being made to tackle the structural causes of collaboration issues. Officers commented that where the issues occurred was usually in relation to supply issues, such as accommodation. It was added that in Redditch the Council had been able to avoid supply issues through the use of its own temporary accommodation (TA) and through investing in the council housing stock.

It was commented that much of the funding for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy came from Government grants and it was questioned whether there was a possible risk of services and initiatives not being delivered if the grants became unavailable. Officers responded that a number of grants stated within the Strategy were recurring grants, however, the Council also needed to be creative in terms of how the homelessness and rough sleeping services operated in order to respond to any possible uncertainties in funding provision. It was further stated that the grants in place provided initiatives to strengthen the resilience and sustainability of these services.

It was clarified by Officers that only recommendation 1 of the report would be considered as part of this reporting (with the report being further submitted to Executive Committee only) and that another report would be produced following the period of public consultation on the Strategy.

The recommendation 1 as set out in the report was endorsed by the Committee.

RECOMMENDED that

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- 1) The draft Shared Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2031 and action plan be approved for public consultation for six weeks starting 13th April 2026.

88. REVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME ENFORCEMENT POLICY - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Principal Officer, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS), presented the Revision of Environmental Crime Enforcement Policy report.

The purpose of the report was to update the existing joint environmental enforcement strategy. Members were advised that the revised policy would mirror the WRS policy already in operation for environmental health and licensing enforcement across the six Worcestershire districts for which WRS delivered environmental crime functions on behalf of. The updated policy also ensured that the most current procedures and enforcement options were clearly set out in a transparent manner.

Following the presentation of the report, a Member commented that recent reporting suggested an increase in larger, organised fly tipping in the Borough. A question was asked about the agencies responsible for dealing with investigating the different types of fly tipping issues. Officers responded that enforcement against large, hazardous or industrial fly tipping on private land was primarily the responsibility of the Environment Agency (EA). WRS would primarily investigate and undertake enforcement work around fly tipping on public land and would do so in cooperation with other agencies as necessary.

Some Members expressed the view that insufficient officer resources were allocated to Redditch to provide effective enforcement of fly tipping and other environmental issues and this needed to be reviewed as a priority.

The recommendation as set out in the report was endorsed by the Committee.

RECOMMENDED that

the Redditch and Bromsgrove Enforcement Policy be adopted and replace the current Joint Environmental Enforcement Policy.

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89. INTRODUCTION OF ENFORCEMENT OF LITTERING FROM VEHICLES - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Principal Officer from Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) presented a report on the introduction of enforcement measures for littering from vehicles.

It was explained that littering was currently enforced as a criminal offence. However, it was often difficult to prove beyond reasonable doubt who had committed the offence. Delegation of authority was therefore sought to enable Civil Enforcement Team to issue Litter Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs).

Members were advised that the PCNs would be issued to the registered keeper of the vehicle, in the same way that parking charges were administered. This report specifically dealt with enabling Civil Enforcement Officers to issue notices for littering when they witnessed littering offences from vehicles being committed.

Members commented that whilst it was positive to provide officers with appropriate enforcement tools, concerns were expressed by Members around the effective ability to enforce this given the Civil Enforcement Officer staff level currently available to Redditch.

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

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) Civil enforcement of Littering from Vehicles be introduced.**
- 2) The Civil Enforcement Team be given delegated authority to issue Litter Penalty Charge Notices.**
- 3) The parking administration team be authorised to deal with appeals and enforcement matters in respect of Litter Penalty Charge Notices.**
- 4) The Penalty Notice Charge be set at the level set by Council for Criminal offences where a Fixed Penalty Notice is served for Depositing Litter (section 87/88 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990) which for 2026/27, subject to Council approval, are proposed to be set as:
 - a) £250; and****

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b) £125 for prompt payment (within 14 days)

5) Authority be delegated to the Assistant Director Regeneration & Property to issue Penalty Notice Charges for Littering from Vehicles under The Littering From Vehicles Outside London (Keepers: Civil Penalties) Regulations 2018.

90. STRATEGIC ENVIROCRIME UPDATE

The Principal Officer, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS), introduced the Strategic Environmental Crime Update report. The report updated Members on fly tipping, littering, dog fouling and untidy land enforcement activity within the Borough.

It was noted that in Redditch the majority of fly tipping consisted of small amounts of domestic waste. Waste crime offences were often conducted inadvertently because of a lack of knowledge or understanding that leaving waste outside of a refuse bin is an offence. Recognising this, a significant focus of WRS activity in Redditch had been on informal warnings to provide education on appropriate behaviour. During 2025, 20 streets / local areas in Redditch were targeted by WRS through this activity.

