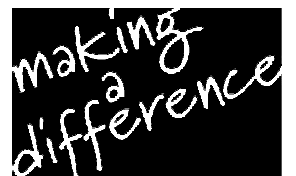


# Executive Committee

Wed 16 Jun  
2010  
7.00 pm

Committee Room 2  
Town Hall  
Redditch



[www.redditchbc.gov.uk](http://www.redditchbc.gov.uk)

# Access to Information - Your Rights

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The Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 widened the rights of press and public to attend Local Authority meetings and to see certain documents. Recently the Freedom of Information Act 2000, has further broadened these rights, and limited exemptions under the 1985 Act.

Your main rights are set out below:-

- Automatic right to attend all Council and Committee meetings unless the business would disclose confidential or “exempt” information.
- Automatic right to inspect agenda and public reports at least five days before the date of the meeting.
- Automatic right to inspect minutes of the Council and its Committees (or summaries of business undertaken in private) for up to six years following a meeting.
- Automatic right to inspect lists of background papers used in the preparation of public reports.
- Access, upon request, to the background papers on which reports are based for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting.
- Access to a public register stating the names and addresses and electoral areas of all Councillors with details of the membership of all Committees etc.
- A reasonable number of copies of agenda and reports relating to items to be considered in public must be made available to the public attending meetings of the Council and its Committees etc.
- Access to a list specifying those powers which the Council has delegated to its Officers indicating also the titles of the Officers concerned.
- Access to a summary of the rights of the public to attend meetings of the Council and its Committees etc. and to inspect and copy documents.
- In addition, the public now has a right to be present when the Council determines “Key Decisions” unless the business would disclose confidential or “exempt” information.
- Unless otherwise stated, all items of business before the Executive Committee are Key Decisions.
- (Copies of Agenda Lists are published in advance of the meetings on the Council’s Website:  
[www.redditchbc.gov.uk](http://www.redditchbc.gov.uk)

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**If you have any queries on this Agenda or any of the decisions taken or wish to exercise any of the above rights of access to information, please contact**

**Denise Sunman  
Committee Support Services**

**Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square, Redditch, B98 8AH  
Tel: 01527 64252 (ext 3270) Fax: (01527) 65216  
e.mail: [denise.sunman@redditchbc.gov.uk](mailto:denise.sunman@redditchbc.gov.uk) Minicom: 595528**

# Welcome to today's meeting.

## Guidance for the Public

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### **Agenda Papers**

The **Agenda List** at the front of the Agenda summarises the issues to be discussed and is followed by the Officers' full supporting **Reports**.

### **Chair**

The Chair is responsible for the proper conduct of the meeting. Generally to one side of the Chair is the Committee Support Officer who gives advice on the proper conduct of the meeting and ensures that the debate and the decisions are properly recorded. On the Chair's other side are the relevant Council Officers. The Councillors ("Members") of the Committee occupy the remaining seats around the table.

### **Running Order**

Items will normally be taken in the order printed but, in particular circumstances, the Chair may agree to vary the order.

**Refreshments** : tea, coffee and water are normally available at meetings - please serve yourself.

### **Decisions**

Decisions at the meeting will be taken by the **Councillors** who are the democratically elected representatives. They are advised by **Officers** who are paid professionals and do not have a vote.

### **Members of the Public**

Members of the public may, by prior arrangement, speak at meetings of the Council or its Committees. Specific procedures exist for Appeals Hearings or for meetings involving Licence or Planning Applications. For further information on this point, please speak to the Committee Support Officer.

### **Special Arrangements**

If you have any particular needs, please contact the Committee Support Officer.

Infra-red devices for the hearing impaired are available on request at the meeting. Other facilities may require prior arrangement.

### **Further Information**

If you require any further information, please contact the Committee Support Officer (see foot of page opposite).

### **Fire/ Emergency instructions**

**If the alarm is sounded, please leave the building by the nearest available exit – these are clearly indicated within all the Committee Rooms.**

**If you discover a fire, inform a member of staff or operate the nearest alarm call point (wall mounted red rectangular box). In the event of the fire alarm sounding, leave the building immediately following the fire exit signs. Officers have been appointed with responsibility to ensure that all visitors are escorted from the building.**

**Do Not stop to collect personal belongings.**

**Do Not use lifts.**

**Do Not re-enter the building until told to do so.**

**The emergency Assembly Area is on Walter Stranz Square.**

# Declaration of Interests: Guidance for Councillors

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DO I HAVE A "PERSONAL INTEREST" ?

- Where the item relates or is likely to affect your **registered interests** (what you have declared on the formal Register of Interests)

**OR**

- Where a decision in relation to the item might reasonably be regarded as affecting **your own** well-being or financial position, or that of your **family**, or your **close associates** more than most other people affected by the issue,

you have a personal interest.

WHAT MUST I DO? **Declare the existence, and nature, of your interest and stay**

- The declaration must relate to specific business being decided - a general scattergun approach is not needed
- **Exception** - where interest arises only because of your membership of another **public body**, there is no need to declare unless you **speak** on the matter.
- You **can vote** on the matter.

IS IT A "PREJUDICIAL INTEREST" ?

In general only if:-

- It is a personal interest **and**
- The item affects your **financial position** (or conveys other benefits), or the position of your **family, close associates** or bodies through which you have a **registered interest** (or relates to the exercise of **regulatory functions** in relation to these groups)

**and**

- A member of public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably believe the interest was likely to **prejudice** your judgement of the public interest.

WHAT MUST I DO? **Declare and Withdraw**

BUT you may make representations to the meeting before withdrawing, **if** the public have similar rights (such as the right to speak at Planning Committee).



# Executive

16th June 2010

7.00 pm

## Committee

Committee Room 2 Town Hall

### Agenda

#### Membership:

Cllrs: Carole Gandy (Chair) Brandon Clayton  
Michael Braley (Vice-Chair) Malcolm Hall  
Peter Anderson Jinny Pearce  
Juliet Brunner Debbie Taylor  
Greg Chance

<b>1. Apologies</b>	To receive the apologies of any Member who is unable to attend this meeting.
<b>2. Declarations of Interest</b>	To invite Councillors to declare any interests they may have in items on the agenda.
<b>3. Leader's Announcements</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>To give notice of any items for future meetings or for the Forward Plan, including any scheduled for this meeting, but now carried forward or deleted; and</li><li>any other relevant announcements.</li></ol> <p>(Oral report)</p>
<b>4. Minutes</b> Chief Executive	To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on the 26th May 2010.  (Minutes to follow)
<b>5. Quarterly Performance Monitoring - Quarter 4 - January to March 2010</b>  (Pages 1 - 6)  Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships	To consider the quarterly performance report, showing indicators which have improved, declined or remained static when compared to the same period in the previous year.  (Report attached / Appendix to follow)  <b>(No Specific Ward Relevance)</b>
<b>6. Quarterly Budget Monitoring - Quarter 4 - January to March 2010</b>  (Pages 7 - 28)  Head of Finance and Resources	To provide Members with an overview of the budget, including the achievement of approved savings as at the end of Quarter 4, 2009/10.  (Report attached)  <b>(No Specific Ward Relevance)</b>

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<p><b>7. Quarterly Monitoring of the Benefits Service Improvement Plan - Quarter 4 - January to March 2010</b></p> <p>(Pages 29 - 62)</p> <p>T Kristunas, Head of Finance and Resources</p>	<p>To advise Members of actual performance during Quarter 4 of the Improvement Plan.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p><b>(No Specific Ward Relevance)</b></p>
<p><b>8. Quarterly Monitoring of Formal Complaints and Compliments - Quarter 4 - January to March 2010</b></p> <p>(Pages 63 - 78)</p> <p>A Heighway, Head of Community Services</p>	<p>To consider a report which provides a view on aspects of the Council's Formal Complaints Procedure, the compliments recorded during the same period and the Ombudsman Annual Review.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p><b>(No Specific Ward Relevance)</b></p>

<p><b>9. Petition Scheme</b> (Pages 79 - 84) Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services</p>	<p>To consider a the adoption of a Petition Scheme as required under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.</p> <p><b>The Committee is asked to RECOMMEND that</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) <b>the draft Petition Scheme in respect of non-executive functions be approved;</b></li><li>2) <b>the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services be designated as the Petitions Officer and instructed to report annually to Council on the operation of the Scheme;</b></li><li>3) <b>the Monitoring Officer be instructed to incorporate the Petition Scheme in the Council’s Constitution and make consequential amendments; and</b></li></ol> <p><b>RESOLVE that</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>4) <b>the draft Petition Scheme in respect of executive functions be approved; and</b></li><li>5) <b>a further report be submitted to the Committee in due course in respect of on-line petitions.</b></li></ol> <p>(Matters that may require particular consideration from Members are highlighted in the draft Scheme.)</p> <p>(Draft Petition Scheme attached)</p> <p><b>(No Specific Ward Relevance)</b></p>
<p><b>10. Worcestershire Partnership - Terms of Engagement</b> (Pages 85 - 90) Chief Executive</p>	<p>To seek approval for the Worcester Partnership’s Terms of Engagement.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p><b>All Wards</b></p>
<p><b>11. Church Hill Redevelopment Project</b> (Pages 91 - 112) Head of Finance and Resources</p>	<p>To update Members on the Church Hill Redevelopment Project.</p> <p>(Report attached)</p> <p><b>(Church Hill Ward)</b></p>

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<p><b>12. Business Centre Review</b> (Pages 113 - 148)  R Bamford, Acting Head of Planning and Building Control</p>	<p>To consider the function and role of business centres, with particular regard to strategic benefits, performance and management.  (Report attached)  To consider a referral from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with regard to this report.  (Report to follow)  <b>(No Specific Ward Relevance)</b></p>
<p><b>13. Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b> (Pages 149 - 158)  Chief Executive</p>	<p>To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 28th April 2010.  There are no recommendations to consider.  (Minutes attached)</p>
<p><b>14. Minutes / Referrals - Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Executive Panels, Neighbourhood Groups etc.</b>  Chief Executive</p>	<p>To receive and consider any outstanding minutes or referrals from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Executive Panels, Neighbourhood Groups, etc. since the last meeting of the Executive Committee, other than as detailed in the items above.</p>
<p><b>15. Advisory Panels - update report</b> (Pages 159 - 162)  Chief Executive</p>	<p>To consider, for monitoring / management purposes, an update on the work of the Executive Committee's Advisory Panels and similar bodies, which report via the Executive Committee.  (Report attached)</p>
<p><b>16. Action Monitoring</b> (Pages 163 - 164)  Chief Executive</p>	<p>To consider an update on the actions arising from previous meetings of the Committee.  (Report attached)</p>



# Executive

Committee

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<b>17. Exclusion of the Public</b>	<p>It may be necessary, in the opinion of the Chief Executive, to consider excluding the public from the meeting in relation to the following items of business on the grounds that exempt information is likely to be divulged. It may be necessary, therefore, to move the following resolution:</p> <p><b>“that, under S.100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following 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, as amended.”</b></p>
<b>18. Confidential Minutes / Referrals (if any)</b>	To consider confidential matters not dealt with earlier in the evening and not separately listed below (if any).
<b>19. REDI CENTRE - Options</b>  Head of Leisure and Cultural Services	To consider an update on the options for the future of the REDI Centre.  (Report to follow)  <b>(Central Ward)</b>



REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

16th June 2010

**QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT**  
**QUARTER 4, 2009/10 – PERIOD ENDING MARCH 2010**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr M Braley
Relevant Head of Service	Hugh Bennett, Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships
Non-Key Decision	

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 This report provides Members with an opportunity to review the Council's performance for quarter 4 of the 2009/10 financial year and to comment upon it.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 **The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that:**

- i. **the update on key performance indicators for the period ending March 2010 be noted and commented upon.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The National Indicator (NI) set was introduced with effect from 1 April 2008 and became the only indicators that public authorities will be required to report on to central Government. Figures collected for 2008/09 formed the baseline for future reporting. 28 national indicators are included in the Local Area Agreement for Worcestershire of which 13 are district indicators.
- 3.2 A number of Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI's) have been retained and are now included in the list of local performance indicators.
- 3.3 To maintain data quality, the Council uses an electronic data collection (EDC) spread sheet. This shows our current and historic performance against selected national indicators and local performance indicators.

**4. KEY ISSUES**Basis of Quarterly Reporting

- 4.1 In moving the agenda forward, the Council looked to address the following:

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- a) Retaining a tighter focus at a corporate level – with a clearly defined number of indicators reported and monitored.
  - b) Developing capacity for Directorates to strengthen performance management by focusing on service plan commitments.
  - c) Continuing to monitor selected National Indicators and retained BVPI's and local indicators at a Member level at least annually.
  - d) The development of links to how the Council is performing in its key delivery projects.
- 4.2 Member involvement in monitoring performance will continue during the 2010/11 reporting year.

**Corporate Performance Report**

- 4.3 The corporate performance report compares the year to date outturn with the same period last year and shows those indicators which have improved, declined and remained static in performance.
- 4.4 As in the previous quarters of 2009/10 out of all the corporate performance indicators reported in quarter 4 a higher proportion have improved compared to the same period last year.
- 4.5 In total, data has been provided for 59 indicators for quarter 4. Of these, 35 have improved in performance and 15 have declined. In addition there are 9 indicators which have remained static but of those, 6 are currently at optimum performance and as such no improvement is possible.

**Data Reporting**

- 4.6 There are a total of 12 performance indicators for which outturn data has not yet been provided. These indicators all rely on data from external sources, i.e. Primary Care Trust (PCT) and Department for Works and Pensions (DWP). It is not unusual for there to be a delay in reporting data, with the time lag on some indicators being up to 12 months.
- 4.7 The performance indicator set for 2010/11 has been revised in line with the Council Plan and will not include these long term indicators. This is due to the ability of Redditch Borough Council to influence them and the time lag involved; however, these are important indicators and will be included in the Sustainable Community Strategy for future reporting.

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**5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Poor financial performance will be detrimental to the Council's organisational assessment and overall performance. Relevant performance indicators are incorporated in Appendix 1.

**6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, a set of 198 new National Indicators was introduced to replace the previous Best Value Performance Indicators. These cover all public authorities, but are not all applicable to Redditch Borough Council.

**7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The Council's current Corporate Plan makes a clear commitment to improve the way in which priority actions are planned and to improve the way in which performance is managed. Appendix 1 reports on the 2009/10 performance indicators contained within the Corporate Plan.

**8. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

- 8.1 The performance data contained in the attached report relates directly to all the Council's priorities and objectives.

**9. RISK MANAGEMENT INCLUDING HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS**

- 9.1 Without adequate performance management the Council cannot review its performance at a corporate or service level adequately.

**10. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 Information contained in the attached appendix will be communicated to both internal and external customers via the intranet/Internet following resolution at committee.

- 10.2 Enhanced performance will assist to improve customer service.

**11. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 None specific

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**12. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS, PROCUREMENT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT**

12.1 None specific

**13. CLIMATE CHANGE, CARBON IMPLICATIONS AND BIODIVERSITY**

13.1 There are a total of 4 performance indicators that relate to air quality and climate change within the list of National Indicators (NI 185, NI 186, NI 188 and NI 194). These are incorporated in the report at Appendix 1.

**14. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

14.1 The performance indicator set includes sickness absence data.

**15. GOVERNANCE/PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

15.1 Performance management implications are detailed within this report at Appendix 1.

**16. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS INCLUDING SECTION 17 OF CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998**

16.1 Relevant performance indicators are incorporated in the report at Appendix 1.

**17. HEALTH INEQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

17.1 None specific

**18. LESSONS LEARNT**

18.1 Any lessons learnt in the course of carrying out performance management of the Council are communicated to the organisation via the Performance Management Group.

**19. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

19.1 None specific

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**20. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Portfolio Holder	YES
Chief Executive	YES
Executive Director (S151 Officer)	YES
Executive Director – Leisure, Cultural, Environmental and Community Services	YES
Executive Director – Planning & Regeneration, Regulatory and Housing Services	YES
Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships	YES
Head of Service	N/A
Head of Resources	YES
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	YES
Corporate Procurement Team	NO

**21. WARDS AFFECTED**

All wards

**22. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 Quarter 4, 2009/10 Corporate Performance Report.

**23. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The details to support the information provided within this report are held by the Policy Team.

**AUTHOR OF REPORT**

Name: Tracy Beech, Policy Officer  
 E Mail: [tracy.beech@redditchbc.gov.uk](mailto:tracy.beech@redditchbc.gov.uk)  
 Tel: (01527) 64252 ext 3182





REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

16th June 2010

**CONSOLIDATED REVENUE OUTTURN – FINANCIAL YEAR 2009/10**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Michael Braley
Relevant Head of Service	Teresa Kristunas
Key Decision	

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

For Members to note the Council's overall financial outturn for the 2009/10 financial year.

The report shows the actual income and expenditure for 2009/10 financial year and compares this to the budget for General Fund Services and the Housing Revenue Account.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that**

**subject to Members' Comments, the report be noted.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 The Statement of Accounts for the year 2009/10 will be presented to the Audit Committee on 29th June 2010.

3.2 The Audit Commission will be commencing their formal examination of the accounts during July 2010.

**4. KEY ISSUES**

4.1 The report details the overall outturn position for the Council's Services including the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account.

4.2 The Revenue outturn position for General Fund Services in 2009/10 is summarised below:

<b>Summary of Spending on Services in 2009/10</b>			
	<b>Budget £000</b>	<b>Actual £000</b>	<b>Variation £000</b>
Net Expenditure on Services	13,645.8	12,957.7	(688.1)

4.3 The major variations are summarised in the table following 4.5. This is shown at cost centre service level and includes details for all variances in

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excess of £20,000; Appendix 1 is at service level. Details of individual cost centres are available in full from Financial Services as required.

The base budget included a sum of £200k for outturn savings as well as the additional savings approved by Members on 6th April 2009. These are detailed in Appendix 2.

- 4.4 The Council applied to the Secretary of State to capitalise the costs associated with the Senior Management Restructure, Redundancy payments and Pension costs. Only the Pension element has been capitalised due to the total Redundancy costs being below the allowance threshold.
- 4.5 The majority of the additional outturn savings can be accounted for as follows:

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<b>Major Variances between Outturn Budget and Actual for 2009/10</b>				
<b>Service</b>	<b>Outturn Budget £</b>	<b>Actual £</b>	<b>Variance £</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Deputy Chief Executive</b>				
<b>Chief Executive</b>				
Corporate Expenses	(133,540)	(42,512)	(91,028)	Increased Audit fees and additional allocation of Officers' time to corporate activities.
Corporate Activities	19,360	53,600	34,240	Serco consultant's fees for shared services.
<b>Benefits</b>				
Housing & Council Tax Benefit	451,360	265,233	(186,127)	Additional administration subsidy granted during financial year and a slight percentage increase in the level of subsidy claimed.
<b>Council Tax</b>				
Council Tax Collection	465,830	388,777	(77,053)	Additional Income from administration fees on recovery action and savings on vacant posts.
<b>Democratic Services</b>				
Election	73,450	44,045	(29,405)	Costs reimbursed from County and European elections.
Members Services	275,180	238,637	(36,543)	Staff salary savings due to staff secondment and a delay in appointing agency staff. Printing costs exceeded budget due to more committee meetings.

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<b>Service</b>	<b>Outturn Budget £</b>	<b>Actual £</b>	<b>Variance £</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Property Management</b>				
Asset Disposal	126,640	99,393	(27,247)	Expenditure has not been incurred as expected.
Investment Properties	(226,220)	(297,550)	(71,330)	Threadneedle House achieved additional income of £75k as a termination of a lease was not received.
Business Centres	(41,560)	12,795	54,355	Rent income was lower than expected due to vacant units.
Comm. Related Asset Property	(303,050)	(376,515)	(73,465)	Rent income is higher due to previous years rent adjustments. Monies were received for dilapidations and NDR was lower than budget.
<b>Corporate Strategy</b>				
Concessionary Fares/Inhouse Community Transport	1,118,460	933,335	(185,125)	A reduction in the cost payable to bus operators for using this service due to several no longer operating in this area and increased competition for fares.
Community Safety	123,950	90,958	(32,992)	Savings due to contribution to Manager's salary not in budget and a vacant post.