It was noted that intelligence assessments were used to identify hot spot areas where informal warnings and letter drops had been unsuccessful so that those areas could be prioritised for enforcement action.

A summary table was provided in paragraph 3.8 of the report. This provided data for Redditch Borough covering the period 2023 to January 2026 on the number of fly tips, littering, dog fouling, and untidy land cases reported and investigated, and data for the number of enforcement actions being taken against the number of cases reported and investigated. The enforcement actions included letter drops, warning letters, and Fixed Penalty Notices issued. It was highlighted that WRS took over the responsibility for environmental enforcement in the Borough from June 2024. Therefore, only data from that point on reflected activity undertaken by WRS.

Following the presentation of the report, Members debated the report and provided comments. Members expressed concern about insufficient staffing levels to enable effective environmental enforcement, with 1.5 full time equivalent (FTE) posts for environmental crime enforcement across the Borough. Some

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Members suggested that the Council should investigate how to fund additional officer resources in this area with the aim of improving the enforcement rate.

The Vice-Chair commented that enforcement in Redditch had been a long-term issue with low levels of enforcement actions taken against the number of environmental offences that were being reported. It was highlighted that data in paragraph 3.8 of the report suggested that only a low proportion of fly tipping cases reported and investigated by WRS would lead to an enforcement outcome. Data for 2025 was quoted, for example for fly tipping cases in the Borough that were reported to WRS, less than 0.25 per cent resulted in Fixed Penalty Notices being issued. If reported cases that were investigated by WRS was considered, the proportion of cases that resulted in Fixed Penalty Notices was circa 1.7 per cent.

It was reiterated that WRS officers were aware of fly tipping hotspots within Redditch and that every fly tip identified was recorded. The main issue in respect of fly tipping remained the lack of subsequent evidence that could allow enforcement action to be taken on the reported/investigated cases, as most fly tips in Redditch consisted of single bulky items that were not easily traced back to source. It was also noted that fly tipping was an urban issue in Redditch, and this limited the scope for use of covert camera deployment in tackling fly tipping.

The Technical Services Manager, WRS, explained further that letter drops to provide informal warnings were conducted in conjunction with Council's tenancy officers. Through letter drops and warning letters, potential offenders were reminded that for council housing tenants, fly tipping offences might impact on social housing tenancy.

The role of education and attitude was discussed. Members commented that the majority of residents in Redditch took pride in their neighbourhoods and wanted to see actions taken to eliminate fly tipping. It was highlighted that further work was needed to increase sense of community cohesion in some areas of the Borough. Members considered it important that fly tipping cases that led to prosecution be publicised widely to provide a strong message to potential perpetrators of environmental crime.

A question was asked about activities that were done to provide fly tipping / littering education in schools in Redditch. WRS Officers responded that the WRS currently had an air quality officer who

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engaged with schools on that subject, but this approach could be widened in the future to include education on fly tipping and littering.

RESOLVED that

the update on Environmental Crime Enforcement be noted.

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

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

RESOLVED that

the Executive Committee's Work Programme be noted.

92. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

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

RESOLVED that

the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be noted.

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

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

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

Councillor Warhurst reported that the last meeting due to take place on 12th March 2026 had to be cancelled as the meeting was not quorate. Councillor Warhurst noted that the political Group Leaders would be contacted to ensure attendance issues were followed up and resolved.

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

There was no further meeting of this group since December 2025.

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

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Councillor Warhurst reported that a rescheduled date for the meeting of 18th February 2026 that had to be postponed had not yet been arranged.

RESOLVED that

the Task Groups and Working Groups Update Reports be noted.

94. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

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

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

Councillor Boyd reported that he had no update to provide at this meeting.

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

As Councillor Fardoe had submitted his apology, there was no update provided at this meeting

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

Councillor Fry reported that the last meeting of HOSC took place on 4th March and that an update with details would be provided to the next meeting of Overview and Scrutiny.

RESOLVED that

the External Scrutiny Bodies updates be noted.

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REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Executive Committee
2026**

21st April

HRA Business Plan Update to Enhance the Delivery of the Housing Improvement Plan

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Hartnett Councillor Woodall
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Assistant Director	Simon Parry
Report Author	Job Title: Simon Parry Contact simon.parry@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk email: Contact Tel: 3201
Wards Affected	ALL
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	No
Relevant Council Priority	Community and Housing
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	
This report contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph(s) 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee RECOMMEND that: -

- 1) The 30 year HRA Business Plan and associated Financial Model are reviewed, updated and as appropriate recalculated utilising modelling that ensures the Council's Housing Stock Portfolio is able to benefit from and perform to the highest standards possible.**
- 2) The high-level findings and risks identified in the report are reviewed and a revised HRA Business Plan is included in a future report.**
- 3) An annual review of the HRA Business Plan is undertaken and reported to Council.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a ring-fenced account used to manage the Council's landlord activities and is funded primarily through rental income and associated service charges, which must be spent for the benefit of council housing tenants. While legislation prevents direct subsidy flowing between the General Fund and the HRA, a well-understood, lawful and balanced relationship between the two remains important and mutually beneficial, supporting effective

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corporate governance, value for money and the sustainable delivery of council services.