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Service	Outturn Budget £	Actual £	Variance £	Commentary
<b>Director of Environment &amp; Planning</b>				
<b>Manager Taxi Licensing</b>				
Hackney Carriage & Private Hire Vehicles	1,120	(19,629)	(20,749)	Saving due to staff turnover and a freeze on recruitment due to WETT programme. £19k has been set aside for an earmarked reserve.
<b>Human Resources</b>				
Job Evaluation	130,000	158,408	28,408	Overspend on consultancy fees.
<b>Manager Waste Collection</b>				
Waste Collection Team	1,482,230	1,424,382	(57,848)	A review of Environmental Operations was undertaken and a Team Leader post was deleted. There were also savings made on transport costs from mechanics recharges, reduced fuel costs, reduced tyre costs and less vehicle insurance costs.
<b>Market</b>				
Market	30,380	1,287	(29,093)	Contract termination of a staff member.
<b>Planning Policy</b>				
Local Development Framework	132,230	99,260	(32,970)	There is an overall saving due to a reduction in support costs and savings from legal and consultants' costs that are to be moved to an earmarked reserve for ongoing work relating to the local plan enquiry.
<b>Service</b>	<b>Outturn</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Commentary</b>

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL****EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

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	Budget £	£	£	
<b>Director of Housing, Leisure &amp; Customer Services</b>				
<b>Leisure Facilities</b>				
Abbey Stadium	465,8 10	444,90 6	(20,904)	The saving is attributable to a reduction in employee costs and considerable rebates for electricity and water charges.
Arrow Vale Sports Centre	127,4 40	155,10 9	27,669	The overspend is due to a significant loss of income on the ATP due to the exceptional weather during the winter, closures of the sports hall due to repair works being carried out and loss of membership at the fitness suite due to breakdowns and the condition of the cardio theatre equipment.
<b>REDI</b>				
REDI Centre	163,200	208,157	44,957	REDI Centre not transferred as originally planned.

- 4.6 The table overleaf summaries the General fund non-service specific Expenditure below. This also shows the contribution to General Fund balances for 2009/10.

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**General Fund Outturn – 2009/10**

	<b>Approved Budget 2009/10 £000</b>	<b>Actual 2009/10 £000</b>	<b>Variance £000</b>
Net Directorate Expenditure (Appendix 1)	13,645.8	12,957.7	(688.1)
<b><u>Non Service Specific Expenditure</u></b>			
FRS17 adjustment (pensions)	217.2	217.5	0.3
Bad debt provision	35.0	35.0	0.0
Capital Charges (reversal of)	(1350.7)	(1350.9)	(0.2)
Parish Precept	8.2	8.2	0.0
Transfer to/(from) reserves/provisions	200.0	445.8	245.8
Superannuation	260.6	350.0	89.4
Corporate employee costs	0.0	495.5	495.5
Prior Year Adjustment	0.0	(51.7)	(51.7)
Financing costs	(129.6)	(480.3)	(350.7)
LAGBI	(23.3)	(23.3)	0.0
Vehicle Adjustment	(38.0)	0.0	38.0
Planning Delivery Grant	(220.0)	(219.6)	0.4
Town Centre Grant	0.0	(52.6)	(52.6)
Budget Savings	(543.2)	0.0	543.2
MRP	286.0	286.0	0.0
<b>Total General Fund Expenditure</b>	<b>12,348.0</b>	<b>12,617.3</b>	<b>269.3</b>
Contribution from Capital	0.0	(327.0)	(327.0)
Income from Grants and Local Taxation	(12,084.0)	(12,084.3)	(0.3)
<b>Contribution From General Fund Balances</b>	<b>264.0</b>	<b>206.0</b>	<b>(58.0)</b>

4.7 General Fund Balances

The impact on the General Fund balances brought forward is as follows:

<b>General Fund Balance</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>
Balance as at 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2009	2,131.2	
Contribution from balances	206.0	
Balance as at 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2010		1,925.2

**Housing Revenue Account**

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- 4.8 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) has been prepared in line with the current Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice.
- 4.9 There is a surplus of £192,748 against the approved budget for 2009/10. This has resulted in HRA balances as at 31st March 2010 of £695,584.
- 4.10 The significant variations between budget and the expenditure are shown in the table below'



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<b>Major Variances between Outturn Budget and Actual for 2009/10</b>				
<b>Service</b>	<b>Outturn Budget £</b>	<b>Actual £</b>	<b>Variance £</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Housing Revenue Account</b>				
Item 8 Debit	4004.1	4060.8	56.7	The overspend is due to additional borrowing and associated debt charges
Repairs & Maintenance	3955.9	4005.4	49.5	There is a separate report (see appendix 4) detailing the overspend of £49,500 which only represents 1.25% of the budget. This is mainly due to additional works on fire alarm servicing & maintenance and roofing offset by savings on administration costs.
Negative subsidy Transfer to DCLG	6167.8	5929.5	(238.3)	This is a government calculation resulting in savings of £238,000 arising from a reduction in interest rates.
Rent, Rates and Taxes	220.1	144.1	(76.0)	The savings in this area are from reduced insurance premiums
Supervision & Management	5707.8	5583.3	(124.5)	The savings are due to post vacancies and a lower than anticipated contribution to the General Fund for Supporting People Services

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**5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Impact on Medium Term Financial Plan

- 5.1 The use of balances in the approved budget for 2009/10 was £264,042; the actual use is £206,028. The Council is therefore using £58,014 balances less than budgeted for.
- 5.2 The Medium Term Financial Plan for the next 3 years does not show any requirement for budget savings.

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Specific Reserves

5.3 The Council's current position regarding its specific reserves is as follows:-

	Balance at 31 March 2010 £'000
Housing Major repairs	0
Earmarked reserves:-	
Third party insurance	61
Community safety	5
Car loan scheme	6
Heming Road Enterprise Centre	45
Taxi Licensing	41
Public donations	98
Mercury emissions	240
Capital expenditure (General fund)	332
Concessionary fares	86
Job evaluation	600
Capital expenditure (HRA)	4,450
Ex SRB Trading Accounts	11
Youth Work	18
NEA Grant	2
Contaminated Land	1
IT Licenses	30
Land drainage	8
Planning	20
Town Centre Grant	53
	6,107

**6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

None Specific.

**7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

None Specific.

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**8. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

The Council needs to regularly monitor budgets against actual expenditure, this is to ensure it maintains a well managed organisation.

**9. RISK MANAGEMENT INCLUDING HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS**

There are no specific risks associated with the details included in this report

**10. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

- None Specific

**11. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- None Specific

**12. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS, PROCUREMENT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT**

- None Specific

**13. CLIMATE CHANGE, CARBON IMPLICATIONS AND BIODIVERSITY**

- None Specific

**14. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

- None Specific

**15. GOVERNANCE/PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- None Specific

**16. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS INCLUDING SECTION 17 OF CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998**

- None Specific

**17. HEALTH INEQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- None Specific

**18. LESSONS LEARNT**

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL****EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

16th June 2010

None specific

**19. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

None specific

**20. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Portfolio Holder	yes
Chief Executive	yes
Executive Director (S151 Officer)	yes
Executive Director – Leisure, Cultural, Environmental and Community Services	yes
Executive Director – Planning & Regeneration, Regulatory and Housing Services	yes
Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships	yes
Head of Service	yes
Head of Resources	yes
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	yes
Corporate Procurement Team	no

**21. WARDS AFFECTED**

All Wards

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**22. APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1 - Service Head Outturn (General Fund)
- Appendix 2 - Budget Savings Monitoring
- Appendix 3 - Housing Revenue Account Outturn
- Appendix 4 - Housing Repair Account

**23. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Available from Financial Services Manager.

**AUTHOR OF REPORT**

Name: Sam Morgan  
Email: sam.morgan@redditchbc.gov.uk  
Tel: 01527 64252 x 3790

**Budget Savings Monitoring**

	Target 2009/10	Actual 2009/10	Comments
	£'000	£'000	
Pitcheroak Golf Course	42.7	25.8	Income target not achieved due to weather
Shared Services	40.0		Savings from CCTV/Lifeline and IT will be realised in 2010/11. Approx £20k savings achieved from Community Safety – however this is out weighed by the additional costs of implementing other shared services.
Vacancy Management/Outturn savings*	325.0	1,035.1	
REDI	60.0	15.0	Transfer not implemented as planned
Printing	52.0	-	
Procurement	70.0	70.0	
Committee Services	14.0	0.0	Members are still receiving printed copies of reports
Benefits Subsidy	40.0	40.0	
Community Meeting Rooms	45.0	51.5	
Support Service Costs	25.0	-	To be added to vacancy savings
*including £200k already built into base budget	713.7	1237.4	





### Appendix1 - Service Head Outturn (General Fund)

Head of Service	Revised Budget	Profiled YTD Budget	YTD Actuals	Commitments	Actual +Commitments	Variance to date	Projected Outturn	Projected Outturn Variance
<b>Deputy Chief Executive</b>								
Corporate Management	639,290	639,290	759,381	0	759,381	120,091	759,381	120,091
Head Of Finance & Resources	1,006,090	1,006,090	738,607	0	738,607	-267,483	738,607	-267,483
Head Of Legal, Equal, & Democ.	593,020	593,020	348,166	0	348,166	-244,854	348,166	-244,854
Head Of Strategy & Partnership	1,606,532	1,606,532	1,394,423	0	1,394,423	-212,109	1,394,423	-212,109
<b>Directorate total</b>	<b>3,844,932</b>	<b>3,844,932</b>	<b>3,240,577</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3,240,577</b>	<b>-604,355</b>	<b>3,240,577</b>	<b>-604,355</b>
<b>Environment &amp; Planning</b>								
Head Of Environment	2,863,920	2,863,920	2,808,592	0	2,808,592	-55,328	2,808,592	-55,328
Head Of Human Resources & Comm	247,660	247,660	295,033	0	295,033	47,373	295,033	47,373
Head Of Operations	1,846,240	1,846,240	1,740,842	0	1,740,842	-105,398	1,740,842	-105,398
Head Of Planning & Regeneratio	883,930	883,930	824,663	0	824,663	-59,267	824,663	-59,267
<b>Directorate total</b>	<b>5,841,750</b>	<b>5,841,750</b>	<b>5,669,129</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5,669,129</b>	<b>-172,621</b>	<b>5,669,129</b>	<b>-172,621</b>
<b>Housing Services</b>								
Head Of Asset & Maintenance	65,530	65,530	64,818	0	64,818	-712	64,818	-712
Head Of Housing & Community	660,810	660,810	646,297	0	646,297	-14,513	646,297	-14,513
<b>Directorate total</b>	<b>726,340</b>	<b>726,340</b>	<b>711,115</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>711,115</b>	<b>-15,225</b>	<b>711,115</b>	<b>-15,225</b>
<b>Leisure Customer &amp; Bus Sup</b>								
Head Of Customer Services	54,130	54,130	48,143	0	48,143	-5,987	48,143	-5,987
Head Of Leisure & Cultural	3,178,690	3,178,690	3,288,742	0	3,288,742	110,052	3,288,742	110,052
<b>Directorate total</b>	<b>3,232,820</b>	<b>3,232,820</b>	<b>3,336,885</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3,336,885</b>	<b>104,065</b>	<b>3,336,885</b>	<b>104,065</b>
<b>Net Directorate total</b>	<b>13,645,842</b>	<b>13,645,842</b>	<b>12,957,706</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12,957,706</b>	<b>-688,136</b>	<b>12,957,706</b>	<b>-688,136</b>



<b>Appendix 3 -Housing Revenue Account Outturn Summary</b>
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	Revised budget	YTD Actuals	Variance
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**Hra Expenditure**

Depreciation & Item 8 Debit	4,004,070	4,060,769	56,699
Hra Repairs & Maint	3,955,940	4,005,454	49,514
Neg Subsidy Transfer To Dclg	6,167,830	5,929,462	-238,368
Provision For Bad Debts	125,000	143,408	18,408
Rents, Rates, Taxes & Oth Chgs	220,110	144,113	-75,997
Supervision And Management	5,707,770	5,583,250	-124,520
<b>Hra Expenditure</b>	<b>20,180,720</b>	<b>19,866,456</b>	<b>-314,264</b>

**Hra Income**

Dwelling Rents	-19,280,170	-19,265,213	14,957
Non Dwelling Rents	-567,410	-507,321	60,089
Services & Facilities	-174,090	-191,940	-17,850
<b>Hra Income</b>	<b>-20,021,670</b>	<b>-19,964,474</b>	<b>57,196</b>

**Hra Interest Receivable**

Interest Receivable	-78,500	-14,180	64,320
<b>Hra Interest Receivable</b>	<b>-78,500</b>	<b>-14,180</b>	<b>64,320</b>

<b>(Surplus)/Deficit on service</b>	<b>80,550</b>	<b>-112,199</b>	<b>-192,749</b>
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<b>Appendix 4-Housing Repairs Account Outturn Summary</b>
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	Revised budget	YTD Actuals	Variance
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### Hra Repairs Expenditure

Administration	297,430	184,319	-113,111
Programmed Maintenance	749,920	841,569	91,649
Projects	100,000	101,268	1,268
Rechargeable Works	-5,000	-23,287	-18,287
Response Maintenance	1,954,750	2,075,345	120,595
Voids	858,840	826,240	-32,600
<b>Hra Repairs Expenditure</b>	<b>3,955,940</b>	<b>4,005,454</b>	<b>49,514</b>

### Hra Repairs Income

Contribution From Hra	-3,955,940	-4,005,454	-49,514
<b>Hra Repairs Income</b>	<b>-3,955,940</b>	<b>-4,005,454</b>	<b>-49,514</b>

<b>Balance at 31 March 2010</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>
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**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL****EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

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**BENEFITS IMPROVEMENT PLAN –  
QUARTERLY MONITORING JANUARY TO MARCH 2010**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Michael Braley
Relevant Head of Service	Head of Finance and Resources
Non-Key Decision	

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

To advise Members on the performance of the Benefits Service during the third quarter and to provide an update on progress against the Benefits Service Improvement Plan.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that  
subject to any comments, the report be noted,**

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 The Benefits Service Improvement Plan was developed in response to the Audit Commission Inspection in February 2009.

3.2 Work is progressing towards the aims of the improvement plan. The Performance Development Team (PDT) from the Department for Work and Pensions has been working with the Benefits Service to help implement the recommendations from the Audit Commission inspection. In particular they are looking at helping to improve overpayment recovery, devise a Take Up Strategy, improve access to the service and performance management.

**4. KEY ISSUES****Claims Performance**

4.1 There are two national Indicators for the Benefits Service.

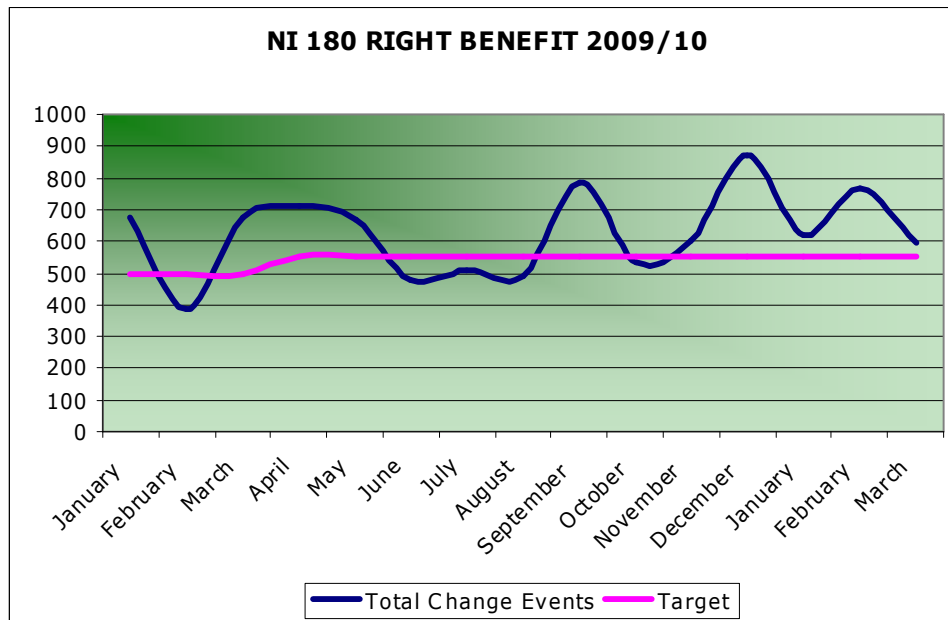
NI 180 Right Benefit – this measures the number of change events identified and actioned – a target of identifying 550 changes each month was set and the average for the quarter was 660 per month. Over the year a total of 7642 changes were identified. This being made up of 2807 reductions 2693 cancellations and 2142 increases, with an average per month of 637.

The DWP have grouped together authorities with a similar expected

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL****EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

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number of changes and Redditch identified 1.84 changes per customer compared to the group average of 1.58 changes per customer.

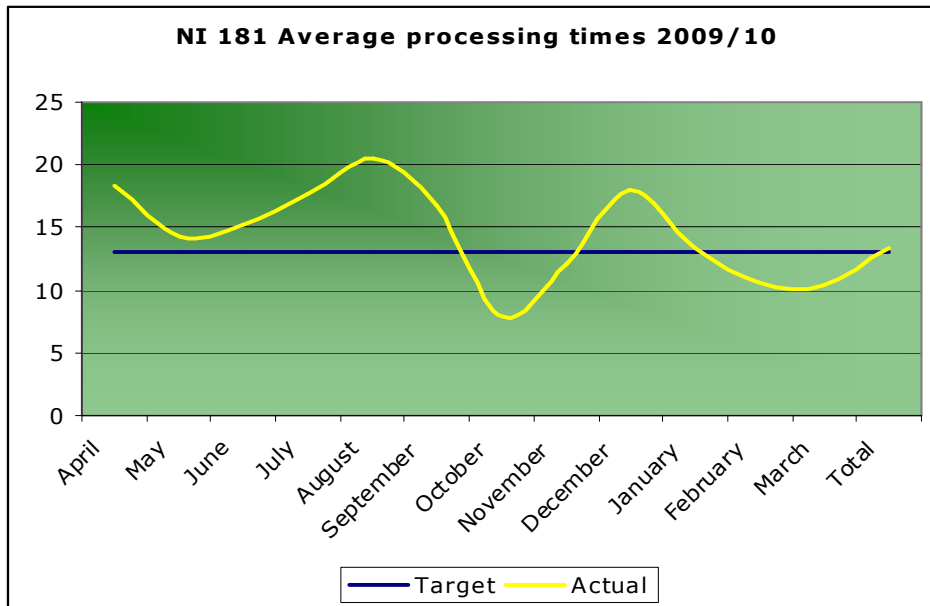


- 4.2 NI 181 – this is a measure of the average number of days taken to process new claims and changes in circumstances. An average of 13 days was set as a target and the average for the year was 13 days. The final quarter performance was 11 days, the table below compares local performance against national data. The national data is based on monthly DWP data extractions – unfortunately Redditch data was not included in the national figures and the data has been collated directly from the Benefit processing system.



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**2009/10**  
**Average processing times**

	National Average*	RBC Quarter 4	RBC YTD
Combined	14	11	13
New claims	25	25	29
Change Events	11	9	10

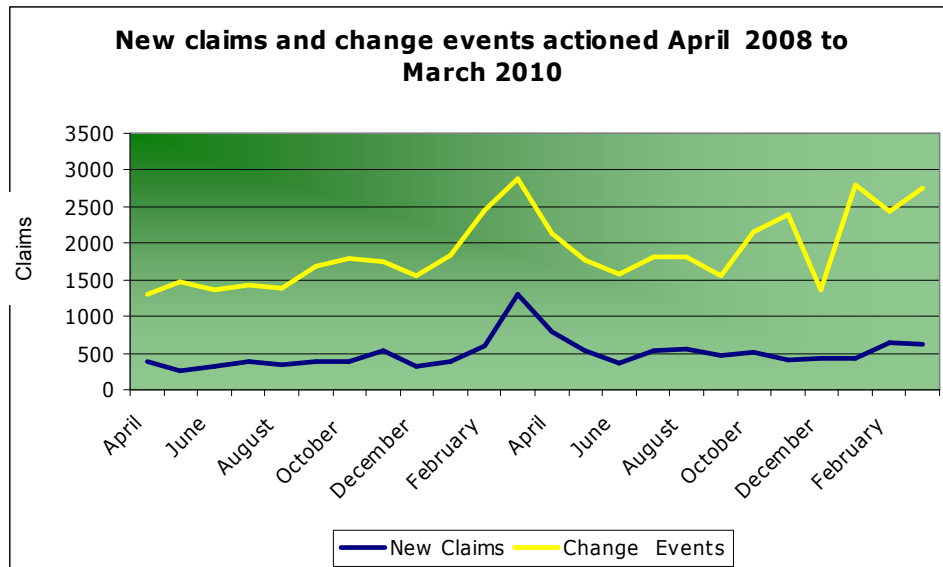
National average as at end of Quarter 2 2009/10

**Case-load and Claims received**

- 4.3 The number of claims received increased in the quarter with 1194 new claim forms being received compared with 1017 in the previous quarter. The caseload also increased to 8117 up from 7831 at the end of the previous quarter. There were further increases in the numbers of new claims and change events processed. A total of 7978 change events were worked on in the quarter compared to 5913 in the previous quarter. 1676 new claims were decided compared to 1345 previously.

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**4.4 Local Indicators**

The Benefits Services also monitors a range of other performance data including the percentage of claims decided within 14 days. The current year target is to decide 85% of claims within 14 days. Between January and March 2010 93% of new claims were dealt with within 14 days of being able to make a decision.