- 2.2 In February 2023, Executive approved a 30-year HRA Business Plan, which set out the Council's long-term approach to the management, maintenance and investment of its social housing stock. The Business Plan provided the strategic and financial framework for delivering landlord services, maintaining financial sustainability, and supporting a planned programme of capital investment.
- 2.3 The Business Plan was developed alongside a refreshed HRA Asset Management Strategy, ensuring that investment decisions were informed by stock condition data and aligned to the Council's objectives for providing homes that are safe, warm and of a good standard. This was reflected through the Council's five-year Housing Capital Programme.
- 2.4 Long-term capital forecasts within the 30-year Business Plan were informed by an independent Stock Condition Survey undertaken in 2019/20, covering the Council's housing stock, garages and parking sites. The survey concluded that the housing stock was generally in a reasonable state of repair, with relatively low levels of immediate 'catch-up' work required. However, it also identified the need for continued and sustained investment over the life of the Business Plan to maintain standards and address longer-term asset condition.
- 2.5 The Business Plan was underpinned by a series of financial and operational assumptions, including:
- Changes in stock numbers, right-to-buy levels and voids.
 - Rent and service charge increases.
 - Management and maintenance costs; and
 - Borrowing costs associated with capital investment requirements.
- 2.6 These assumptions were designed to be reviewed, with appropriate HRA reserves maintained to provide resilience against cost pressures or changes in circumstances. In line with best practice, business plans are based on long term assumptions, refreshing these assumptions regularly in the light of actual or changing events is critical.
- 2.7 Considering strengthened regulatory requirements, the expectations set out within the Council's Housing Improvement Plan, and the fact that the HRA Business Plan is now three years old, it is both prudent and necessary to undertake a review to assess opportunities to

accelerate the delivery of actions identified through the Improvement Plan. This will support improved service delivery and ensure residents are kept safe in line with the Council's legislative, compliance and regulatory obligations.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1 The housing sector has undergone significant change in recent years, particularly from a regulatory perspective. This includes the strengthening of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) and the introduction of increased legislative requirements, driven largely by the response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy and subsequent reforms to building safety and consumer regulation.
- 3.3 As part of these reforms, the Regulator now has enhanced powers to proactively inspect social housing providers. Redditch Borough Council received its regulatory judgement in July 2025, at which point it was issued with a C3 rating. A C3 rating means that "there are serious failings in the landlord's delivery of the outcomes of the consumer standards and significant improvement is required".
- 3.4 The regulatory judgement identified significant areas of weakness, including outstanding fire safety remedial actions, backlogs in repairs, gaps in transparency and oversight of performance reporting, and the absence of effective tenant scrutiny arrangements. These findings highlight the need for a clear, credible and accelerated approach to delivering the Council's Housing Improvement Plan and restoring regulatory assurance. The relationship between the major repairs programme and the capital programme is critical to securing best value. Effective alignment ensures that investment decisions are planned in a co-ordinated way, preventing duplication, avoiding abortive revenue spend, and targeting resources where they deliver the greatest whole-life benefit. By coordinating major repairs with planned capital works, the Council can optimise asset condition, extend component lifecycles, improve long-term value for money, and ensure that limited resources are deployed strategically rather than reactively.
- 3.5 Refreshing the Business Plan provides the opportunity to review whether the HRA can prudently and sustainably support additional borrowing, accelerate delivery of new council homes where viable, and increase investment in existing properties to address stock condition and compliance issues, improve energy efficiency and long-term asset

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sustainability and ensure ongoing compliance with current and emerging regulation.

- 3.6 The updated assumptions reflected in this report have been tested against Long-term HRA affordability and sustainability Impacts on rents and service charges; Exposure to financial risk, including interest rate movements and inflation; and Alignment with the Council's capital and treasury strategies.
- 3.7 To undertake this work the Council commissioned sector experts Savills UK Limited. To consider the business plan in 2 phases
- 1) to identify immediate potential headroom for investment to expedite the housing improvement plans focussed on high priority safety works
 - 2) to explore the scope for future growth in housing stock through a full review of capital financing options.
- 3.8 This review has two objectives:
- (i) to secure a sound and efficient approach to the £15million repayment of the subsidy debt, due in March 2027
 - (ii) to maximise capacity for additional stock via a low-risk growth strategy the focus is on low-risk, high-value delivery options. This includes prioritising Section 106 acquisitions and limiting exposure to open-market sales, which reduces financial risk and market dependency. The approach also maximises flexibility in tenure mix, allowing homes to be allocated across social rent, affordable rent, or other tenures as needs change. This ensures the Council can respond effectively to the greatest housing pressures while maintaining value for money and delivery confidence.
- 3.9 Following a review of the 2022/23 Redditch HRA Business Planning financial model, Savills have produced a report (Appendix 1) utilising their own model thereby recreating the plan using an agreed combination of assumptions, with the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) providing the basis for the majority of these. This report presents important findings and risks at a high level. A summary is provided below, with further details included in the Executive Summary starting on page 2 of Appendix 1.

3.10 *Overview of Key Themes and Issues*

3.10.1 Financial Viability and Assumptions

The HRA business plan was originally assessed as viable and capable of supporting modest growth without additional borrowing. However, since the baseline was established, there have been significant changes in the economic climate, housing regulation, building safety expectations and energy standards. These changes place increased pressure on the plan and require a more dynamic approach to financial modelling, with regular refreshes to ensure assumptions remain realistic and affordable in practice.

3.10.2 Income Growth, Rent Policy and Collection Risk

The plan assumes that rental and other income streams grow at a faster rate than operating costs over the full 30-year period. Operationally, this places increased importance on effective rent setting decisions, robust rent collection performance, and active management of voids and arrears.

Key income risks relate to the implementation of rent convergence, the use of rent flexibilities on re-lets, and the accuracy of assumptions around void loss and bad debt provision. While these offer opportunities to strengthen HRA income, they also require clear policy decisions, system capability, and ongoing monitoring to ensure that assumed income levels are achievable and sustainable.

3.10.3 Service Charges and Cost Recovery

Service charge income is assumed to increase significantly in the medium term as services are better identified and recharged. Operationally, it is necessary to enhance cost allocation, maintain transparent communication with tenants and leaseholders, and demonstrate that charges are both reasonable and recoverable. There are also opportunities to review discretionary services currently funded through the HRA and consider whether separate charging would improve fairness and maximise income recovery.

3.10.4 Stock Investment, Compliance and Data Quality

The level of capital investment assumed for the existing stock is lower than sector benchmarks and is currently based on outdated stock condition information. This creates operational risk, particularly as the

Council responds to ongoing regulatory changes, and wider consumer regulation expectations. Until stock condition data is refreshed and compliance requirements are fully quantified, there remains uncertainty around the true scale, timing and prioritisation of investment needed, increasing the risk of reactive rather than planned intervention. The model and initial review were based on stock condition data from 2020 surveys, since then a rolling programme of surveys have been undertaken and refreshed data will be used in the next phase of this review.

3.10.5 Borrowing Profile and Refinancing Exposure

The HRA benefits from historically low interest rates on existing borrowing; however, loans begin to mature from 2027 onwards. Operationally, this creates a refinancing risk that is not fully reflected in the current plan. Given limited capacity to repay principal at maturity, future borrowing is likely to be at higher rates, which could place pressure on revenue budgets and investment capacity unless mitigated through early planning and scenario testing.

3.10.6 Depreciation Policy and Revenue Flexibility

While day-to-day management and repairs costs remain broadly in line with sector benchmarks, the Council's approach to depreciation results in a relatively high transfer of resources into the Major Repairs Reserve. A review of depreciation policy could allow greater discretion in how revenue resources are deployed, particularly to manage emerging pressures or support delivery of priority works.

3.10.7 Development Programme Delivery and Risk Management

The development programme included in the MTFP improves the long-term position of the HRA, provided it is delivered within cost and timescale assumptions. In the early years of the plan, borrowing levels are relatively high against indicative prudential benchmarks, increasing the importance of strong project management, cost control, and delivery discipline.

There is potential to accelerate delivery, particularly if Homes England grant funding is secured, but this would require careful consideration of additional borrowing in a high interest-rate environment. Similarly, an acquisition-based strategy would increase stock levels in advance on land-based developments undertaken by the Council.