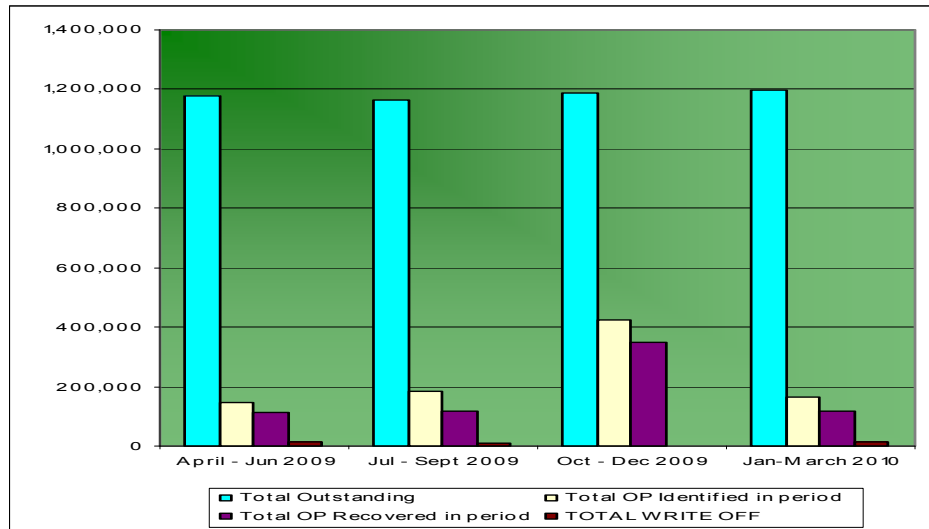
**4.5 Overpayment recovery**

Outstanding overpayments at the beginning of the quarter increased to £1,197,616 but in the context of increasing claim numbers this may not be unexpected. New dedicated recovery post recruited and receiving training.

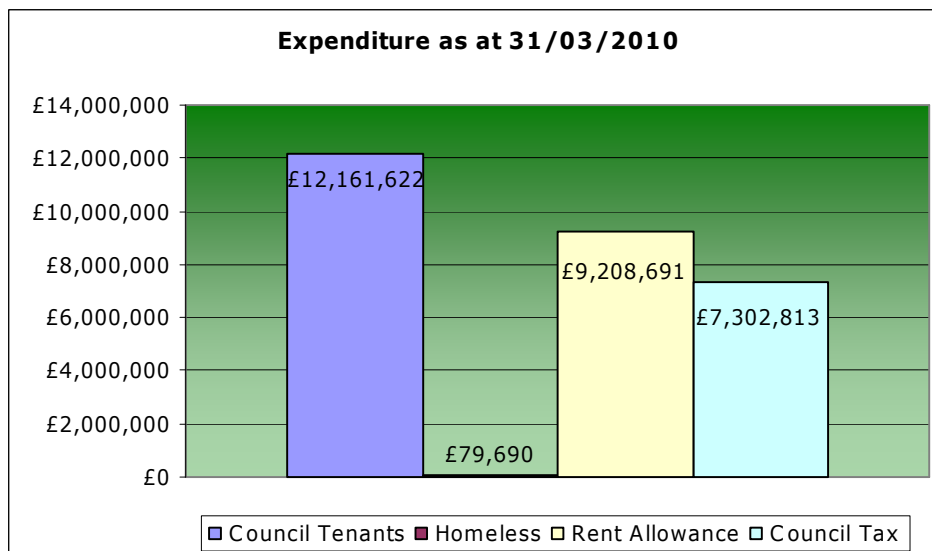
New overpayments totalling £166,215 were identified and £116,139 was recovered in the quarter.

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL****EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

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- 4.6 Full subsidy should be payable on Local Authority Error overpayments as they remained below threshold. Only £85,052 or 0.31% of qualifying expenditure has been treated as Local Authority error. Total expenditure on Benefit payments increased by about £1.5 million compared to the previous year ending at £28,752,816.



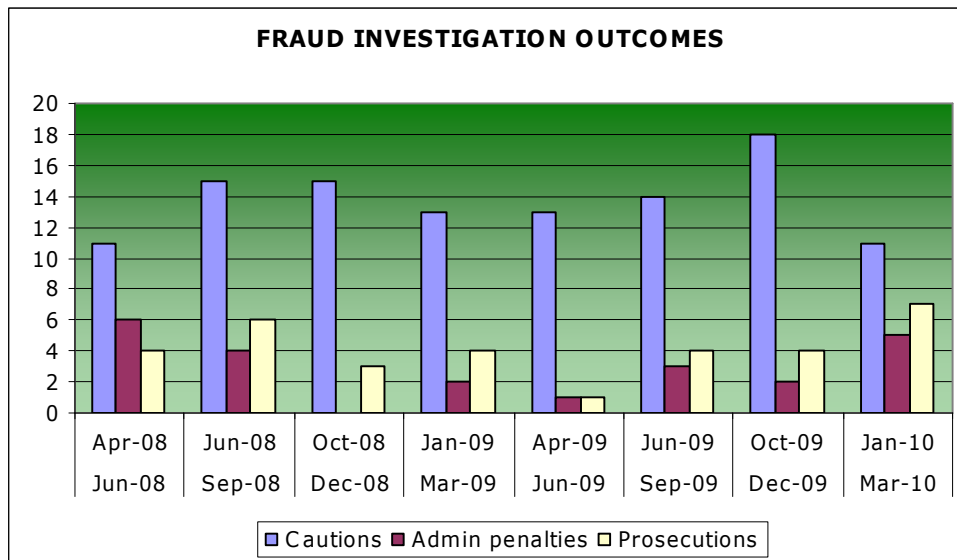
Local Authorities receive a grant to cover all overpayments attributed to Local Authority delay or error as long as the total does not exceed 0.48% of qualifying expenditure (qualifying expenditure in this case being expenditure which qualifies for 100% subsidy).

## 4.7 Counter Fraud work

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL****EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

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In the quarter 295 cases where fraud was suspected were referred to the Investigations team, and 11 Cautions and 5 Administration penalties were issued. 7 cases were identified as being suitable for prosecution.

**Improvement plan**

- 4.8 Work is progressing towards the aims of the improvement plan. The Performance Development Team (PDT) from the Department of Work and Pensions worked with the Benefits Service to help implement the recommendations from the Audit Commission inspection. In particular the main areas to be improved are the management and collection of overpaid Housing Benefit, adopting a Take-Up strategy, accessibility of the service and setting challenging service standards and performance targets.
- 4.9 The overpayment recovery process has been mapped and a new Overpayments Officer appointed.
- 4.10 A Take-Up strategy has been created to help local people maximise their income. Consultation has taken place with stakeholders such as the Job Centre Plus, Age Concern and Citizens Advice Bureau. Various activities and events are scheduled to promote take-up.
- 4.11 Service users have been asked their views on aspects of service provision and the service is working closer with voluntary and community organisations.

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- 4.12 Service standards set, monitored and reported to customers – available from web site and from Customer Service Centre.
- 4.13 Detailed training plan developed to show objective of training and how effectiveness measured.
- 4.14 The latest position regarding the Benefits Improvement Plan has been included at Appendix 1.

**5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no specific financial implications.

**6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no specific legal implications.

**7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no specific policy implications

**8. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

Enterprising Community  
Safe  
Well Managed Organisation

**9. RISK MANAGEMENT INCLUDING HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS**

Without adequate performance monitoring arrangements there is a risk that the planned / required improvements in the Benefits Service will not be achieved. In addition without an effective recovery procedures for over allowed Housing Benefit the Council will forego the ability to pursue debt recovery procedures with a consequential loss of income to the Council.

**10. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

None identified

**11. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

None identified

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**12. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS, PROCUREMENT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT**

None identified

**13. CLIMATE CHANGE, CARBON IMPLICATIONS AND BIODIVERSITY**

None Identified

**14. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

None

**15. GOVERNANCE/PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

None identified

**16. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS INCLUDING SECTION 17 OF CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998**

None identified

**17. HEALTH INEQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

None identified

**18. LESSONS LEARNT**

The Performance Development Team are as useful source of learning for the Benefits Service.

**19. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

The Benefits Service has worked with stakeholders to identify key service improvements and has undertaken a range of stakeholder engagements.

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL****EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

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**20. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Portfolio Holder	No
Chief Executive	Yes
Executive Director (S151 Officer)	Yes
Executive Director – Leisure, Cultural, Environmental and Community Services	Yes
Executive Director – Planning & Regeneration, Regulatory and Housing Services	Yes
Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships	Yes
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Resources	Yes
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	No
Corporate Procurement Team	No

**21. WARDS AFFECTED**

Not ward specific.

**22. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Position Statement – Benefits Service Improvement Plan as at March 2010

**23. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Audit Commission inspection report.

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**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**16th June 2010**

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**AUTHOR OF REPORT**

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Tel: 01527 64252 extension3295



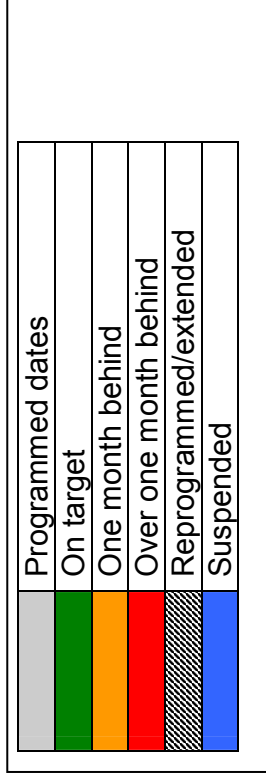
**Key Objective WM8:**

To produce and deliver on an Improvement Plan for the Benefits Service that delivers a Benefits Service that is responsive to customer needs

**Monthly Progress Update**

**Owner :** Head of Finance, Revenues & Benefits

**Date:** March 2010



Ref.	Action	Lead	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Comment / Corrective Action
<b>25.1 (R1)</b>	<b>Improve the management and collection of all Housing Benefit overpayments.</b> Approval to combine recovery of overpaid HB in the HB section with the creation of a new post dedicated to this role. Ongoing Performance Development Team support to develop procedures. Target date January 2010 for transfer of debts from Income Recovery.														
R1a	Reviewing the roles and responsibilities for recovery.	David Taylor/ Jane Bough													COMPLETE
R1b	Ensure that the resources needed are made available.	David Taylor/ Jane Bough													COMPLETE Overpayment officer post in place.
R1c	Reviewing debts and improving procedures for recovery, monitoring and management.	David Taylor/ Jane Bough													Three month extension requested to complete improved procedures.

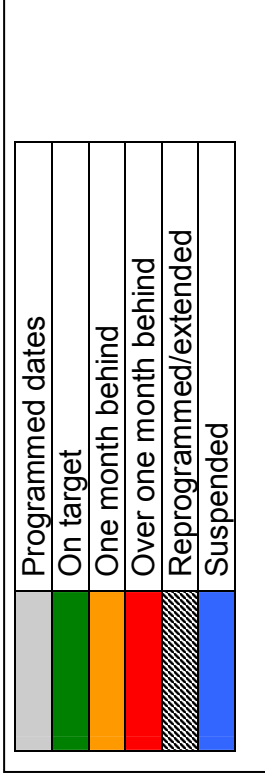
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**Monthly Progress Update**

**Owner :** Head of Finance, Revenues & Benefits

**Date:** March 2010



Ref.	Action	Lead	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Comment / Corrective Action
R1d	Review the write off policies and procedure.	David Riley		On target	On target	On target	On target	On target	On target	On target	On target	On target	Ongoing process expanded from revenues only review to encompass all services. Draft policy being prepared.
R1e	Effective prevention work to reduce overpayments arising, particularly LA Error overpayment.	David Taylor		On target	On target	On target	On target	On target	On target	On target	On target	On target	COMPLETE Weekly measures in place to monitor with monthly reporting.
R1f	Improve information sent to customers so that underlying entitlement can be established.	Sandra Maddox		On target	On target	On target	On target	On target	On target	On target	On target	On target	COMPLETE Customer letter updated, reminder to staff made, new overpayment post to check that all debtors have had underlying entitlement applied. Leaflet issued in all cases where underlying entitlement can be calculated.

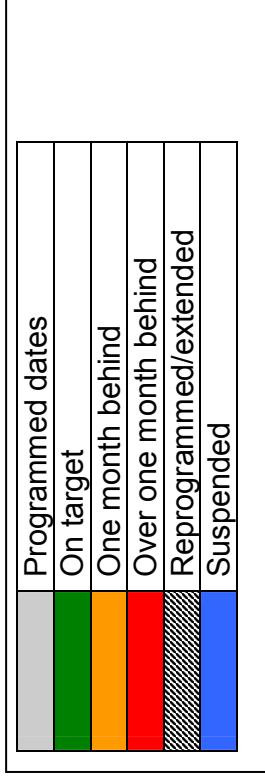
**Key Objective WM8:**

To produce and deliver on an Improvement Plan for the Benefits Service that delivers a Benefits Service that is responsive to customer needs

**Monthly Progress Update**

**Owner :** Head of Finance, Revenues & Benefits

**Date:** March 2010



Ref.	Action	Lead	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Comment / Corrective Action
R1g	Need for an embedded mechanism to ensure that all debtors already on the sundry debtors system can be identified if they reclaim benefit.	Vicki Lewis David Taylor											Partially Complete - Report already written to identify invoices where HB reclaimed. Will become embedded when the debts are transferred.
R1h	Overall profile of the historic debt is not reported or regularly monitored.	Mandy Vernon/ Sandra Maddox											As above will be complete once post in place and debts transferred.
R1i	Create a SMART plan to improve overpayment recovery.	David Taylor											Smart plan to be finalised when post in place. With new post there will be more than double the resources devoted to recovery of these debts.

**25.2 (R2)** **Increase income levels of the poorest parts of the community by adopting a Take-Up Strategy.** Stakeholders identified and roles defined, work ongoing with Performance Development Team to develop strategy to include dates in respect of activities and event. Officer began w/c 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2010



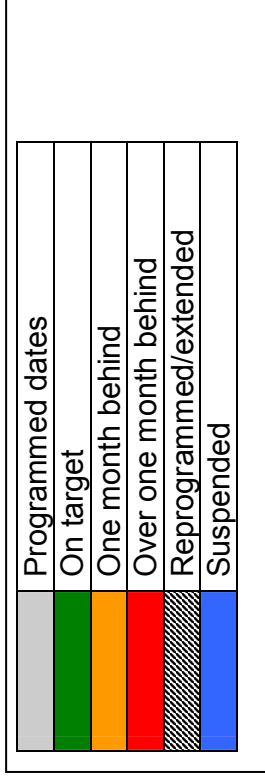
**Key Objective WM8:**

To produce and deliver on an Improvement Plan for the Benefits Service that delivers a Benefits Service that is responsive to customer needs

**Monthly Progress Update**

**Owner :** Head of Finance, Revenues & Benefits

**Date:** March 2010



Ref.	Action	Lead	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Comment / Corrective Action
R3a	Seek customer and internal and external stakeholders' views for consideration in the design of the Service, to ensure it meets their needs.	David Taylor													COMPLETE Income Maximisation Group and RSL views sought. Customer survey complete for quarter. Staff and other internal stakeholders have been consulted.
R3b	Jointly working with public sector, voluntary and community organisations locally to improve the delivery of service	David Taylor													COMPLETE Closer working with Age Concern agreed – Income Maximisation posts to work from Age Concern offices part of the week to help complete DLA and AA forms. Accommodation problems prevent this from happening currently with CAB but other closer working to be investigated – i.e. e-mail referrals for debt advice.

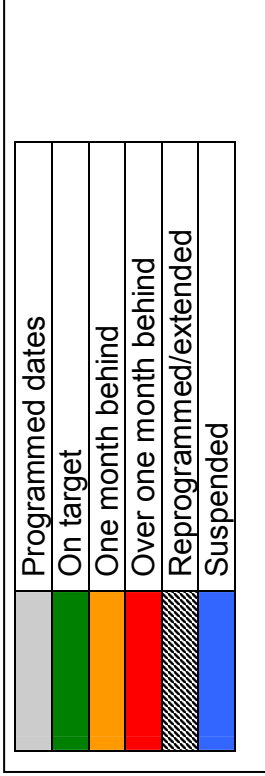
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**Monthly Progress Update**

**Owner :** Head of Finance, Revenues & Benefits

**Date:** March 2010



Ref.	Action	Lead	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Comment / Corrective Action
R3c	Develop relationship with Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) including verification.	David Taylor											COMPLETE Quarterly meetings being held with RSL's. SLA with Redditch Co-Op Housing complete - verification to commence April 2010
R3d	Understanding and addressing the needs of disabled persons and vulnerable groups.	David Taylor											COMPLETE Income Maximisation posts to identify any problems. Take-up strategy has specific action to support this.
R3e	Promote the appointments system and home visits facility.	David Taylor/ Lynn Jones											COMPLETE Information about appointments and home visits included in adverts and already raised with RSL and private landlord groups.
<b>25.4 (R4)</b>	<b>Ensure challenging service standards and performance targets are in place, that are relevant to customers needs.</b> Service Plan in place. Action plans for the delivery of service standards delayed. Consultation with stakeholders started and customers to be involved via survey and/or participation group ready for inclusion in next years plans.												







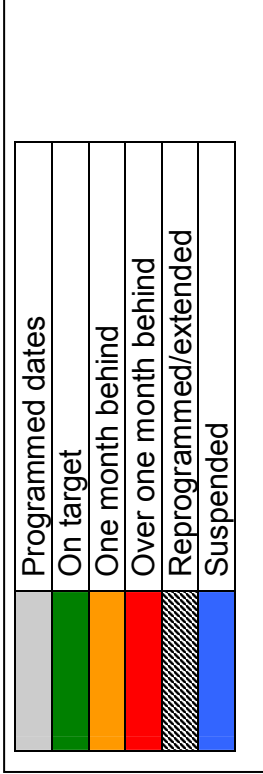
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R5a	Improve claim processing performance.	Kerry Herbert				Green	Green	Orange	Orange	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Average processing time has been further improved to 10 days for March (National Average is 14 days according to latest DWP data) New lean ways of working have been a factor in the improvement.
R5b	Improve accuracy rate to above average performance.	Kerry Herbert				Green	Orange	Red	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Three month extension requested – no national figures collected anymore but enhanced work checking needs to be introduced – looking at capacity to move post away from processing to carry out work checking.
R5c	Improve Appeals performance in meeting its targets. The published target is to make a submission to the Tribunals Service within 28 days.	Sandra Maddox				Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Orange	Red	Green	28 day target met in Feb 10. March data yet to be finalised.



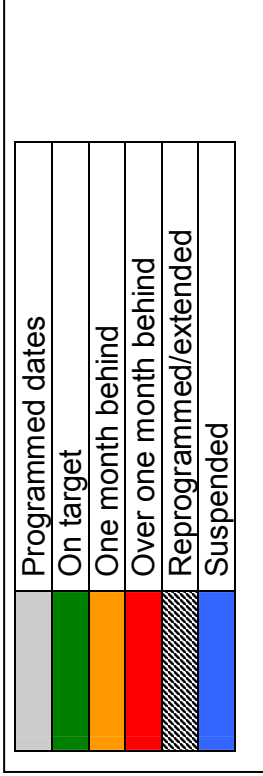
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R6b	Service Plan to be supported by a detailed action plan that identifies key activities, responsibilities and measures of success that can be recognised by customers. These should address problem areas and have specific and measurable targets, linked to staff objectives.	David Taylor													Action plans to be completed once service plan has been finalised. Six week extension requested.
R6c	Involve staff in setting future priorities and objectives for the Service, to shape the immediate future of the Service.	David Taylor/Teresa Kristunas													COMPLETE Staff have been involved in setting new priorities and objectives for 2010/11.

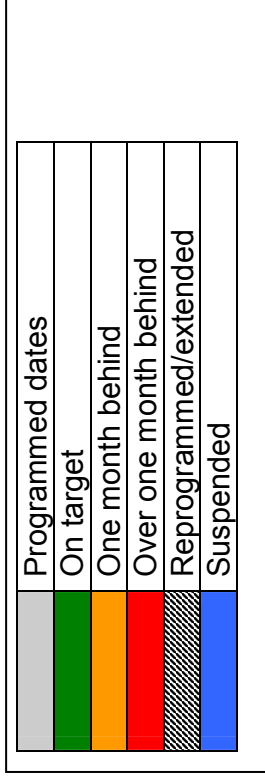
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Ref.	Action	Lead	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Comment / Corrective Action
R6d	The Service should specifically acknowledge how it will support and contribute to the priorities of the Worcestershire LAA; reducing the proportion of children in poverty, increasing the number of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living and successful new claims generated for Pension Credit, Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance.	David Taylor/Teresa Kristunas													<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>New Service plan (due April 2010) will directly link to these themes.</p> <p>Staff have been consulted and draft Service Plan 2010-11 in process.</p> <p>Income Maximisation Officer posts to help with new claims for AA and DLA and Child Tax Credit.</p> <p>Take up strategy completed.</p>

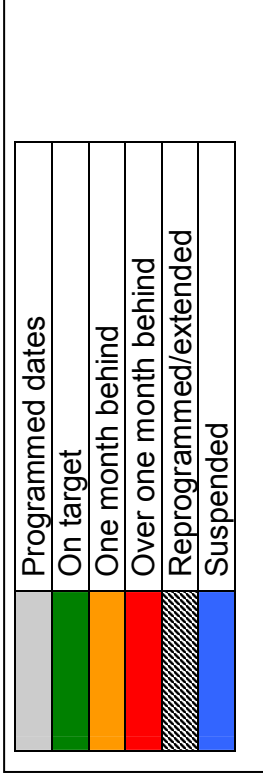
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**Date:** March 2010



Ref.	Action	Lead	Performance Management Data in support of performance targets for individual members of staff still being compiled – Performance Development Team (PDT) supporting.												Comment / Corrective Action			
			April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar				
R7a	The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is not sufficiently involved in overseeing the management of performance. There should be a greater emphasis on performance analysis against existing policies and obligations rather than future policy development. Increase the role of the Portfolio Holder in performance management	David Taylor/Teresa Kristunas																There is now regular feedback on performance and the portfolio holder has an increased role through new performance management framework. Referred back to O and S by Executive for their comment.
R7b	Improve Performance management arrangements at service level. Introduce staff performance appraisals and individual or team targets for processing staff. Measure productivity systematically. Embed new performance management.	David Taylor																Data analysed to set individual targets. Feedback given to processing staff on their current performance.

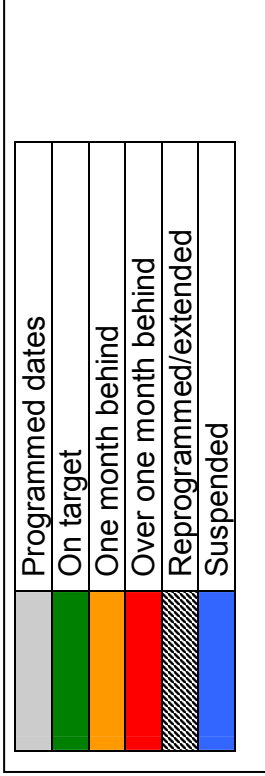
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Ref.	Action	Lead	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Comment / Corrective Action
R7c	Limited up to date management information is available to senior managers and Councillors to assess variations in performance	David Taylor/Teresa Kristunas				Green	Green	Green	Red	Red	Grey				COMPLETE
R7d	Introduce regular reporting of current performance to customers against either the corporate Customer Service Standards or the Service targets.	David Taylor/Lynn Jones				Green	Green	Green	Red	Green	Hatched				COMPLETE Website, OSS TV screen and noticeboard in T/Hall updated to show performance data for 2009-10.  New performance measures for 2010-11 will be shown from May 2010 (April Data)



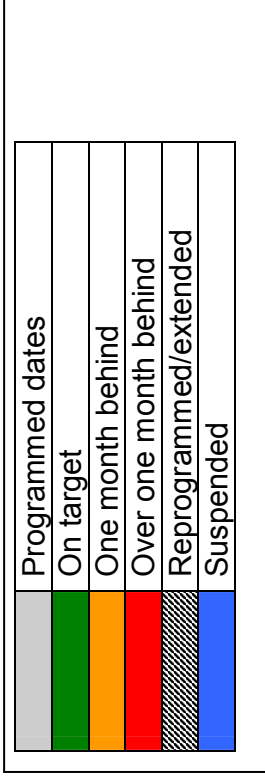
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R8a	Information provided is not easy for customers to understand and does not help claimants to provide all of the evidence required, leading to excessive appeals and reconsiderations. Customers are providing evidence after the decision date which is resulting in a change to the decision.	David Taylor											Work underway, including telephoning customers for more information or queries and advising to provide information within 7 days of claim receipt. This will reduce the number of decision changes. Not due until May 2010
R8b	Increase understanding of the reasons for the high number of unsuccessful and defective (incomplete) claims	David Taylor											COMPLETE Analysis of defective claims complete. New method (above) being trialled to reduce number of defective claims.
<b>25.9 (R9)</b>	<b>Customer led Improvement</b> On target – not due till later in the year.												
R9a	The Service does not systematically measure customer satisfaction on an ongoing basis.	David Taylor											COMPLETE Customer satisfaction survey completed.





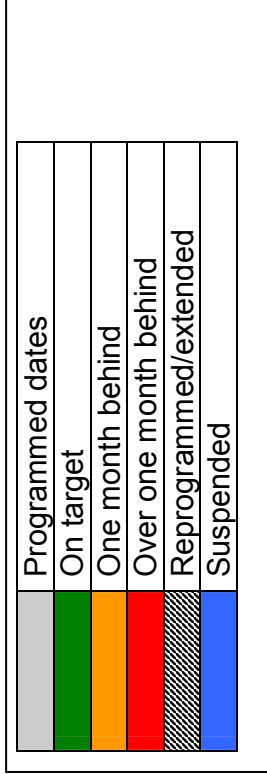
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R10a	Improve telephone access. Calls put on hold or not answered at all. Customer service staff unable to contact Benefits quickly to ask for detailed advice. There is no systematic monitoring of abandoned calls.	David Taylor/ Lynn Jones				Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Monthly monitoring of telephones data commenced – more detailed reports to be investigated.
R10b	The appointments system in the Benefits Service is not operating effectively and it is difficult for users of the One Stop Shop to meet face to face with benefits assessors.	David Taylor/ Lynn Jones					Red	Red	Red	Yellow	Red	Green	Green	Green	Appointments promoted. SLA to be revised to set out when Benefit staff should meet with Customer Service staff. Outline discussed with Lynn Jones 03/02/10.
R10c	Leaflets and forms are not readily available in the One Stop Shops. Customers have to request them.	David Taylor/ Lynn Jones					Yellow	Red	Red	Yellow	Red	Green	Green	Green	COMPLETE Leaflets & forms readily available in self-service area and a benefit notice board in TH OSS  Website contains forms for download and advice for customers, including an electronic claim form.

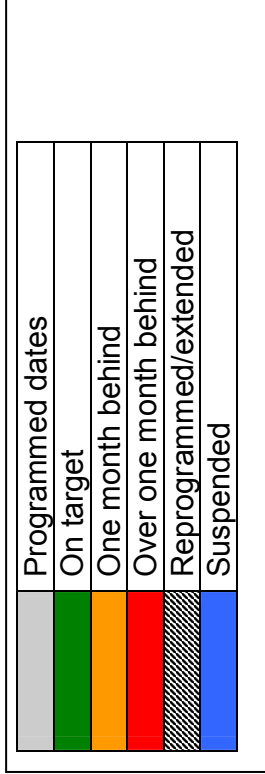
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R10d	Benefits Service has not yet identified its hard to reach groups. Not due till July 2010.	David Taylor											Not due until July 2010
R10e	The Service has not formally assessed whether all users have fair and equal access to the Service and its policies.	David Taylor											Linked to completion of Equalities Impact Assessment. New e-claim form has ethnicity and disability monitoring reports included.
R10f	Some vulnerable claimants are receiving a slower service than other claimants.	David Taylor											Original target date of Nov 2009 missed – Income Maximisation posts to identify any problems.
<b>25.11 (R11)</b>	<b>Value for Money</b> Work ongoing. Some comparators obtained continuing to source others.												
R11a	Demonstrate improved outcomes that have arisen from actively exploring opportunities to work in partnership to deliver financial efficiencies	David Taylor/Teresa Kristunas											Shared Service agenda Shared training with Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest.

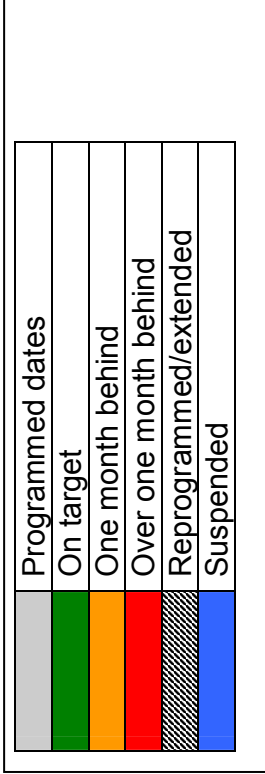
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R11b	The Benefits Services' net cost per head of population is lower than average and satisfaction is higher than average, but processing times are slow when compared to its statistical nearest neighbours.	David Taylor/Teresa Kristunas													COMPLETE DWP data now published and standing agenda item for County Managers Group for bench marking. Regular Further comparative analysis to be undertaken.
R11c	Compare costs to other services, calculate unit costs and seek to evaluate cost effectiveness.	David Taylor													Delays getting detailed costs together and persuading other authorities to share data – County group to exchange performance information quarterly from April 2010 . Three month extension requested.

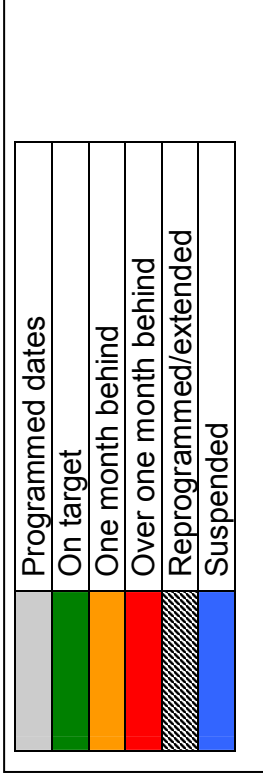
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R11d	Create robust proposals for delivering efficiency savings. Identify areas for efficiency savings that are cash-able and sustainable.	David Taylor											Shared service. E-claim form and BACS take-up.
R11e	Future investment proposals should demonstrate an awareness of linking improvement in performance to value for money	David Taylor/Teresa Kristunas											COMPLETE Evaluating performance improvements that may be possible before purchasing additional software
<b>25.12 (R12)</b>	<b>Training</b> Work ongoing, due later in year.												
R12a	Develop a training plan that gives clear details of the cost of training, what the objective of the training is, or how its effectiveness will be determined. Create a transparent and prioritised system for identifying individuals who need particular training.	Kerry Herbert / Sandra Maddox/ Shona Knight											COMPLETE Overarching training plan has been drafted. On target for April 2010.
<b>25.13 (R13)</b>	<b>System and System Reports</b>	Local Authority error on target – only partial improvement on other areas due to capacity.											Due later in year.

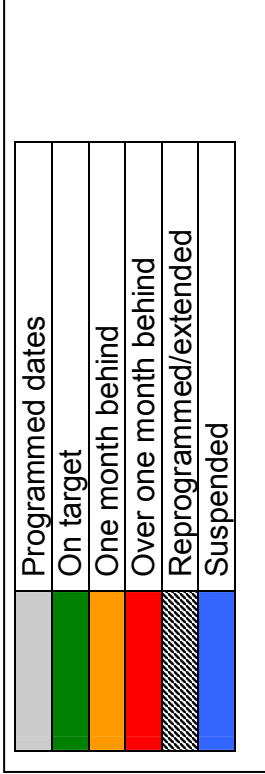
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Ref.	Action	Lead	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Comment / Corrective Action
R13a	Improve data assurance in the process for compiling the performance indicators.	David Taylor /Sandra Maddox													Review of roles delayed – capacity issue – intended to move processing officer into Controls team to support this area.

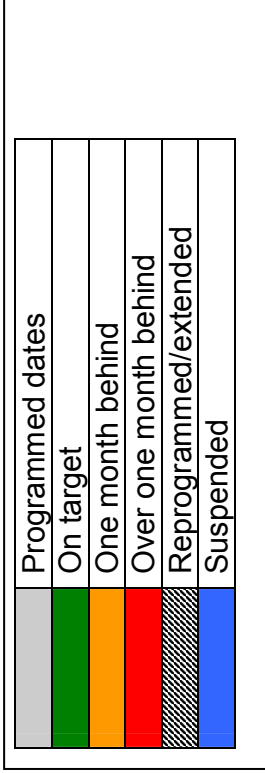
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Ref.	Action	Lead	Month	Comment / Corrective Action
R13b	Improve HB/CTB Subsidy Claim processes. Introduce testing of software releases and regular testing of claim accuracy during the year to ensure that subsidy calculation is accurate.	David Taylor / Ian Sprout	May	
			June	
			July	
			Aug	
			Sep	
			Oct	
			Nov	
			Dec	
			Jan	
			Feb	
			Mar	
				LA error on target and tested – only limited improvement elsewhere. Previous year audit qualified and additional testing may be required by DWP – Capacity issue to be looked at as part of review of how teams organised within the service. Look at options to provide more dedicated resource – pay IBS to carry out checks, work with another authority or use existing staff. Three month extension requested.

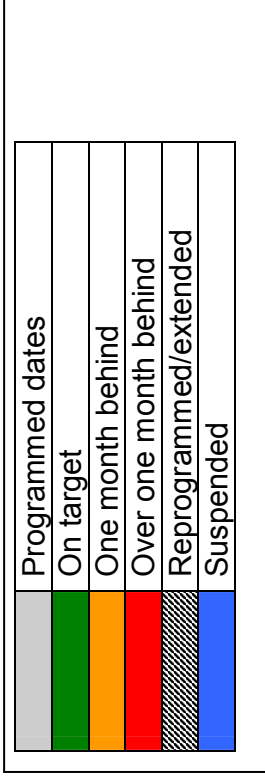
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Ref.	Action	Lead	Month	Comment / Corrective Action
R13c	IBS and Anite are not being used to best effect.	David Taylor / Micki Lewis	June	Not due until 2010 but any areas identified for quick wins implemented – NVQ project to improve Anite letter requesting further information – standardised paragraphs to save time and ask for consistent information. Investigating input of forms directly into processing software to avoid typing in names and addresses etc.
			July	
			Aug	
			Sep	
			Oct	
			Nov	
			Dec	
			Jan	
			Feb	
			Mar	
			April	
			May	



REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE  
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16 June 2010

**QUARTERLY MONITORING OF FORMAL COMPLAINTS AND  
COMPLIMENTS - JANUARY TO MARCH 2010 (4<sup>th</sup> Quarter)**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Michael Braley
Relevant Head of Service	Head of Customer Services
Non-Key Decision	

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 This report provides a view on aspects of the Council's Formal Complaints Procedure. It shows the numbers of complaints at each Stage (Formal, Complaint Appeal and Ombudsman) whether they were responded to on target and what has been learnt/service improvements that have been made.
- 1.2 The report also shows the compliments recorded during the same period and details the Ombudsman Enquiry response times and outcomes.
- 1.3 This report provides Members with an opportunity to review the Council's performance for quarter 4 of the 2009/10 financial year and to comment upon it.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that**

**subject to the Committee's comments, the report on complaints and compliments for the period January to March 2010 be noted.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Council's Formal Complaints Procedure has the following stages:

<b>Stage 1</b> Formal Complaint	Relevant Director/Head of Service for that service areas responds. Target for response 10 working days.
<b>Stage 2</b> Complaint Appeal	Chief Executive investigates and responds. Target for response 10 working days.
<b>Stage 3</b> Member Complaint Appeal	Panel of Members consider complaint. Committee Services respond on Panel's behalf. No target set for response time.
<b>Ombudsman</b>	Chief Executive investigates and responds. Target of 28 working days (set by Ombudsman)

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- 3.2 Quarterly reporting is intended to drive improvement based on organisational need and local priorities.

**4. KEY ISSUES**

Basis of Quarterly Reporting

- 4.1 The report sets out the statistical details of Formal Complaints, Complaint Appeals, Member Complaint Appeals and Ombudsman Enquiries.
- 4.2 It was reported in the 1st quarter monitoring that only 50% of Formal Complaints (Stage 1) and Complaint Appeals (Stage 2) were responded to on time. The response time target is 10 working days. Officers have pursued an improvement in this area and actions have been successful. Response times for the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter increased to 74% on target for Stage 1 and 80% for Stage 2 complaints. For the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter response times increased again, to 92% on target for Stage 1 and 86% for Stage 2 complaints. During the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter the Stage 1 complaints remained at 92% responded to on target. For Stage 2 complaints, although only two were received only one (50%) was responded on target. The one that was not responded to on target was a very complicated landscaping case requiring a lot of investigation / detail from officers and was sent 3 days after the due date although a holding letter, advising the complainant it would be late, was sent.
- 4.3 The outturn for the whole year was 75% of Stage 1 responded to on target and 74% of Stage 2 complaints responded to on target. This is the first year that monitoring has been done so will provide a baseline for future years.
- 4.4 The Audit Commission monitors the Ombudsman Response times and these are used in Audit Commission reports/reviews including Direction of Travel and Service Reviews.
- 4.5 The Ombudsman Response times had improved from 28 days at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter to 25 days at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter. They remained at 25 days during the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter.

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- 4.6 The Ombudsman Response times have improved greatly over the past few years, following efforts by officers, although 2009/10 was not as good as the previous year but still within the Ombudsman's own target of 28 days.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Enquiries</b>	<b>RBC average days</b>
06/07	8	39.6 days
07/08	6	26.7 days
08/09	5	14.6 days
09/10	6	25 days

**5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Poor performance may have an impact on the financial position of the authority.

**6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

No particular legal issues arising from this report – any legal issues arising from complaints or compliments are dealt with on a case by case basis.

**7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

No particular issues arising from this report – any policy issues arising from complaints or compliments are dealt with on a case by case basis.

**8. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

Well Managed Organisation

**9. RISK MANAGEMENT INCLUDING HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS**

Without analysing the Council's complaints or compliments the Council cannot identify whether there are any patterns to complaints / compliments which need to be addressed and any lessons learned in order to improve the Council performance and service to the Customer.

**10. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

Without analysing the Council's complaints or compliments the Council cannot identify whether there are any patterns to complaints / compliments which need to be addressed and any lessons learned in order to improve the Council performance and service to the Customer.

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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11. **EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

None Specific.

12. **VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS, PROCUREMENT AND ASSET  
MANAGEMENT**

None Specific.

13. **CLIMATE CHANGE, CARBON IMPLICATIONS AND BIODIVERSITY**

None Specific.

14. **HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

None Specific.

15. **GOVERNANCE/PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

None Specific.

16. **COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS INCLUDING SECTION 17 OF  
CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998**

None Specific.

17. **HEALTH INEQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

None Specific.

18. **LESSONS LEARNT**

See Appendix One and Four.

19. **COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

None Specific.

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL****EXECUTIVE  
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**20. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Portfolio Holder	No
Chief Executive	Yes
Executive Director (S151 Officer)	Yes
Executive Director – Leisure, Cultural, Environmental and Community Services	Yes
Executive Director – Planning & Regeneration, Regulatory and Housing Services	Yes
Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships	Yes
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Resources	Yes
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	Yes
Corporate Procurement Team	Yes

**21. WARDS AFFECTED**

All Wards

**22. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1	Monitoring data 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter (January – March 2010)
Appendix 2	Quarterly Complaints Statistics
Appendix 3	Quarterly Compliments Statistics
Appendix 4	What has been learnt and Service Improvements

**23. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The details to support the information provided within this report are held by Chief Executive/Directors/Personal Assistants.