- 3.11 The next stage of the HRA Business Plan review will explicitly consider the range of options identified above to maximise borrowing headroom and investment capacity. This will include the impact of rent convergence and available flexibilities, a review of asset lives, and the integration and alignment between the capital programme, major works and responsive repairs. These options will be assessed alongside the potential move towards component accounting, ensuring that depreciation more accurately reflects asset performance and supports longer-term financial sustainability.
- 3.12 In parallel, the review will incorporate a clear investment strategy that prioritises acquisition in the early years of the Business Plan, followed by a shift towards land-led development in later years. This phased approach is intended to deliver the greatest impact on housing growth and investment delivery, enabling the Council to increase stock numbers quickly in the short term while building capacity for more complex development activity over time.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The objective of the next stage is to apply, subject to approval, a new financial modelling tool, with specialist support, where required, to optimise the profile of affordable borrowing within the HRA. This will seek to increase borrowing headroom for investment in the early years of the Plan, when delivery pressures are most acute, while smoothing the current exponential rise in headroom projected in later years. This approach will support earlier delivery of priority investment, provide greater financial resilience, and strengthen the overall deliverability of the Housing Improvement Plan and growth ambitions.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 In November 2020, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) issued guidance on the operation of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) ring-fence. The guidance emphasised the need for fairness to both tenants and council taxpayers, with costs apportioned transparently and appropriately between the HRA and the General Fund.
- 5.2 The Localism Act 2011 reformed council housing finance by ending the former HRA subsidy system and introducing self-financing

arrangements, enabling local authorities to retain rental income to support the management and investment of council housing.

- 5.3 The removal of the HRA borrowing cap in October 2018 provided local authorities with greater flexibility to borrow against future rental income, subject to compliance with the CIPFA Prudential Code, ensuring borrowing remains affordable, prudent and sustainable.

6. **OTHER - IMPLICATIONS**

Local Government Reorganisation

- 6.1 Housing functions remain statutory (homelessness, allocations, landlord duties for stockholding councils). For councils with HRAs, the HRA and landlord obligations continue, similarly Consumer regulation continues regardless of LGR with The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) inspecting and issuing judgements under the new regime.

Relevant Council Priority

- 6.2 Accelerating delivery will support the Council Plan objectives, strengthen long-term income generation within the Housing Revenue Account, and increase the supply of good-quality, affordable homes for local residents. The immediate priority is to speed up delivery of the Housing Improvement Plan, with clear emphasis on essential health and safety works, including fire safety remedial actions. Once these critical risks are addressed and the position is stabilised, the Council will be able to move forward confidently into a programme of sustainable housing growth.
- 6.3 Key housing-related activities and commitments within the Council Plan include:
- *Increasing the supply of council and affordable homes to reduce housing waiting lists and meet local need, including delivering new homes directly and making best use of existing stock.*
 - *Ensuring homes are safe, warm and well-maintained, with a strong focus on compliance with building safety requirements, fire safety, and emerging legislation such as Awaab's Law.*

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- *Tackling damp and mould proactively*, with investment already committed ahead of legislative requirements to improve health, safety and living conditions for tenants.
- *Improving the quality and condition of existing housing stock*, supported by sustained capital investment, planned maintenance programmes and evidence-led asset management.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.4 The Council continues to invest in improving the energy efficiency of its existing housing stock, supported by secured Government funding, including Warm Homes programmes. This investment supports national objectives to improve energy performance, reduce fuel poverty and contribute towards long-term net zero targets.
- 6.5 Ongoing programmes include upgrades to heating systems, electrical installations and lighting, alongside works to improve insulation and thermal performance. These measures will reduce carbon emissions, lower energy consumption and improve comfort and affordability for tenants, particularly those experiencing fuel poverty.
- 6.6 New council homes delivered through the housing growth programme will be built to high energy-efficiency standards and will utilise low-carbon heating solutions, supporting wider climate change commitments.
- 6.7 Improving the energy efficiency of council homes is central to tackling fuel poverty, reducing household energy bills and improving tenants' quality of life, while also supporting the Council's Climate Change Strategy and carbon reduction ambitions.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.8 The findings from opportunities identified through a review of the HRA Business Plan, which may create headroom and thus facilitate investment in new or existing stock, will result in an Equality Impact Assessment being conducted.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 This report does not introduce any new or additional risk. Rather, the proposed review of the HRA Business Plan is intended to proactively identify and mitigate a range of existing and emerging risks, including

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financial sustainability, regulatory compliance, data quality, and the Council's capacity to deliver its Housing Improvement Plan effectively.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1- Savills HRA Business Plan Review Report

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9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Woodall Cllr Hartnett	1/4/2026
Lead Director / Assistant Director	Guy Revans	10/4/2026
Financial Services	Julie Lorraine	10/4/2026
Legal Services	Sarah Sellars	1/4/2026
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	N/A	
Climate Change Team (if climate change implications apply)	N/A	

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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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