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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**16 June 2010**

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24. **KEY**

None

**AUTHOR OF REPORT**

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E Mail: [susan.tasker@redditchbc.gov.uk](mailto:susan.tasker@redditchbc.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01527 53400 ext 3299

**APPENDIX 1**  
**COMPLAINTS MONITORING**  
**January - March 2009-10 (4<sup>th</sup> Quarter)**

**Formal Complaints (Stage 1)**

	Number of complaints	Target met (response within 10 working days)	Complaint Justified	Complaint Partly Justified	Complaint Not Justified	Still awaiting response from officers (whether justified or not)
1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	18	9 (50%)	3	5	10	-
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	23	17 (74%)	2	7	10	4
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	25	23 (92%)	14	7	4	
4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	12	11 (92%)	4	6	2	
Outturn Full year	78	60 (76%)				

**Details of those Justified or Partly Justified:**

Service	Nature of Complaint	Justified/ Partly Justified	Action Taken or explanation	Service Improvement
One Stop Shop	Complaint about waiting times.	Partly	This was an unusual day due to the heavy snow fall and normal staffing arrangements changed due to staff leaving early to travel home safely, however, we continued to provide a reduced face to face service.	Re-evaluate the options in extreme circumstances. Will aim to put an alternative in place for customers with quick enquiries at this time.
Repairs & Maintenance	Complaint about staff member	Justified	Member of staff spoken to and advised that comments were not acceptable and unprofessional and has been given a verbal warning.	Member of staff aware of needing to be tactful and not to make inappropriate comments even in humour.
Benefits	Difficulty making Benefits Claim and attitude of Staff	Partly	Spoke with Officer concerned. Further proof re claim requested.	DHP policy needs to be reviewed to be more flexible. Review with OSS receipt issue by July 2010

Benefits	Delays in receipt of benefit	Partly	Complicated claim with multiple changes before claim set up - requires confirmation from other Govt agency of income	Greater use of telephone - new evidence gathering procedure reiterates Officers should check for evidence they can themselves and then try and phone for any missing information as well as/instead of always writing
Benefits	Unclear process for claiming 2 <sup>nd</sup> adult rebate	Partly	Claim form to be revised to give further clarification. To our knowledge this is the only time someone has reported a problem on how to claim 2nd Adult Rebate	Application form to be revised by May 2010
Council Tax	Wording on Council Tax documentation (intimidating/ misleading) and attitude of Manager	Partly	Review contents of SPD canvass form	Review contents of SPD canvass form
Property Services	Delay in purchasing former play area adjacent to property and unclear who owns the land	Partly	Greatest part of complaint relates to WCC records and not RBC. Continuity of RBC service broken due to staff turnover & recruitment/ resource issues	Improve handover notes when staff leave
Tenancy	Problems with no contact from Tenancy Officers	Justified	Housing Services Team Leader has spoken to tenant and given her name as contact Officer. Apologies given that Tenancy Officer did not communicate with tenant. Gas Supervisor to investigate options of heating to property.	Ensure that Officers keep in touch with tenants when they make enquiries and keep them informed of any action being taken
Council Tax	Direct Debit incorrectly taken and no call back received	Justified	Raised system fault with software suppliers and apologised for not calling back	Enhancement of software



Waste Collection	Has made repeated requests for supply of black bags to be provided. Still awaiting delivery.	Justified	Year's supply of clear sacks have been delivered to resident. Regular issue of sacks to residents is difficult to monitor, but new process has been introduced.	Daily round check sheet has been introduced that the crew has to sign to confirm the days work is completed before they leave. This includes all the assisted, sack and bin collections contained in the days round. It is hoped this will give greater control of what is/isn't completed by the rounds.
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### **Complaints Appeals (Stage 2)**

	Number	Target Met (response within 10 working days)	Complaints Upheld
1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	4	2 (50%)	0
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	10	8 (80%)	0
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	7	6 (86%)	0
4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	2	1 (50%)	0
Outturn – Full year	23	17(74%)	

### **Member Complaint Appeals (Stage 3)**

	Number
1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter	1
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	3
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter	1
4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	2

**COMPLAINTS MONITORING : January – March 2010 (4th Quarter)****OMBUDSMAN MONITORING - 2009/10 Response times & Outcomes**

Complaint (service)	Quarter received	Info requested on	Target for response	Letter sent on (by e-mail)	Response time	Average Response time (cumulative)	Outcome
Property Services	1 <sup>st</sup>	22 04 09	16 05 09	09 06 09	48 days	48 days	Local Settlement - £500 compensation & waiver of £121 legal costs
Housing recharges	1 <sup>st</sup>	24 04 09	18 05 09	08 05 09	14 days	31 days	No maladministration
Housing Options	1 <sup>st</sup>	02 06 09	26 06 09	23 06 09	21 days	28 days	Ombudsman's Discretion – No Maladministration. Asked Council to consider : Consideration of a) whether someone fleeing violence should pay rent on two properties and b) need to discuss with households entering temporary accommodation whether there are any particular difficulties in storing belongings.
Housing Repairs	2 <sup>nd</sup>	01 07 09	24 07 09	21 07 09	21 days	26 days	No maladministration
Homelessness	2 <sup>nd</sup>	08 07 09	01 08 09	27 07 09	20 days	25 days	No maladministration
Leisure/Sundry Debts	3 <sup>rd</sup>	26 10 09	19 11 09	20 11 09	26 days	25 days	No maladministration
<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Enquiries</b>					<b>RBC average days</b>	
03/04	-					66.7 days	
04/05	-					36.4 days	
05/06	-					22.5 days	
06/07	8					39.6 days	
07/08	6					26.7 days	
08/09	5					14.6 days	
09/10	6					25 days	

APPENDIX 2

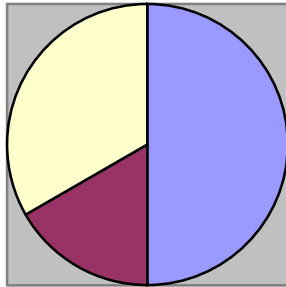


# Redditch Borough Council Quarterly Complaints Statistics

## January – March 2010

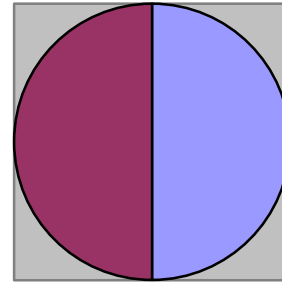
There were a total of 12 complaints in the last quarter

### DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE DIRECTORATE



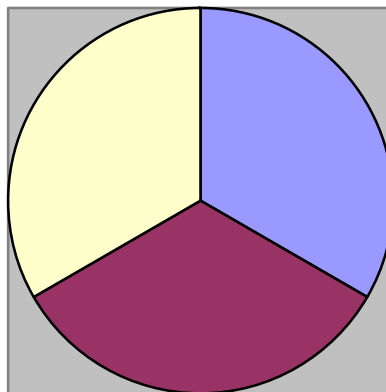
■ Benefits(3) ■ Property(1) □ Revenues(2)

### ENVIRONMENT & PLANNING DIRECTORATE



■ Waste Collection (1) ■ Landscape (1)

### HOUSING, LEISURE & CUSTOMER SERVICES DIRECTORATE



■ OSS (1) ■ Repairs (1) □ Tenancy(1)

#### What did you complain about?

The majority of complaints related to Benefits and Revenues.

#### What did we do about this?

We addressed each case individually, and tightened up our procedures. We have reviewed/improved services where possible



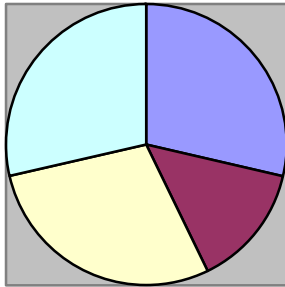
APPENDIX 3

# Redditch Borough Council Quarterly Compliment Statistics



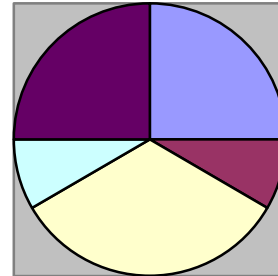
**January – March 2010**  
There were a total of 84 compliments in the last quarter

DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTORATE



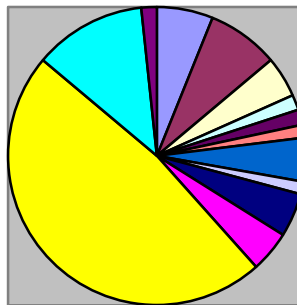
- Directorate Support(2)   ■ Asset Maintenance (1)
- Civic Functions (2)   ■ Property Services (2)

ENVIRONMENT & PLANNING  
DIRECTORATE



- Building Control (3)   ■ Development Control (1)   ■ Landscape & Cleansing (4)
- Environmental Health (1)   ■ Waste Collection(3)

HOUSING, LEISURE & CUSTOMER  
SERVICES DIRECTORATE



- Palace Theatre(4)   ■ Capital (5)   ■ Rent (3)
- Housing Options (1)   ■ Income (1)   ■ IT (1)
- OSS (3)   ■ Leisure (1)   ■ Performance (3)
- Home Support (3)   ■ Repairs (31)   ■ Sure Start (8)
- Tenancy (1)

**What did you compliment?**

The majority of compliments related to Repairs and Surestart.



APPENDIX 4

# Redditch Borough Council Quarterly Complaints Statistics



**January-March 2010**

## What we Learnt and Service Improvement

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Action Taken/Improvement</b>
OSS waiting times – during period of heavy snow	Re-evaluate options in extreme circumstances. Aim to put an alternative in place for customers with quick enquiries.
Benefits	Policy to be reviewed by July 2010
Benefits	Greater use of telephone – new evidence gathering procedures so that Officers check for evidence themselves and phone for any missing information as well as/instead of always writing.
Benefits	Application form to be revised by May 2010.
Council Tax	Review contents of Single Person Discount canvass form by November 2010.
Property Services	Improve handover notes when staff leave.
Housing	Officers reminded to keep in touch with tenants when they make enquiries and keep them informed of any action being taken.
Council Tax	Raised fault with software suppliers, for it to be rectified.
Waste Collection – supplying bags	Daily round check sheet introduced.





## Petitions

Redditch Borough Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns. All petitions sent or presented to the Council will receive an acknowledgement from the Council within 10 working days of receipt. This acknowledgement will set out what we plan to do with the petition. We will treat something as a petition if it is identified as being a petition, and/or if it seems to us that it is intended to be a petition, i.e. it has been signed by 10 or more individuals. Correspondence from less than ten signatories will be treated as normal correspondence.

Paper petitions can be sent to:

The Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer)  
Redditch Borough Council  
Town Hall  
Walter Stranz Square  
Redditch B98 8AH.

*[To be added later / adapted for Paper / Electronic use – subject to separate report -*

Petitions can also be created, signed and submitted online *by following this [link](#).*

The subject of the petition and the number of signatories will determine how the Council deals with your petition. Some petitions may result in a debate at a meeting of the Council or an Officer of the Council being asked to give evidence at a Committee meeting. The receipt of other petitions may be reported to a relevant Committee of the Council. The options are detailed below.

## What are the guidelines for submitting a petition?

Petitions submitted to the Council must include:

- a clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition. It should state what action the petitioners wish the Council to take
- the name and address and signature of any person supporting the petition.

Petitions should be accompanied by contact details, including an address, for the petition organiser. This is the person we will contact to explain how we will respond to the petition. The contact details of the petition organiser will not be placed on the website. If the petition does not identify a petition organiser, we will contact signatories to the petition to agree who should act as the petition organiser.

Petitions which are considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate will not be accepted. In the period immediately before an election or referendum we may need to deal with your petition differently – if this is the case we will explain the reasons and discuss the revised timescale which will apply. If a petition does not follow the guidelines set out above, the council may decide not to do anything further with it. In that case, we will write to you to explain the reasons.

## What will the Council do when it receives my petition?

An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within 10 working days of receiving the petition. It will let them know what we plan to do with the petition and when they can expect to hear from us again. It will also be published on our website.

If we can do what your petition asks for, the acknowledgement may confirm that we have taken the action requested and the petition will be closed. If the petition has enough signatures to trigger a Council debate, or a senior Officer giving evidence, then the acknowledgment will confirm this and tell you when and where the meeting will take place. If the petition needs more investigation, we will tell you the steps we plan to take.

*If the petition applies to a planning or licensing application, is a statutory petition (for example requesting a referendum on having an elected mayor), or on a matter where there is already an existing right of appeal, such as Council Tax banding and non-domestic rates, other procedures apply.*

If the petition has enough signatures to trigger a Council debate, or calling a senior Officer to give evidence, then the acknowledgement will confirm this and tell you when and where the meeting will take place. If the petition needs more investigation, we will tell you the steps we plan to take.

We will not take action on any petition which we consider to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate and will explain the reasons for this in our acknowledgement of the petition.

To ensure that people know what we are doing in response to the petitions we receive the details of all the petitions submitted to us will be published on our website, except in cases where this would be inappropriate.

## How will the council respond to petitions?

Our response to a petition will depend on what a petition asks for and how many people have signed it, but may include one or more of the following:

- taking the action requested in the petition

- considering the petition at a council meeting
- holding an inquiry into the matter
- undertaking research into the matter
- holding a public meeting
- holding a consultation
- holding a meeting with petitioners
- referring the petition for consideration by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee \* (*see note below*)
- calling a Referendum
- writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition.

*\* Overview and Scrutiny committees are committees of Councillors who are responsible for scrutinising the work of the Council – in other words, the Overview and Scrutiny committee has the power to hold the Council's decision makers to account.*

If your petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control (for example the local railway or hospital) we will consider making representations on behalf of the community to the relevant body. The Council works with a large number of local partners [[link to list of Local Area Agreement \(LAA\) partners](#)] and where possible will work with these partners to respond to your petition. If we are not able to do this for any reason (for example if what the petition calls for conflicts with Council policy), then we will set out the reasons for this to you. You can find more information on the services for which the Council is responsible [here](#).

If your petition is about something that a different council is responsible for we will give consideration to what the best method is for responding to it. This might consist of simply forwarding the petition to the other council, but could involve other steps. In any event we will always notify you of the action we have taken.

## Petitions triggering a full Council debate

If a petition contains more than **3,500** signatures it will be debated by the full Council (unless it is a petition asking for a senior Council officer to give evidence at a public meeting). This means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting which all Councillors can attend. The Council will endeavour to consider the petition at its next meeting, although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will then take place at the following meeting. Meetings of the Council take place approximately on a six-seven weekly basis and the dates and times of Council meetings can be found [here](#).

The petition organiser will be given the opportunity to present the petition at the meeting and the petition will then be discussed by Councillors, with a maximum of 15 minutes being allowed for the consideration of each petition. The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. They may decide to take the action the petition requests, not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate, or to commission further investigation into the matter, for example by a relevant committee. Where the issue is one on which the Council's Executive Committee is required to make the final decision, the Council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision. This confirmation will also be published on our website.

## Petitions requesting Officer evidence at a Public Meeting

Your petition may ask for a senior Council Officer to give evidence at a public meeting about something for which the Officer is responsible as part of their job. For example, your petition may ask a senior Council Officer to explain progress on an issue, or to explain the advice given to elected members to enable them to make a particular decision.

If your petition contains at least **3,500 signatures**, the relevant Senior Officer will give evidence at a public meeting of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. You should be aware that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may decide that it would be more appropriate for another Officer to give evidence instead of any officer named in the petition – for instance if the named Officer has changed jobs. The Committee may also decide to call the relevant Councillor to attend the meeting. Committee members will ask the questions at this meeting, but you will be able to suggest questions to the chair of the Committee by contacting the Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer on 01527 64252 (Extensions 3267/3268) up to five working days before the meeting. Meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee take place on an approximately three weekly basis

## Other Petitions

As mentioned above, those petitions which have received **3500 signatures** or more can either be presented and debated at a meeting of the Council or can result in an Officer being asked to give evidence at a public meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

- **Petitions which do not meet these thresholds and which are not in respect of a statutory or regulatory matter or a matter where there is an existing right of appeal will be presented to the next available meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee unless the matter is the subject of an imminent decision of the Executive Committee whereupon it will be presented to that meeting.**
- ***Petitions with fewer than 10 signatures (suggested break point) will be referred direct to relevant Officers for consideration and response.***

If you would like to be in attendance when your petition is presented to the relevant Committee please contact the Democratic Services Manager on 01527 64252 (Extn. 3256) 10 working days before the meeting and they will talk you through the process.

## E-petitions

*[subject to later separate report – here for initial consideration only]*

The Council welcomes e-petitions which are created and submitted through our website [\[link\]](#). E-petitions must follow the same guidelines as paper petitions [\[link to guidelines\]](#). The petition organiser will need to provide us with their name, postal address and email address. You will also need to decide how long you would like your petition to be open for signatures. Most petitions run for **six months**, but you can choose a shorter or longer timeframe, up to a maximum of **12 months**.

When you create an e-petition, it may take five working days before it is published online. This is because we have to check that the content of your petition is suitable before it is made available for signature.

If we feel we cannot publish your petition for some reason, we will contact you within this time to explain. You will be able to change and resubmit your petition if you wish. If you do not do this within 10 working days, a summary of the petition and the reason why it has not been accepted will be published under the 'rejected petitions' section of the website.

When an e-petition has closed for signature, it will automatically be submitted to the Proper Officer. In the same way as a paper petition, you will receive an acknowledgement within 10 working days. If you would like to present your e-petition to a meeting of the Council, please contact the Democratic Services Manager on 01527 64252 (Extn. 3256) within 10 working days of receipt of the acknowledgement.

## How do I 'sign' an e-petition?

You can see all the e-petitions currently available for signature [here](#).

When you sign an e-petition you will be asked to provide your name, your postcode and a valid email address. When you have submitted this information you will be sent an email to the email address you have provided. This email will include a link which you must click on in order to confirm the email address is valid. Once this step is complete your 'signature' will be added to the petition. People visiting the e-petition will be able to see your name in the list of those who have signed it but your contact details will not be visible.

## What can I do if I feel my petition has not been dealt with properly?

If you feel that we have not dealt with your petition properly, the petition organiser has the right to request that the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the steps that the council has taken in response to your petition. It is helpful to everyone, and can improve the prospects for a review if the petition organiser gives a short explanation of the reasons why the Council's response is not considered to be adequate.

The Committee will endeavour to consider your request at its next meeting, although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will take place at the following meeting. Should the Committee determine we have not dealt with your petition adequately, it may use any of its powers to deal with the matter. These powers include instigating an investigation, making recommendations to the Council's Executive Committee and arranging for the matter to be considered at a meeting of the full Council.

Once the appeal has been considered the petition organiser will be informed of the results within 5 working days. The results of the review will also be published on our website.

## Note: Other Constitutional Arrangements for Public Involvement

Other existing arrangements offer opportunities for public involvement at full Council and other Council meetings. These include opportunities for Deputations and Questions to the Leader of the Council; Public Speaking at Planning Committee, etc. : separate provisions refer.

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL****EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

16th June 2010

**WORCESTERSHIRE PARTNERSHIP – TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Carole Gandy
Relevant Head of Service	Kevin Dicks
Non-Key Decision	

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

To consider a protocol that has been agreed by all members of the Worcestershire Partnership with regard to future budget decisions.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Executive Committee is asked to RECOMMEND that the protocol be endorsed.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Worcestershire Partnership is the Countywide Local Strategic Partnership comprising partners from across the statutory (public sector) and voluntary sector.
- 3.2 Over the last few months the Partnership have been endeavouring to improve how they work together which has resulted in the attached protocol.

**4. KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 It is widely accepted that there will be significant reductions in public sector funding over the next few years and the Partnership have developed a protocol (attached at Appendix 1) which seeks to ensure that all Partners take a more joined up approach in the future to budget decisions and their potential impact on communities. In particular this will seek to address that there is not a significant cumulative detrimental affect on our community by decisions made individually by partners.
- 4.2 The Cabinet is asked to endorse the attached protocol and to have due consideration to this when considering budgets in the future. The Cabinet, if they wished, could consider embracing this protocol within the Financial Regulations in order to make this more formal. This would require a recommendation to full council.

**5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

16th June 2010

None directly from this report.

**6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

None directly from this report.

**7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

None directly from this report.

**8. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

This protocol will underpin all of the Council's objectives.

**9. RISK MANAGEMENT INCLUDING HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS**

None directly from this report.

**10. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

None directly from this report.

**11. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

Agreeing to this protocol will help ensure that any Equalities and Diversity implications of budget decisions are considered across the Partnership.

**12. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS, PROCUREMENT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT**

None directly from this report.

**13. CLIMATE CHANGE, CARBON IMPLICATIONS AND BIODIVERSITY**

None directly from this report.

**14. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

None directly from this report.

**15. GOVERNANCE/PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

None directly from this report.



**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL****EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

16th June 2010

**16. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS INCLUDING SECTION 17 OF CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998**

None directly from this report.

**17. HEALTH INEQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

None directly from this report.

**18. LESSONS LEARNT**

None directly from this report.

**19. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

None directly from this report.

**20. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Portfolio Holder	Yes
Chief Executive	Report Author
Executive Director (S151 Officer)	Yes
Executive Director – Leisure, Cultural, Environmental and Community Services	Yes
Executive Director – Planning & Regeneration, Regulatory and Housing Services	Yes
Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships	Yes
Head of Service	N/A
Head of Resources	Yes
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	Yes
Corporate Procurement Team	No

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**16th June 2010**

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**21. WARDS AFFECTED**

All.

**22. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Worcestershire Partnership Statutory Partners: Terms of Engagement

**23. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Worcestershire Partnership

**AUTHOR OF REPORT**

Name: Kevin Dicks  
E Mail: k.dicks@bromsgrove.gov.uk  
Tel: 01527 881400



## **Worcestershire Partnership Statutory Partners: Terms of Engagement**

The public sector agencies in Worcestershire recognise that over the next 4-5 years, we will all face major budget pressures, requiring changes and sometimes reductions in services.

Our commitment is to:-

1. Talk to each other before we make major budget decisions
2. Protect critical services to the public and businesses as far as possible, by redesigning services across organisational boundaries and achieve savings by sharing strategies, resources and budgets
3. Put the needs of local people and places ahead of bureaucratic needs
4. Prevent the cumulative effect of decisions affecting some communities or groups in society disproportionately
5. Minimise adverse consequences for the local economy
6. Engage with businesses and the third sector where appropriate, and jointly consult stakeholders before major decisions are made.



REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

16th June 2010

**CHURCH HILL DISTRICT CENTRE – REDEVELOPMENT REPORT**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Brandon Clayton
Relevant Head of Service	Teresa Kristunas
Key Decision	
The Appendix to this report contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph(s) 100 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended	

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

The report informs Members of the outcome of tendering of the redevelopment scheme, with recommendations of the Church Hill Members Panel. Members are asked to make a decision on whether to proceed or not with the redevelopment.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that**

**one of the confidential recommendations detailed in Appendix A to the report be approved**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Following a review of all District Centres, the Council choose Church Hill as the first centre to redevelop, The project principal was that the scheme would “break even”.
- 3.2 The Council commenced the project by firstly consulting the public and then issuing a “Supplemental Planning Document” for Church Hill, and then embarked upon the appointment of consultants and the EU procurement exercise.

**4. KEY ISSUES**

The Committee is asked to note the tender results of this scheme marketing, and make a decision on the options, as detailed in Appendix A.

**5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are financial implications arising from this report, as detailed in Appendix A.

**6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

16th June 2010

6.1 The Council is required to dispose of any interest in land including leases for the best consideration possible under Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

6.2 Appendix A & B to this report are exempt in accordance with S.100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, as they contain information relating to the business affairs of the Council's tenants., and the tender proposals confidential to the Council and developer. For the Council to reveal information at this stage may affect the Council's bargaining position whilst very detailed contracts are being considered. It is therefore felt that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

**7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The current policy of this Council is to work up a scheme that achieves total redevelopment of the Church Hill Centre as approved by the Council in December 2006.

**8. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

To regenerate Church Hill Centre by the demolition of the existing centre and rebuilding a centre fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century , with additional housing. The added benefit hopefully be a reduction in crime and anti social behaviour.

**9. RISK MANAGEMENT INCLUDING HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS**

There are a number of risks associated with this scheme. Following marketing of the scheme the reduced developer interest shows that in the current financial conditions it is difficult to deliver this type of total redevelopment without Council financial support. However having raised residents expectations and Councils aspirations not now to proceed may produce some adverse publicity. The Council can however still withdraw from current proposal and remarket the opportunity at a later date.

**10. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

Improved new centre with updated shops and other facilities.

**11. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

16th June 2010

New building designs will reflect equality and access issues as required by current Planning Acts & Building Regulations.

**12. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS, PROCUREMENT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT**

The redevelopment principal is in accordance with the current Asset Management Plan, the project has been procured using the competitive process in accordance with the Restricted Procedure under the Consolidated Public Procurement Directives 2004/18/EC, as implemented by The Public Services Contracts Regulations 1993 and The Public Services Contracts Regulations under the EU procurement regulations.

**13. CLIMATE CHANGE, CARBON IMPLICATIONS AND BIODIVERSITY**

These issues will be addressed at detailed planning permission stage, but with reference to the current policy document "Supplementary Planning Document – Church Hill Centre, Development Brief".

**14. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

Continued staff time on this project with revenue consequences, with additional Officer time and consultants for Property and Legal Services.

**15. GOVERNANCE/PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

None stated.

**16. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS INCLUDING SECTION 17 OF CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998**

Under section 17 of the Crime & Disorder Act 1998, the Council is under a duty to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area.

The redevelopment of Church Hill will help to address incidents of anti-social behaviour incidents in this location by designing out crime hot spots. The principles of "Secure by Design" will be addressed in the detailed planning stage.

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL****EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

16th June 2010

**17. HEALTH INEQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

The project may include a new medical centre. The project will include a replacement chemist shop and dental facilities with improved services for the public.

**18. LESSONS LEARNT**

At the outset of this project the financial appraisal was quite different, the delayed marketing decision was correctly taken and did result in developer interest but still there is no substitute in testing the viability other than marketing. Such costs to test the market and progress legal agreements are unavoidable. The extra delivery time to test the market is justifiable, but greater certainty could have been created at the outset if a Compulsory Purchase Order had been used, although the costs may have been greater and resulted in a "Blight" of the centre.

**19. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

There has been extensive consultation in the initial stages in 2007 with area leafleting and public meetings. Existing tenants have been engaged and relocation terms been renegotiated. In 2010 the tender submissions were on public display for comments. The Primary Care Trust and local doctors practice has been consulted.

**20. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Portfolio Holder	√
Chief Executive	√
Executive Director (S151 Officer)	√
Executive Director – Leisure, Cultural, Environmental and Community Services	√
Executive Director – Planning & Regeneration, Regulatory and Housing Services	√
Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships	√



**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL****EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

16th June 2010

Head of Service	√
Head of Resources	√
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	√
Corporate Procurement Team	√

**CONSULTATION**

There has been consultation with relevant Officers in the preparation of this report, and the Church Hill Member Panel which met recently on 13 April and 25 May 2010.

**21. WARDS AFFECTED**

Church Hill.

**22. APPENDICES**

Appendix A – Results of marketing and options with financial implications  
Confidential Appendix and plan

Appendix B - Project timetable (revised)

(Appendices A & B to this report are exempt in accordance with S. 100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, as they contain information relating to the business affairs of the Council's tenants, disclosure of which is not considered to be in the public's best interests.)

**23. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Papers held within Property Services, some of which are exempt (confidential).

**AUTHORS OF REPORT**

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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

Document is Restricted



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

Document is Restricted



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**BUSINESS CENTRES - REVIEW**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Jinney Pearce, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Regeneration, Economic Development and Transport
Relevant Head of Service	Ruth Bamford, Head of Planning & Regeneration
Key Decision	
Appendix 4 to this report contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended	

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

A review was undertaken to consider the performance of the business centres and to clarify their role and purpose, as reflected in the recommendations.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee is asked to **RESOLVE** that

- 1) **the Borough Council continue to own / lease and manage all three business centres;**
- 2) **the aim of the business centres be to provide accommodation and support to as many businesses as possible, having a mixture of maturities, that realises the Borough Council's wider objectives to boost enterprise and employment across the Borough as a whole (the business centres should be viewed as an economic development asset, contributing to the process of creating and supporting a prosperous community);**
- 3) **in the first instance, Officers be instructed to improve occupancy and business support, with regard to helping start, grow, retain and attract businesses (Appendix 5 to the report outlines the matters which Officers shall consider in this respect);**
- 4) **Officers be instructed to investigate how the business centres' expenditure can be reduced and income better maximised (Appendix 5 outlines the matters which Officers shall consider in this respect);**

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- 5) the recommendations be reviewed in three years, as key factors may have changed in that time – or earlier if urgent matters arise which need examining or changing;

and to **RECOMMEND** that

- 6) further authority be delegated to the Head of Planning & Regeneration, Business Centres Manager, or Economic Development Manager, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, so that occupancy and performance can be improved, as detailed in Appendix 6 to the report.

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 The business centres referred to in this report are described in appendices 1, 3 and 4 and consist of the three centres. Appendix 1 describes the business centres and services offered. Appendix 3 details the business centres' performance in terms of occupancy and customer satisfaction and characteristics of licensees. Appendix 4 summarises the current and recent financial performance and details of asset holdings. As a point of comparison, Appendix 2 summarises the accommodation and services at private business centres operating on similar terms in Redditch.

3.2 A key deliverable in Legal, Democratic, Property and Audit Services' 2009/10 Service Plan is to 'manage the Council's assets effectively', with a related action to review the business centres. The centres are also a useful economic development tool and, as they will be included in Economic Development's remit following the Shared Service restructuring, the review was led by Economic Development Officers.

3.3 Economic Development is the process in which economic wealth and wellbeing is improved. Increased prosperity can be affected by – and affect – growth, productivity, efficiency, income and job availability. The economy can be strengthened by the delivery of services to support the creation, growth and survival of businesses. As such, priorities in The Redditch Economic Development Strategy include: supporting starter and young businesses; encouraging businesses to move to and stay in Redditch; and establishing and maintaining a reputation as a 'business-friendly Council'.



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- 3.4 Whilst originally established to support new businesses, firms of all ages and types now operate in the centres (see appendices 1 and 3). As such the purpose of the centres needs to be re-visited and clearly defined, taking into consideration asset management and economic development priorities as well as the current economic climate.
- 3.5 On average, the centres are currently operating at a 65% occupancy level (see appendix 3). Although the 2009/10 budget projected a £41,560 surplus, a £11,395 deficit resulted – in part due to higher than anticipated void levels (see appendix 4). To improve the financial situation while assisting as many businesses as possible, initiatives are needed to improve occupancy and performance. Enhanced delegated powers would allow the Business Centres Manager flexibility to react to the market more quickly and instigate such initiatives.

**4. KEY ISSUES**

4.1 Continued ownership / lease

- a) The centres were originally intended to offer new businesses accommodation and support, thus filling a gap in the local market. The short notice license terms were to assist firms in times of economic difficulties – although these terms are now standard across most business centres. As a starting point the review considered whether the original gap in market provision still existed.
- b) The two private business centres operating on similar terms in Redditch are detailed in Appendix 2. The Imex Business Centre offers office and industrial accommodation, while the Edward Street Business Centre offers office accommodation. Comparing the offer, there is still a role, and need, for the Borough Council's centres in terms of serviced accommodation and business development support.
- c) With regard to office accommodation, the Borough Council's centres offer a wider size range than the Imex centre. Units can also be combined to offer a similar top end size to the Edward Street centre. The Rubicon and Heming Road centres offer smaller workshops and industrial units than are available at the Imex – suiting different markets and filling a gap in market provision for new and young small businesses. The Borough Council's centres offer secretarial services which are not available at the Imex centre.

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- d) Annual surveys show that licensees are satisfied with the business centres and believe a good service is provided. Licensees that left during 2009 did not do so due to dissatisfaction with the centres (see appendix 3). Most either ceased trading; or had outgrown the centre and bought larger commercial premises; or downsized to work from home due to the economic downturn. New licensees continue to move into the centres.
- e) However, the centres have not been operating at full capacity in recent years and generate little or no budget surplus. The suggestion of rationalisation to reduce excess capacity and budgetary pressure was considered but rejected on grounds of practicality, negative publicity and cost.
- f) Consolidating existing licensees into two centres rather than three would be impractical. It would not be possible to accommodate current licensees in just two of the existing centres, given the varied business activities and facilities required. For example, there is not enough space to accommodate Rubicon licensees in Greenlands and Heming Road, or vice versa. Also displacing any businesses could result in negative publicity and relations with licensees could deteriorate, particularly if they incurred relocation costs. It is hoped the demand for units will improve as overall economic activity increases. It is therefore sensible to retain capacity for when demand improves in order that the borough can support growth and boost the economy. In the interim, initiatives are required to increase occupancy.
- g) Critically, the cost of rationalisation is prohibitive. A full asset disposal analysis has not been conducted, but estimated headline figures for this option have been considered (see appendix 4). As illustrated in the appendix, financially it would be better to continue to operate three centres and absorb an actual budget deficit each year than to exit the centres. It is believed that in the current economic climate it would also be difficult to find a private company to buy a centre or take over a lease. Therefore it does not appear financially viable to dispose of these assets.
- h) As rationalisation is not an option, the question of whether resources and budget would be better spent on more direct help for business – rather than funding the business centres – was not considered.
- i) Some Councils contract the management of their business centres to a trust. However such a move should not be viewed as a cost-cutting option. In many examples in which trusts assume the overseeing of an asset, the governing Council pays a management fee and the trust take a percentage of the income generated once it exceeds a specified level.

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Trusts then have an incentive to improve efficiency and income levels. However this option still involves costs and only a limited income for the Council. It is believed that, at present, interest from trust operators would be limited by the small scale of operations and low profit levels.

- j) The likelihood of this option being suitable was too low to justify the cost of employing consultants to fully analyse the case for transferring ownership or management to a trust. It may, however, be worthwhile to re-examine trust or private management options in any future review.

#### 4.2 Aim of the business centres

- a) The business centres were originally intended to give support to new businesses, although firms of all ages currently occupy units (see Appendix 3). This review recommends that a more appropriate aim for the centres is to support any business in an expansionary phase.
- b) Young businesses benefit from the centres' accommodation and secretarial services. If the centres' policy was to only accommodate and assist start-ups, each licensee would be required to move on after one year – because they would no longer be 'start-ups' according to the technical definition – to provide space for new licensees so the policy is consistent. Yet the constant and high level of demand necessary from new businesses to maintain a reasonable occupancy level under this policy is unrealistic. In recent years there has been insufficient demand from start-up businesses to fill existing available units, whilst larger units, designed for companies to expand into, may be difficult to let to new firms. Furthermore, displacing current licensees to instigate this policy would result in negative publicity.
- c) Furthermore, there are several benefits to having licensees of various ages. For example, established businesses can act as anchor tenants. They tend to occupy larger units for long periods, providing a steady and more reliable revenue stream. There is continued demand for units from businesses of all ages.
- d) Moreover, firms need support throughout the business maturity cycle. For example, firms are vulnerable during expansion when there is an interval between expenditure on working capital and a resultant increase in revenue. Office of National Statistics data on business demography supports the assertion that young, growing businesses are more vulnerable than start-ups.

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The annual failure rate in Redditch is worst in years two to three. In contrast, less than 6% of new Redditch businesses on average fail in the first year (2003-2007). This may suggest that businesses are given sufficient financial and other support during their first year in order to ensure survival, but that, once established and therefore considered to be secure, support for businesses in subsequent years can dwindle. An emphasis on new businesses can be to the detriment of all other businesses at different stages in their lifecycles. Support therefore needs to be available and forthcoming not only in the first year of operation, but more crucially in every year of operation.

- e) A firm's decision to stay in a location or move may be affected by costs, premises, customer and supplier base. While some of these factors are beyond the Borough Council's control there are ways in which the centres' wide offer and supportive environment can aid efforts to retain businesses in Redditch. The units can act as a stepping stone for businesses expanding or contracting in size. Licensees can have close contact with Economic Development Officers who can, for example, help with property searches and raise awareness of financial assistance and business support organisations.
- f) Greenlands could have a role in attracting business to Redditch. For example, inward investment enquirers could be offered a unit within the centre on a short-term license to use as a project office. An Economic Development Officer could be assigned to help them investigate relocation options.
- g) This review therefore proposes the centres' remit be formally expanded to recognise that all businesses in an expansionary phase are eligible for, and may need, accommodation, secretarial and business development support.
- h) The Borough Council can help to "start – grow – retain – attract" businesses if the aim of the centres is "to provide accommodation and support to as many businesses as possible having a mixture of maturities that realises the Borough Council's wider objectives to boost enterprise and employment across the borough as a whole".
- i) Operating the centres this way would contribute to the Borough Council's priority of developing and maintaining an 'enterprising community' as well as its Economic Development work 'to encourage a thriving local economy with diverse successful businesses'.

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4.3 Improving occupancy and business support

- a) In recent years – perhaps reflecting the economic downturn – void levels at all three centres have been steadily increasing towards the current 35% level (see appendix 3). Void levels have a direct impact on income but also affect the centres' vibrancy and appeal to prospective tenants.
- b) As such, initiatives are required to boost occupancy. This includes ensuring the offer is attractive to existing and potential tenants – in terms of services, support and accommodation – with incentives to become and remain a tenant. The offer must appeal to a wide range of businesses, reflecting the centres' role in helping start, grow and retain Redditch businesses and attract firms to Redditch. Appendix 5 outlines the matters which Officers will consider in this respect.

4.4 Improving the income-expenditure balance

- a) Financial data is given in appendix 4. Apart from 2007/08 when a profit of £24,018 was made, in recent years the centres have tended to be in deficit. In 2008/09 and 2009/10 surpluses of £12,900 and £41,560 were projected, but deficits of £9,124 and £11,395 resulted, respectively. In both years income was less than anticipated, while in 2008/09 expenditure was also more than expected.
- b) The resulting variance between budget projections and actuals was £22,024 and £52,955 respectively. This should however be viewed as the Borough Council in effect investing £74,979 in business support over these two financial years, thus having an intrinsic value to the Borough Council in terms of financing economic development and the business community.
- c) Initially work should aim to both (a) trend the variance towards zero or a positive figure (actuals equal to or greater than the budget projection); and (b) generate an actuals surplus. Any surplus could be used as re-investment income. Alternatively, it could be held in a separate reserve to support the centres during downturns in the economy and occupancy. In this way the centres could become self-financing over the course of a business cycle. Another possibility would be that the surplus could be re-invested in business support activities.
- d) Finance Officers have confirmed such a reserve could technically be established, with Members' approval. However the reserve would have to be used to meet deficits. Difficulties would arise should there be a situation where the business centres were making continuous deficits.

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In the current climate – even using pessimistic occupancy projections and setting the budget to help achieve a positive variance – this option may not be easily implemented. It should however be considered when this review is revisited in three years.

- e) The void levels used when setting the budget were overly optimistic given occupancy patterns in recent years. Although in both years the assumed void levels took into consideration the difficulties in the economy, the impact of the downturn was worse than expected. A more cautious bias would be appropriate in the future.
- f) Examination of the centres' standalone position – of income compared with the direct costs attributable to that income only – illustrates that the centres effectively make a significant contribution to the Borough Council. Without central services recharges and depreciation costs, the centres could have made a large surplus in 2006/07 and 2007/08 (£85, 216 and £109,880 respectively). Even during the economic downturn, a surplus could have been generated (£42,925 in 2008/09 and £39,204 in 2009/10).
- g) Income-expenditure patterns for each centre show Greenlands and Heming Road have a reasonable – although decreasing – gap between income and expenditure. At Rubicon, however, expenditure has consistently exceeded income; a major factor being the rent. Income projections suggest that while an overall surplus would have been possible if all units were in theory let, Rubicon would still be just in deficit.
- h) A review of the Council's continued lease of Rubicon and viable alternatives should be considered as a matter of policy at least one year before the lease ends. Options may include negotiating a new lease; relinquishing the building and accepting the cost of re-instating it to its original state at lease end; then finding new premises or closing the centre altogether. Sufficient time should be allowed to investigate options properly. If the centre closed or moved, tenants would appreciate more than the standard one-month notice to find and fund any relocation.
- i) Looking at the balance sheet in isolation may suggest the centres use significant resources for seemingly little return. However a large number of businesses are supported. The strategic benefits in terms of economic development and enterprising community priorities should be considered alongside the accounts.
- j) Appendix 5 details the matters on which Officers will work to improve income, notably rent, service fee and meeting room hire income.

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Options to reduce expenditure are limited. As noted above, it is less costly in the long term to continue operating the three centres – and if necessary absorbing an actual budget deficit each year – than try to exit the centres.

4.5 Revised and extra delegated powers

- a) Under the Shared Services restructure, the Business Centres' Manager will be overseen by the Head of Service for Planning and Regeneration. Continued technical assistance is required from Property, Legal and Financial Services, for example advising on rent reviews.
- b) Currently, the Business Centres' Manager only has discretion to offer a rent-free period of up to three months for new lettings. Anecdotal evidence suggests some enquirers have taken units at a competing centre as it was more flexible on terms and incentives. It is a buyer's market at present, with several business centres locally competing for the same few business opportunities.
- c) During Economic Advisory Panel meetings, it was proposed that the Business Centres Manager and the Head of Service would benefit from greater flexibility to react to the market and negotiate to win business.
- d) Details of the existing scheme of delegation and proposed revisions are outlined in Appendix 6. The aim is to allow more flexibility and a faster reaction to enquiries and market changes, but maintain a suitable level of accountability. There is a change to the delegated Officers – from the Property Services Manager to the Business Centres Manager, Economic Development Manager or Head of Service. Decisions are to be made with the portfolio holder.
- e) Current delegated authority to annually review and set rents and fees (for all tenants from 1 April) remains. The maximum change Officers (with the portfolio holder) can make remains at plus or minus 10% of the preceding year's rents / fees. (The wording in the Scheme has been altered to simplify it but the authority has not changed.)
- f) Authority to offer a rent free period to secure new lettings remains the same. Not all new lettings receive a rent free period – rather it is used if necessary during negotiations to secure new tenants. (The wording in the Scheme has been altered but the authority has not changed.)

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- g) This review proposes that to secure new lettings in times of decreased demand, Officers (with the portfolio holder) may agree a period of reduced rent. The rent on new lettings could be reduced by a maximum of 20%. Such offers would be judged on a case-by-case basis.
- h) Discretion of (up to) 20% is proposed to boost the process of securing more tenants; and on the basis that earning 80% of potential income for a limited time is better than the units remaining empty and not generating any income. It would be continually monitored and reviewed as necessary.
- i) This review also suggests that in times of increased demand, Officers are able to maximise income from new lettings. It is proposed that Officers (with the portfolio holder) may increase the rent on new lettings by up to 20%. This would be judged on a case-by-case basis. This would also enable Officers to ensure the business centres reflect market circumstances. For example increased demand may occur when the economy is more buoyant and hence the market rate – and what other business centres charge – is pushed up.
- j) This review recommends the Scheme of Delegation include authority to agree these two different types of offer (reduced rents and rent free periods), to allow Officers flexibility to respond to different offers made by competing business centres, as necessary.
- k) In addition, the revised Scheme proposes Officers be able to agree a period of reduced rent for specific licensees in response to evidence of hardship – from time to time during their tenancy. Agreements would be judged on a case-by-case basis.
- l) Finally, Officers could agree a discounted rate for bulk orders of secretarial services, again judged on a case-by-case basis. This would help Officers negotiate to secure income-earning business.

**4.6 Review the recommendations in three years**

The recommendations reflect the current operating position, economic climate and businesses' needs. Revisiting the review in three years will allow consideration of any changed circumstances affecting these issues. The recommendation acknowledges that Officers will address urgent matters which may occur in the interim.



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**5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

None identified. It is envisaged that the recommendations would improve the financial standing of the centres.

**6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

None identified.

**7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

There is a suggested alteration in relation to delegations to Officers as discussed in this report. Furthermore this report clarifies the role and purpose of the business centres.

**8. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES**

The business centres – in terms of accommodation provided and services offered – can play an important role in supporting small businesses and contributing to the Borough Council's priority of encouraging an enterprising community.

**9. RISK MANAGEMENT INCLUDING HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS**

None identified.

**10. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**

None identified.

**11. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

None identified.

**12. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS, PROCUREMENT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT**

12.1 There is a risk that the business centres as assets will not be best utilised to advance the corporate priority of enterprise and the aims and objectives of the Economic Development Strategy.

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12.2 Following the introduction of Shared Services and transfer of responsibility for the business centres to Economic Development, Economic Development Officers shall require continued support from Property Services, Finance and Legal Services in the management of the business centres. The nature and degree of this technical assistance is yet to be agreed.

**13. CLIMATE CHANGE, CARBON IMPLICATIONS AND BIODIVERSITY**

None identified.

**14. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

None identified.

**15. GOVERNANCE/PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

Expanded performance monitoring criteria are suggested.

**16. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS INCLUDING SECTION 17 OF CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998**

None identified.

**17. HEALTH INEQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

None identified.

**18. LESSONS LEARNT**

None identified.

**19. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

Property Services, Finance, Legal and Internal Audit Officers, the Business Centres Manager, Economic Advisory Panels Members, the Federation of Small Businesses and the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce were consulted.

**20. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT**

Portfolio Holder	Yes
Chief Executive	No

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Executive Director (S151 Officer)	No
Executive Director – Leisure, Cultural, Environmental and Community Services	No
Executive Director – Planning & Regeneration, Regulatory and Housing Services	Yes
Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships	No
Head of Service	Yes
Head of Resources	Yes
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	No
Corporate Procurement Team	No

**21. WARDS AFFECTED**

All Wards.

**22. APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1 - Description of business centres and services offered
- Appendix 2 - Summary of private business centres operating on similar terms in Redditch
- Appendix 3 - Performance (occupancy and customer satisfaction) and characteristics of licensees in Redditch Borough Council's business centres.
- Appendix 4 - Current and recent financial performance and details of asset holdings of Redditch Borough Council's business centres (Confidential)
- Appendix 5 - Further detail regarding Recommendations 3 and 4 – improving occupancy, business support and the income-expenditure balance

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Appendix 6 - Further detail regarding Recommendation 5 and revised delegated powers

**23. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Legal, Democratic, Property and Audit Services' 2009/10 Service Plan  
Redditch Economic Development Strategy 2009-2018  
Council Constitution, Appendix C (revised and approved October 2007)  
Internal Audit Report, November 2009  
Office of National Statistics 2008 Business Demography data  
Asset Management General Suitability and Sufficiency Assessment, 2009  
Occupancy, customer survey and performance monitoring data  
(confidential)  
Financial accounts (confidential)

**AUTHOR OF REPORT**

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# Executive Appendix 1

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## DESCRIPTION OF BUSINESS CENTRES AND SERVICES OFFERED

The three business centres provide a mix of accommodation to meet the needs of a variety of small businesses.

### The Greenlands Business Centre, Studley Road

The building houses 35 unfurnished office units ranging in size from 108 sqft to 600 sqft (with some units interconnecting to create larger office space). Licensees include charities, IT consultants, mediators and recruitment companies.

### The Rubicon Business Centre, Broad Ground Road, Lakeside Industrial Estate

The building houses 18 unfurnished office units (150 to 300 sqft) and 23 workshops (280 to 590 sq ft) for commercial enterprises and for light industrial use. Licensees include a carpenter, locksmith, calibration services, disability products supplier, design and printer and office equipment supplier.

Greenlands and Rubicon Services include: manned reception, telephone answering and secretarial services. There is also a conference room and other meeting rooms available to licensees and external companies to hire.

### The Heming Road Enterprise Centre

The building has been divided into 31 units of 290 sqft or 428 sqft for warehouse, industrial or engineering use. Licensees include audio equipment manufacturers, grinding and tool making businesses. There is a shared roller door and side door access. There are no reception services but secretarial support is available from Greenlands or Rubicon.

All three centres have on-site parking, 24 hour access and a caretaking service.

### License fees and terms

Occupiers hold a license which can be terminated with 14 days notice. The flexibility allowed by the 'easy in – easy out' terms is attractive, particularly to new and growing businesses that may be hesitant about committing to long leases while their business is at a vulnerable stage. New businesses can move in quickly and inexpensively. Licensees can also move to larger or smaller units – or leave – without penalties or legal costs. The majority of similar business centres across the region have 14 or 28 day notice periods.

Fees are charged at market rates, they are not subsidised or discounted. License fees include: rent, VAT, water rates, communal lighting and heating. Licenses and fees are reviewed annually for all occupiers. Reception services, postal services, postal address services, secretarial support, telephone switchboard, dedicated answering services and meeting room hire are subject to extra charges.

# **Executive Appendix 1**

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Businesses are responsible for business rates, telephone bills, electricity within their own unit, furnishing their unit, and licensees must have public liability insurance.

A three month rent-free period may be offered with new lettings at the discretion of the Business Centres Manager. The policy is intended to effectively reduce a licensee's initial costs to help them afford necessary furniture or equipment. Rent-free periods are also useful negotiating tools when securing new business. Existing licensees can apply for a three month rent-free period when renting additional space or moving to a larger unit within the centre as these reallocations are viewed as new lettings. This offer is monitored carefully to prevent abuse of the system, but can help growing businesses trial an expansion without over-committing themselves.

The different size units allow licensees to move between units within the centres – subject to availability – as their business expands or contracts.

A maximum of three units are permitted per company. This mitigates the risk of several units being simultaneously unoccupied and the associated break in income if that business were to leave the centre.

### Staffing Resources

The centres employ 1 full-time and 6 part-time staff.

# **Executive Appendix 2**

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## **SUMMARY OF PRIVATE BUSINESS CENTRES OPERATING ON SIMILAR TERMS IN REDDITCH**

Several developments in Redditch include 'business centre' in their name but are stand-alone buildings or buildings comprising multiple office suites or industrial bays, operating conventional (longer-term) commercial lease terms and without business support services.

There are two private business centres within Redditch which operate similar short-notice license terms and similar fees to the Borough Council's centres. Available information indicates they are experiencing similar void levels.

The Ashtenne / Imex Business Centre (Oxleasow Road, East Moons Moat) offers serviced office and industrial accommodation for start-up businesses to established businesses on flexible terms. There are approximately 48 office units (75 sqft to 380 sqft) and 25 industrial and warehouse units (870 sqft to 18,000 sqft). Meeting rooms are available to hire.

The Edward Street Business Centre offers serviced office suites, from 125 sqft in size. Units can be combined to offer suites of up to 2200 sqft. Market research by the Business Centre Manager notes the license fee and terms are comparable with the Borough Council's centres. In contrast to the other centres, units at the Edward Street Business Centre are offered fully furnished.

Comparing services, the Imex reception is manned on a part-time basis only and no additional secretarial services are offered. The Edward Street centre offers secretarial services.





# Executive Appendix 3

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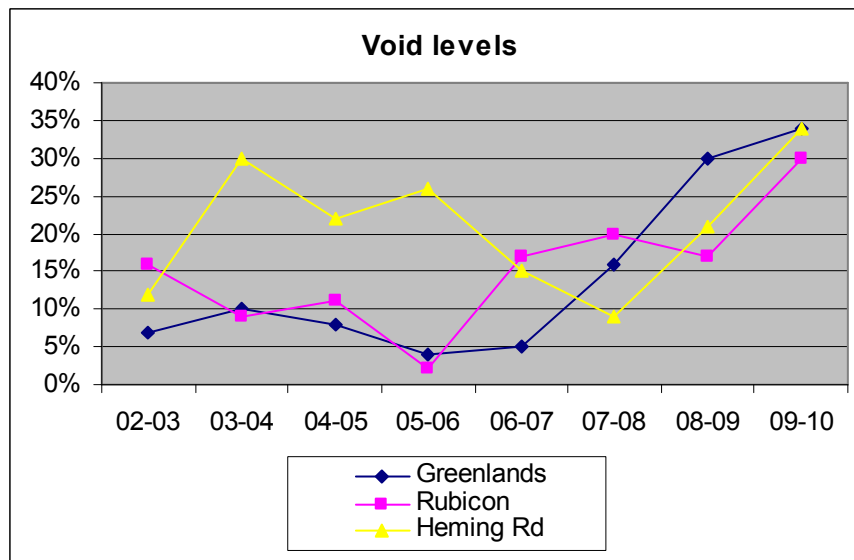
### PERFORMANCE (OCCUPANCY AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION) AND CHARACTERISTICS OF LICENSEES IN REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL'S BUSINESS CENTRES

Patterns of occupancy levels and characteristics of licensees are detailed below and results from annual customer satisfaction surveys are also summarised.

#### Void levels

The table below shows the void levels for 2001/02 onwards.

	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10
Greenlands	7%	7%	10%	8%	4%	5%	16%	30%	34%
Rubicon	7.5%	16%	9%	11%	2%	17%	20%	17%	33%
Heming Rd	23%	12%	30%	22%	26%	15%	9%	21%	39%



The demand for office and warehouse / light industrial accommodation has varied considerably in the last decade. There is a clear pattern at Greenlands Business Centre and the Rubicon Centre whereby void levels were low in the early part of the decade and have steadily increased since the economic downturn took hold. The fluctuating pattern at Heming Road is more difficult to explain, although voids in all three centres are trending to similar levels.

The number of enquiries about units has fallen in recent years – from 58 per annum in 2007/08 to 30 in 2009/10.

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### Characteristics of Licensees

Approximately 60% of new licensees are starting a business or have started a business from home and are moving to their first premises; the remainder are young and established businesses moving from other commercial premises.

### Average length of occupancy

Current licensees include start-ups through to businesses which have been trading for 10 years or more. The majority of licensees stay in the business centres for less than two years, although a significant number stay for more than six years.

Table: average length of stay of licensees between 1999 and 2009

	Up to 2yrs	2 - 6 yrs	6 - 9 yrs	10yrs+
Greenlands	146 (66%)	49 (22%)	21 (9%)	6 (3%)
Rubicon	154 (65%)	54 (23%)	17 (7%)	13 (5%)
Heming Road	46 (52%)	24 (27%)	5 (6%)	13 (15%)

As at the end of 2009 at Greenlands, 8 licensees have been at the centre for up to a year, while 6 companies have been at the centre for 10 years or more. At Rubicon, most current licensees have been at the centre for 2-4 years, although 5 companies have been at the centre for 10 years or more. At Heming Road, approximately half have been licensees for 2-4 years and half for 10 years or more.

### Reasons for leaving

Between January 2009 and January 2010, thirteen businesses left the centres. Of these, five closed down or went into liquidation, three moved to larger premises and one downsized by moving their office to home. Others moved to cheaper accommodation in the region or moved to different regions of the country (including Devon and Manchester). Eleven of the companies had been at the centres for between three months and four years, the rest were longer term licensees.

### Customer Satisfaction

The latest annual survey showed a high level of satisfaction towards the business centres. The majority of licensees rate the accommodation as 'very good value for money'; are pleased with reception services and note that secretarial services are 'good value for money'. The provision of free parking spaces is also rated highly.

Complaints were raised about the time taken to resolve maintenance issues, and general security. A General Suitability and Sufficiency Assessment judged the three buildings to be 'adequate' in terms of quality and suitability. The report did note the Greenlands Business Centre needs new windows and all three centres require better security and CCTV. It may be necessary to submit capital bids via the energy saving budget or asset maintenance budgets in due course to resolve these issues.

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

Document is Restricted



# Executive Appendix 5

Committee

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## FURTHER DETAIL REGARDING RECOMMENDATIONS 3 AND 4 – IMPROVE OCCUPANCY, BUSINESS SUPPORT AND THE INCOME-EXPENDITURE BALANCE

Officers are instructed to consider the matters below to enhance performance. Performance monitoring criteria and, where relevant, targets are suggested for each option.

### Instigate offers to attract new licensees

While more intensive marketing can help increase occupancy, ultimately financial incentives will be the main draw in attracting new licensees. Officers will investigate the ease of introducing the following offers and their financial and legal implications.

*Rent-free periods:* Three or six month rent-free periods could be offered to attract new tenants. In a similar offer at Bromsgrove's Basepoint, occupiers paid rates, lighting, heating and water bills. The centre had already ensured it could meet general running costs and staff salary bills from existing income, factoring in a percentage of units being empty. Essentially the running costs associated with the empty units were covered, but the 'extra' (income) part of the license fee was foregone. It is noted that many occupiers stay after a rent-free period – sometimes because of the premises and offer, sometimes due to inertia.

Other centres offer a six-month rent-free period on the condition a 12 month contract is signed. Such offers could be restricted to businesses which have been trading for less than four years – thereby supporting firms as they grow through the most vulnerable stages in the early lifecycle of the business. The number of units available offering a six month rent-free may need to be limited.

*Tiered rent* - to help start-up and young, growing businesses. Data shows that businesses are most vulnerable in their first two to three years of trading. Under this system, rents could be subsidised (at a tiered rate) for the first three years of occupancy, after which businesses would pay market rates. For example, new firms could receive a discount of 20% in year one, 10% in year two, 5% in year three then the market rate from year four. Established businesses already located in or moving to the centre would pay the market rate.

It should be noted this is just an example and an exact tiering structure would need investigating in detail with Finance Officers.

A decision on the definition of new or young business would be essential to this offer – for example, length of time trading or in commercial premises.

Offers could be conditional upon the business having a free review with a Business Link Advisor.

# Executive Appendix 5

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*Furnished units let for short-term project offices.* Such units – for example used by inward investors assessing the area – would be more attractive if offered furnished, so firms can move in (subject to availability) at short notice.

*Furniture loans for start-up and young businesses* - to reduce the initial costs of setting up an office – and as a draw to potential licensees.

### Performance monitoring:

- **Investigate the feasibility and affordability of the above and make proposals for implementation within 12 months.**
  - **Rent-free periods and tiered rent:** The number of units available rent-free or the particular level of discount is not specified here, but Officers will investigate the financial, legal and administrative viability of the offer and then outline the appropriate detail.
  - **Furnished units:** Officers will investigate the likely demand for such an offer and the practical implications, including cost of furnishing, having phone and internet connections ready at short notice and storing the furnishings when the units are not being used for project offices.
  - **Furniture loans:** Officers will investigate the demand for, and cost of, such an initiative.
  
- **If the above offers are implemented, targets for take-up of the offers would be set annually, depending on the number of vacant units.**
  
- **General occupancy:** Previously, occupancy targets have been set during the annual budget projection process and in individuals' performance review meetings. This review recommends a general occupancy target of 80% – in line with many other Council-owned business centres – be set, but with the prevailing economic conditions noted during monitoring.
- **New lettings:** Target to be set annually, dependent on current occupancy rates and general economic conditions.

### Improve the income-expenditure balance

Asset rental (depreciation), utilities, repair and maintenance and central services recharges are the considerable cost areas for the business centres. However it is unlikely that these could be reduced significantly. The focus therefore for improving the financial position is to increase income.

### Performance monitoring:

- **Target: trend the variance between projected budget and actuals towards zero or a positive figure.**
- **Target: trend the actuals accounts towards zero or surplus.**

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### Maximise license fee income

License fees are reviewed annually. The Property Services Manager confirmed rent reviews consider operating costs and a baseline to cover overheads, market conditions and comparisons of competitors' rents. A rental element is then applied to give an overall licence fee for each size/category of unit. In 2008/09 the fees were increased by 4.95%. In 2009/10 the fees were not increased, due to the economic downturn. Fees were increased by 1.5% for 2010/11.

Fee levels need to remain at market levels to keep the centres attractive and competitive – particularly as supply is exceeding demand. There is however scope for increasing the charges for secretarial services (see below).

### **Performance monitoring:**

- **Verify rents are within market rates.**
- **Verify initiatives to increase occupancy through offers and marketing strategies ultimately have a positive impact on income.** Initiatives to increase occupancy should help increase income although the two variables can not always be improved at the same rate – for example with a tiered rent system. Rent-free period offers are only likely to bring more income in the first instance through new tenants' use of secretarial services.
- **Ensure annual rent changes have a positive impact on the income-expenditure balance.**
- **Ensure annual rent changes do not have a negative impact on occupancy rates.**

### Maximise income from meeting rooms by improving usage

In 2009/10 the meeting rooms were available for approximately 2000 hours per year. Rooms at Greenlands were used for 325 hours (of which 57.5 hours were by external organisations). Rooms at Rubicon were used for 215 hours (of which 156 hours were by external organisation). Total income – including hire and refreshment costs – was £6,637.

To increase usage and income, Economic Development Officers are already publicising the meeting rooms within Redditch Borough Council. Larger empty units are also being utilised as extra meeting rooms until new occupiers are found.

Officers will explore further options to increase usage. This includes offering the meeting rooms to external organisations for innovative uses such as exhibition space, product launches, interview / assessment days or to hold training courses. General business support events – for example a procurement seminar or a jobs fair – could also be held at the centres. Such events could be open to businesses in the wider locality as well as tenants and could include networking time. This would also allow for informal promotion of the centres.

# Executive Appendix 5

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Wifi internet access has recently been provided. Facilities now match those offered by other local business centres. The internet connectivity has already attracted more business.

### Performance monitoring:

- **Verify charges are within market rates.**
- **Maintain a record of where external users heard about the facilities.**
- **Verify new offers and marketing strategies have a positive impact on usage.**
- **Verify any future facilities' upgrades have a positive impact on usage.**
- **Monitor customer satisfaction.**
- **Target: As a minimum, maintain usage levels. Aim to increase use by more companies more often, with annual target for number of hours used to be set annually, dependent on general economic conditions.**

### Increase income from reception and secretarial services

Service provision is an important part of the centres' offer. Annual surveys suggest the secretarial services are 'good value for money'. In 2009/10 they were used by 99% of Greenlands licensees and 96% of Rubicon licensees.

It is believed usage is high because it is both cheaper than employing a dedicated secretary and easier than licensees doing jobs like franking post themselves. As an example of the former - the gold phone service (phones answered with a personalised company-specific greeting and message taken if staff are out of the office) is charged at £2 per day.

It is appropriate to sell these services at market rates to established businesses that are more likely to be in a position to afford the set charges for service provision. The services are however particularly useful for sole traders and start-up businesses who cannot afford to employ a secretary. These businesses however may not find the services financially viable at the fixed market rates. Therefore the case for subsidising access for start-up and young businesses will be investigated with Finance Officers. The review recommends the Business Centres Manager has discretion to negotiate prices when approached about large and / or regular secretarial jobs.

Outsourcing secretarial services is not recommended. Staff undertake secretarial work alongside their reception duties, ensuring an effective use of staff time. Staff are familiar with licensees and their needs, resulting in good customer service and satisfaction. This in itself is a good selling point when marketing the centres' offer.

Some business centres offer selected secretarial services (for example photocopying) to the wider business community as well as tenants. Officers and the Business Centre Manager will investigate whether this would be manageable and profitable.



# Executive Appendix 5

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### Performance monitoring:

- **Verify charges are within market rates.**
- **Assess the scope for increasing charges – before January 2011 as charges are normally changed in March / April.**
- **Monitor the impact of fee increases on usage and income.**
- **Monitor customer satisfaction through annual survey.**
- **Target: at a minimum, maintain level of income generated from these services.**
- **Investigate the feasibility of offering secretarial services to external businesses.**

### Improve marketing to attract new licensees

The Business Centres Manager and Economic Development Officers will liaise more closely on the marketing strategy, assessing appropriate advertising mediums and target audience. Officers will continue to promote the units and meeting rooms internally and at external events including to other organisations and training providers which may be in contact with businesses.

The design and production of a more up-to-date and attention-grabbing brochure will be costed.

Information provided on the Borough Council website will be reviewed to ensure it is sufficiently informative and appealing. Officers will investigate (with IT Officers) the possibility of a dedicated website advertising the centres – such as [www.stocktonbusinesscentre.org](http://www.stocktonbusinesscentre.org).

### Performance monitoring:

- **Clarify an appropriate marketing strategy and continue promotion.**
- **Investigate the cost of developing a new brochure and leaflet; implement design and production if feasible within budget allowances.**
- **Investigate time and cost factors in developing the existing or a new website; implement if feasible and appropriate.**
- **Continue to record details of where enquirers heard about the centres and use to ensure marketing strategy is appropriately focused.**

### Expand the business support offer for all licensees

The centres are well-placed to offer business development support, in addition to just accommodation. Business centres' staff can help raise awareness of the assistance available from the Borough Council's Economic Development Officers.

New and young businesses could be offered a 'support package' – involving a free review with a Business Link advisor, a place on a three-day business start-up course and information on other business development courses.

# Executive Appendix 5

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In some centres, Economic Development Officers have a permanent presence or office. However there may not be enough requests for assistance from tenants of Redditch Borough Council's business centres to make the permanent presence of Economic Development Officers financially or logistically viable. Nonetheless tenants will continue to require support, therefore a more regular opportunity to seek advice and information when required would be welcomed and may be a more feasible alternative for the Borough Council. As such a small-scale free business advice surgery – with Economic Development Officers and a Business Link advisor – will be trialled.

An annual business support roadshow could take place with representatives of business support agencies and local training providers. Advice or specialised clinics could be provided on, for example: IT support, business planning, accessing finance, legal matters, accountancy or marketing.

Currently a directory of tenants is available in paper form, primarily for licensees. An online version would help tenants promote their services more widely. It may also be used by prospective tenants to assess the centre.

Inward investors using units as short term project offices would have a specific Economic Development Officer to assist them as required.

### **Performance monitoring:**

- **Ensure all licensees are aware of the business support services available from the Borough Council; are kept informed of news and events; and are aware of how to contact Economic Development Officers.**
- **Organise a roadshow and business surgeries, with regularity dependent on demand.**
- **Ensure all enquiries are responded to within seven working days. (A target for number of businesses assisted is not appropriate as not all licensees may need assistance.)**
- **Monitor customer satisfaction through annual survey.**
- **Provide an online directory of licensees, giving licensees the opportunity to opt out.**
- **Name an Officer as dedicated liaison to assist inward investors letting units as project offices.**

# **Executive Appendix 6**

Committee

16th June 2010

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## **REVISED DELEGATED POWERS**

### **FURTHER DETAIL REGARDING RECOMMENDATION 6**

The present Scheme of Delegation (in the Council's Constitution, Appendix C) states:

*Property Services – Business Centres*

*To manage and control the centres and all letting and licenses, to include the annual review of rents and service charges as appropriate and the setting of fees for secretarial services (provided the variation in fees / rents shall be limited to plus or minus 10% of the current year rent / fees unless first approved by the Executive Committee. (Property Services Manager - PSM)*

*To offer rent-free periods as an incentive at the start of a new letting, as necessary. (PSM)*

(A discretionary rent-free period of up to three months is currently available to new lettings. The Property Services Manager confirmed this includes licensees new to the centre as well as existing licensees renting additional space or moving to a smaller or larger unit (viewed as a new letting).)

Following Shared Services and WETT, this review proposes a revised Scheme:

**To manage and control the Business Centres.**

***To manage all letting and licenses:***

***Annual rent review: designated Officers, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to set rent annually (any change to be limited to plus or minus 10% of the preceding year's level, unless first approved by the Executive Committee).***

***To secure new lettings in times of decreased demand: designated Officers, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, may agree a rent-free period and / or a period of reduced rent (up to 20% of the current year's levy), judged on a case-by-case basis.***

***To maximise income from new lettings in times of increased demand: designated Officers, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, may increase rents (up to 20% of the current year's levy), judged on a case-by-case basis.***

***Designated Officers, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, may agree a period of reduced rent for specific licensees in response to evidence***

# **Executive Appendix 6**

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*of hardship, from time to time during their tenancy, judged on a case-by-case basis.*

**Secretarial services fees:**

- *Designated Officers, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to set fees annually (any change shall be limited to plus or minus 10% of the preceeding year's level, unless first approved by the Executive Committee).*
- *Designated Officers may agree a discounted rate for bulk orders, judged on a case-by-case basis.*

*(Designated Officers - HP&R / MBCe / MED)*

KEY:

HP&R = Head of Planning & Regeneration Services

MBCe = Business Centres Manager

MED = Economic Development Manager



# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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28th April 2010

## MINUTES

### Present:

Councillor Phil Mould (Chair), and Councillors K Banks, G Chance, J Pearce and D Taylor

### Also Present:

Councillors P Anderson, M Braley and C Gandy.  
T Buckley (Co-opted Representative – Unison)

### Officers:

B Barr, C Felton and J Pickering  
F Scott (Bromsgrove District Council)

### Committee Services Officers:

J Bayley and J Smyth

### 229. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors R King, Smith and Thomas.

### 230. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of any Party Whip.

### 231. MINUTES

The Committee was provided with brief updates on two of the minutes, namely:

- a) in respect of Minute 220 (Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel – Chair's Update), Members were informed that West Mercia Police Authority had made contact and advised that they would be considering the invitation to nominate a co-opted member to join the Panel at their Annual Meeting in June: and

.....  
Chair

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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- b) in respect of Minute 224 c (CfPS Good Scrutiny Awards), Members were informed that ninety five submissions had been received and were currently being short listed. It was anticipated that the results of the short listed submissions would be announced on the 25th May.

**RESOLVED that**

**the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 7th April 2010 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.**

**232. ACTIONS LIST**

The Committee considered the latest version of the Actions List and specific mention was made of the following matter:

Action 5: Communal Cleaning Contract for Council properties

Members were informed that the further consultation work requested had commenced and would be completed within eight to twelve weeks. An update would be provided in due course.

**RESOLVED that**

**the report be noted.**

**233. CALL-IN AND PRE-SCRUTINY**

It was noted that due to the last scheduled meeting of the Executive Committee being cancelled, there had been no call-ins. There were also no requests for any item on the Forward Plan to be pre-scrutinised.

**234. TASK & FINISH REVIEWS - DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENTS**

There were no draft scoping documents for the Committee to review.

**235. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS - PROGRESS REPORTS**

The Committee received reports in relation to current reviews, namely:

- a) Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

Members were informed that the Task and Finish Group had held three further interviews since the last meeting of the

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was further noted that the next meeting was likely to be organised for some time in May, following the Elections.

b) Joint Worcestershire Hub Review

Councillor Pearce reported that issues around monitoring and a general lack of available information had been discussed at the last meeting. Members noted that relevant Officers in at Redditch Borough Council would be providing information about the operation of the Hub in Redditch for consideration at the following meeting when the robustness of the monitoring process would be discussed.

**RESOLVED that**

**the reports be noted.**

**236. BUS PASS SCHEME: COUNTY PROVISION - UPDATE**

The Committee was informed that no further updates had been provided since the previous meeting.

Councillor Gandy reported that she had received a letter relating to a test case in London where the Institute for the Blind had taken a local Council to Court following their decision to restrict use of bus passes and not allow any use prior to 9.30am. They had won the case on the grounds that the decision discriminated against people with sight problems, who were reliant on buses at peak times as they were not able to drive. Councillor Gandy suggested that the success of the test case could potentially lead to other similar claims and was something that would have to be borne in mind and she was intending to raise the matter at a future Leaders Meeting.

**RESOLVED that**

**the report be noted.**

**237. GENDER EQUALITIES - UPDATE REPORT**

The Committee received a presentation on the Council's Gender Equalities Scheme and the Council's requirement to abide by a new Gender Equality Duty which came into force from April 2007 and publish a scheme showing how the Authority would meet their general duties to eliminate unlawful discrimination between men and women, eliminate harassment based on gender and promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

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Members noted that the gender equality duty required the Council to demonstrate through specific duties and practical measures how they intended to establish and operate the scheme and Officers suggested that a Lead Officer role would need to be established at the end of the process.

It was reported that the 2007 Duties were further amended in 2008 to include demonstrable actions to eliminate discrimination and harassment against transsexual and transgender people across all sectors. Officers advised that emerging new guidance meant the scheme was somewhat fluid at the moment and further changes were likely before coming into effect in June 2011.

Members were advised that the Council was expected to focus on four main issues identified as being the most significant for Gender Equality, namely:

1. income and pay gaps;
2. gender power;
3. violence and aggression against women and girls; and
4. discrimination and harassment against transsexual and transgender people.

The Council would be required to identify what functions were already in place to address the four areas and consider how to provide for what it did not have. Evidence would need to be collected to prove that appropriate consultation, monitoring, assessment of impact of actions and review progress had been undertaken to identify the most important issues for gender equality within the Council's remit. The Council would also have to consider addressing the gender pay-gap within its wider remit.

The Council's Policy would need to be clarified and the process would need to be achieved through:

- 1) leadership;
- 2) ownership of policy objectives by Service Departments;
- 3) collection of information by gender in delivery of services and employment opportunities whenever possible; and
- 4) consultation and involvement with the community and partners.

Members were informed that Bromsgrove's current scheme, whilst not perfect, would probably be acceptable under the new arrangements. Work was being done however, on a new scheme to address longer term objectives.



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Officers provided clarification on a number of points, including a query on whether the Council had undertaken a pay equality audit. Members were advised that this would form part of the Job Evaluation process.

The Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services reported that the vagueness of initial guidance had not helped but new information being provided would help to set up a framework through which specific actions that would fall into the scheme could be taken as a matter of course.

Members discussed the contribution the Council could make to address issues of violence against women and children. Officers advised that the Council could consider providing a range of services, for example rape crisis centres and refuges. Local authorities were being looked to to provide services for an anticipated high demand. It was suggested that the Equality and Human Rights Commission did not seem to understand the financial constraints on small local authorities. Any provision of specialist services would have to be looked at on a partnership basis, such as through shared services.

Officers advised that both recording and monitoring of reported incidents were undertaken and gender discrimination would form part of part of any local authority scheme. Mention was made of the Community Forum, a vibrant group of people who provided very good input into consultations and various other partnerships, such as with the Police. The Council had a number of mechanisms that could be evidenced to prove its compliance; there was, however, a need to ensure that all measures possible were put in place to avoid any challenges.

The Union perspective was that the Gender Equalities Scheme covered a wide, often vague, subject matter and that budgets would potentially be an issue. It was, however, a step in the right direction and something that the Council, working with partners, needed to consider.

It was agreed that of the four main issues identified as being significant, the causes and consequences of violence against women and girls was the most important area for further scrutiny.

## **RESOLVED that**

- 1) the presentation and supporting documents be noted;  
and**

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- 2) **the domestic violence strand of the identified four main focus areas be referred on to the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel for further discussion.**

## 238. YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

The Committee considered a report which detailed youth employment statistics for Redditch Borough Council, together with current initiatives and potential developments. The following matters were highlighted:

- a) Under 30's Employment

The Human Resources Development Manager highlighted the figures detailed in the report which demonstrated the balance of young people employed by the Council on permanent and casual contracts. These figures were not too dissimilar to other authorities if casual employees were not included. It was noted, however, that the authority employed a greater percentage of casual 16 to 24 years than other Local Authorities, predominantly in Leisure Services.

- b) Existing initiatives: Apprenticeships / Work Experience initiatives

Members were reminded of the three year plan that had been agreed in 2009 when a budget had been agreed for the Council to participate in a pilot to encourage apprenticeships and work experience. The apprenticeships' budget was allocated following submissions for placements by Service Managers. The Council currently employed two apprentices with funding in place for a third.

It was reported that, in comparison to some authorities the Council was doing very well with placements increasing year by year, although they were often offered in the same departments. Officers were looking to address this problem and expand the opportunities for placements across the Authority. Members further noted that Officers were currently looking into supporting schools and colleges running the Diplomas in Public Services due to be introduced in September.

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c) Potential Future Developments: Graduate Programme and Internships

Members were briefly updated on the National Graduate Development Programme which seeks to recruit and develop graduates with the potential to fill senior management roles in local government as well as the potential for the development of 12 month internships for third year undergraduates in local authorities. It was noted that there would be financial implications as undergraduates would generally be looking for paid placements and internships. For this reason, joining the programme was not regarded as viable at this time.

The Union representative attending suggested that graduate placements and internships formed part of a valid career structure and were worth considering at some point, particularly as there was the potential for the Council to find themselves with a huge gap in knowledge and experience when older, long serving members of staff retired. Members were informed that most local authorities were struggling with recruitment and retention of young people and it was suggested that shared services might provide better prospects for staff development and improve the situation.

Mention was also made of the Future Jobs Fund, a nationwide scheme which was designed to support the creation of jobs for young people aged 18-24 who had been out of work for a year or more. In Worcestershire many of the young people would be supported into 'green jobs' and would be required to work a minimum of 25 hours per week. There was no guarantee that these young people would be residents of Redditch and a number of applications for had been completed by residents living in other parts of Worcestershire. Officers agreed to discuss the matter further with Worcestershire County Council and to urge the authority to ensure that Pertemps, the employment agency which had won the contract to deliver this work in Worcestershire, advertised all Redditch opportunities within the Borough.

It was suggested that the higher aspirations young people had today were not always achievable and students often moved from course to course trying to find a career. Under these circumstances it was suggested that it might be useful for pupils to have 'tasters' of different jobs during school times as this might help them to decide what they wanted to do with their careers.

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**RESOLVED that**

- 1) the report be noted; and
- 2) the Committee continue to monitor the situation with regards to youth employment at the Council.

**239. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN**

The Committee considered a number of reports, provided by the Audit Commission, on best practice examples of other local authority Medium Term Financial Plans for comparison purposes. This provided an opportunity to identify measures, if any, that could be taken to improve the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and Plan in future years.

The Director of Finance and Resources reported that, Redditch Borough Council had been scored as a two star Council, as had Bromsgrove. The Audit Commission had been challenged on a number of points, it had been acknowledged that a number of areas did require improvement.

Members were informed that, whilst there was not a lot of risk involved in Medium Term Financial Planning, budget setting was difficult and would remain so for the foreseeable future. Risk management would be important and there was a need to have a transparent plan that provided clear information for Councillors on all budgets and resources. Councillors needed this to ensure they understood budget setting arrangements and could make an informed contribution to the budget setting process. It was further suggested that the community, through Budget Juries, could be more involved in budget setting processes as this would provide an opportunity for better understanding of the Council's finances and efficiencies.

It was noted that a number of areas of the plan needed to be improved, including better management of efficiencies and performance management. It was suggested that Shared Services should be shown as a separate efficiency for clarity. The Plan provided a lot of statistics but did not inform, and this needed to be addressed to ensure Members knew exactly what the Council was doing and its financial position.

Members suggested that the Medium Term Financial Plan should reflect the Corporate Plan and that figures on accumulative borrowing should be shown. They also queried why spending was not shown against individual services. Officers acknowledged that

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the accumulative borrowing figures were not provided in quarterly budget monitoring and that this point would be taken on board.

Members also expressed some concerns about budget juries. However, it was clear that the public needed to have a better understanding of the Council's finances and the difficult choices that would need to be made whilst the Council needed to get a feel for what people really wanted.

Members further commented that whilst clarity about the Council's finances was needed there was a risk that lobby groups could try and impose their views. Empowering people was important but not to the point that the Council lost control. The public needed to understand, in simple terms, what was happening with the authority's finances.

## **RESOLVED that**

**subject to the comments detailed in the preamble above, the report be noted.**

### **240. REVIEW OF THE OPERATION OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - MUNICIPAL YEAR 2009/10**

Members were invited to reflect on the operation of the Committee during the 2009/10 municipal year and consider whether they wished to propose any amendments to current practices.

The Chair commented that the Committee's Annual Report, which had been discussed at the previous meeting, had already highlighted the weaknesses and areas that required improvement. He did not, therefore, believe that the item was suitable for the Committee's consideration.

Members raised the matter of the Council Flat Communal Cleaning Task and Finish review and expressed disappointment at the lack of progress being made to implement the recommendations. The Committee had monitored the low response rate to the initial consultation at a previous meeting and Officers had therefore decided to undertake further, more locally focused, consultations in Winyates and Exhall Close. It was agreed therefore, that pending the completion of the consultation work in those two locations, the Committee continue to monitor the situation.

# **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

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**RESOLVED that**

- 1) **Officers be asked to review the applicability of the end of year review to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and**
- 2) **the consultation work being undertaken in response to the recommendations of the Council Flat Communal Cleaning Task and Finish Group continue to be monitored by the Committee.**

**241. REFERRALS**

There were no referrals.

**242. WORK PROGRAMME**

Members were advised that David McGrath had been invited to deliver an Introduction to Overview and Scrutiny training session at a meeting of the Committee on 2nd June 2010.

The Committee agreed that a letter of thank you be sent to Councillor David Smith for his work and commitment to the Committee during his two years as Vice-Chair.

A note of thanks to the Chair of the Committee was formally requested for all his hard work and support over the past two years.

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) **a vote of thanks to the Chair of the Committee, Councillor Mould, for all his hard work and support over the past two years be formally recorded;**
- 2) **a letter of thanks be forwarded to Councillor Smith for his work and commitment to the Committee during his two years as Vice-Chair; and**
- 3) **subject to any updates previously agreed during the meeting, the Committee's Work Programme be noted.**

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm  
and closed at 9.00 pm

.....  
CHAIR

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL****EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

16th June 2010

**ADVISORY PANELS, WORKING GROUPS, ETC - UPDATE REPORT**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Corporate Management
Relevant Head of Service	Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services
Non-Key Decision	

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

To provide, for monitoring / management purposes, an update on the work of the Executive Committee's Advisory Panels, and similar bodies which report via the Executive Committee.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that**

**subject to Members' comments, the report be noted.**

**3. UPDATES****A. ADVISORY PANELS**

	<b><u>Meeting :</u></b>	<b><u>Lead Members / Officers :</u></b> (Executive Members shown <u>underlined</u> )	<b><u>Position :</u></b> (Oral updates to be provided at the meeting by Lead Members or Officers, if no written update is available.)
1.	Climate Change Advisory Panel (formerly Environment Advisory Panel)	Chair: <u>Cllr B Clayton</u> / Vice-Chair: Cllr Hopkins  Guy Revans.	Date to be arranged
2.	Economic Advisory Panel	Chair: <u>Cllr Pearce</u> / Vice-Chair: Cllr Braley  John Staniland / Georgina Harris	Last meeting – 8th February 2010.

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL****EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE****16th June 2010**

3.	Housing Advisory Panel	Chair <u>Cllr B Clayton</u> / Vice-Chair Cllr Quinney Liz Tompkin	Last meeting – 17th November 2009.
4.	Leisure Contracts Advisory Panel	Chair <u>Cllr Anderson</u> / Vice-Chair Cllr Hopkins Kevin Cook	Last meeting – 1st February 2010.
5.	Planning Advisory Panel	Chair <u>Cllr Pearce</u> / Vice-Chair Cllr M Chalk John Staniland / Ruth Bamford	Next meeting – 17th June 2010.

**B. OTHER MEETINGS**

6.	Constitutional Review Working Party	Chair <u>Cllr Gandy</u> / Vice Chair Cllr Braley Steve Skinner	Last meeting - 24th February 2010.
7.	Grants Panel	Chair / Vice Chair Cllr Braley Angie Heighway	Next meeting – to be arranged.
8.	Independent Remuneration Panel	Independent Members / Chair Mr Andrew Powell	Last meeting – 5th February 2010.
9.	Member Development Steering Group	Chair <u>Brunner</u> / Vice-Chair Cllr Braley Steve Skinner / Trish Buckley	Last meeting – 23rd March 2010



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10.	Procurement Steering Group	Chair <u>Cllr Braley</u> / Vice-Chair Cllr Hall Sue Hanley	Last meeting – 18th January 2010.
11.	Church Hill District Centre – Members' Panel	Chair <u>Cllr B Clayton</u> Jim Prendergrast	Last meeting – 25th May 2010.

**22. APPENDICES**

None.

**AUTHOR OF REPORT**

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REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

16th June 2010

**ACTION MONITORING**

<b>Portfolio Holder(s) / Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Action requested</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>13th January 2009</b>		
<b>Cllr Gandy / Executive Committee</b>	<b>Third Sector Task and Finish Group</b>  The Executive to consider the further work to be undertaken (detailed in recommendation 5) and come back with suggestions for further work in due course.	Awaiting further consideration by relevant Members.
<b>27th January 2010</b>		
<b>Cllr Gandy / A Heighway</b>	<b>Single Equalities Scheme</b>  Members requested that a report/action plan be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee or Council detailing what the Council, as Community Leader, expected to receive in terms of education provision for the Borough and its children and young people.	
<b>Cllr Braley / Property Services Manager / B Haycock</b>	<b>Easemore Road Site – Consultation with Tenants</b>  Officers undertook to carry out a basic check of all such Leases held by the Council by the end of the financial year.	
<b>3rd February 2010</b>		
<b>Cllr Braley / T Kristunas</b>	<b>Initial Estimates 2010/11</b>  Officers to write, in the first instance, to Worcestershire County Council highlighting the increasing pressure on the Council's budgets for staff pensions.	

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL****EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

16th June 2010

<b>26th May 2010</b>		
<b>C Gandy / H Bennett</b>	<p><b>Council Plan 2010-13</b></p> <p>Officers undertook to circulate a definition of the acronym GV to Members of the Committee following the meeting.</p> <p>Amendments to be made to the Plan to reflect Members' comments on layout and content.</p>	
<b>B Clayton / L Tompkin</b>	<p><b>Capital Budget Provision 2009/10 and 2011/12 for Asbestos Removal</b></p> <p>Officers were requested to include a detailed update on asbestos removal as a separate appendix to the forthcoming half-yearly report on the Housing Capital Programme.</p>	
<b><u>Note:</u></b>	<i>No further debate should be held on the above matters or substantive decisions taken, without further report OR unless urgency requirements are met.</i>	Report period: 13/01/09 to 26/5/10