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FOREWORD BY THE CHAIR

I am very pleased to present the annual report for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This report provides an account of the work that the Committee has undertaken during the last twelve months, highlights progress that has been made, and identifies potential areas for further development.

As Chair, the last year has been a busy yet rewarding period. The Committee has scrutinised the Council's budget-setting process, helping to improve the accountability and detail provided. It has also embarked on a reduced number of Task Group reviews, which have been limited this year as a result of overall budget restrictions.

I have asked Task Groups to keep the number of recommendations to a maximum of five in order to ensure that they are more focussed and achievable. We have tried to ensure that our contribution has a positive impact on the Council's performance.

Looking ahead, I am confident that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee can continue to play an integral part in ensuring that Council services are fit for purpose and enhance the wellbeing of our residents. We will particularly be looking at how we can be of greater use by scrutinising policies and initiatives in advance so that we are able to provide greater support and challenge to the Council.

I would like to express my gratitude to all my fellow Committee Members for the hard work, support and enthusiasm that they have shown. I am also very appreciative of the hard work of Officers who support the work of the Committee, and would like to thank our lead support officers, Jess Bayley and Amanda Scarce, for the excellent work they have produced and, on a personal note, the support that they have given me in my first year as Chair.



**Councillor Jane Potter
Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Redditch Borough Council**

INTRODUCTION

There is an annual requirement for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to produce a report outlining its work and achievements during the previous year. The report contains information about the reviews that have been undertaken by Task Groups, Short Sharp Review Groups, and the work of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel. The report also provides Members with an opportunity to assess developments in scrutiny during the year.

This report has been produced by Democratic Services Officers with lead responsibility for Overview and Scrutiny in consultation with the Chair of the Committee and the remaining eight Members.

KEY PRINCIPLES OF SCRUTINY

Members at Redditch Borough Council aim to ensure that the Overview and Scrutiny process complies with the four key principles of scrutiny identified by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), the organisation set up to promote effective scrutiny in local government. The four key principles of effective scrutiny are:

- to provide a critical friend challenge to executive policy-makers and decision-makers;
- to enable the voice and concerns of the public and its communities to be heard;
- for scrutiny to be carried out by independent minded governors who lead and own the scrutiny process; and
- to drive improvement in public services.

MEMBERSHIP GALLERY

The following Councillors have served as members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee this year.



Councillor Jane Potter
Chair of the Committee



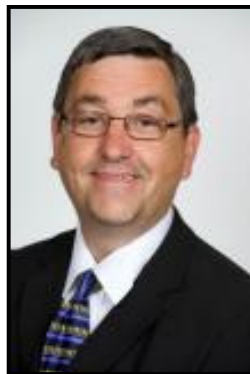
Councillor Gay Hopkins
Vice Chair



Councillor
Joe Baker



Councillor
David Bush



Councillor
Andy Fry



Councillor
Carole Gandy



Councillor
Alan Mason



Councillor
Paul Swansborough



Councillor
Pat Witherspoon

CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY

Membership: Councillors Jane Potter (Chair), Andrew Brazier, Carole Gandy, Pattie Hill and Wanda King.

The Police and Justice Act 2006 required every local authority in England and Wales from April 2009 to have a designated Committee with the responsibility for scrutinising the work of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CRDP). The North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership is the CDRP in Redditch. The Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel, established in 2010 as a sub-committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, was allocated responsibility for scrutinising the work of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership on behalf of Redditch Borough Council.

The Panel held its annual meeting on 29th October when it considered briefing papers on Domestic Abuse Projects. This subject was chosen for scrutiny because, as the meeting coincided with the white ribbon campaign, Members agreed that scrutiny of the matter would be timely. Members also felt the subject would be suitable for scrutiny due to the importance of the matter to community safety and Members were impressed by the work that was being delivered locally to address the problem. The Panel also considered the support provided to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community. The information provided during consideration of this matter helped to inform the work of the Provision of Support Networks for the LGBT Community Task Group. The Panel's findings were reported back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 24th November 2014.

HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Councillor Witherspoon continued to act as the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) in 2014/15. District Councils are invited to appoint representatives to the HOSC to ensure that the interests of the district in relation to health are taken into account.

During the year Councillor Witherspoon advised Members that a range of issues had been discussed by HOSC including the following topics:

- The Acute Hospitals Review which has involved a review of acute NHS services in the county and future service capacity. The particular implications for the Alexandra Hospital have been taken into account during meetings.
- The Integrated Community Team Hubs – whereby staff were encouraging patients to attend clinics rather than acute hospitals.
- Provision of incontinence pads to vulnerable patients and whether this would be subject to a charge.
- Community Stroke Rehabilitation Services. Members have been advised that 40 per cent of stroke patients require on-going rehabilitation which can be made available at community hospitals.

A SNAPSHOT OF REPORTS RECEIVED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

During the course of the year the Board received a number of reports, including the following:

Community Infrastructure Levy

Early in the year the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a presentation on the subject of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The levy had only recently been introduced and the presentation was designed to provide an overview of the process and the implications for the Borough.

Positive Activities – Monitoring Report

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee received an update on progress with the implementation of the positive activities programme across the Borough. Worcestershire County Council commissions positive activities that can be delivered to young people living in the county. Activities are commissioned from a number of public sector and Voluntary and Community Sector organisations working together.

Members learned that a wide range of positive activities are available for young people in the Borough. The aim of these projects is not simply to provide activities for all young people. Instead young people living in particular geographical areas where there is a high number of those not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) or where there is a high rate of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) are targeted.

Redditch Sustainable Community Strategy – Monitoring Report

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee continued to monitor implementation of the Redditch Sustainable Community Strategy by local partners. This role was assumed by the Committee at the suggestion of the Local strategic Partnership Task Group in 2010. During consideration of this update Members discussed progress in relation to the four key priorities detailed in the strategy which are:

- Health inequalities – specifically smoking, alcohol consumption and obesity/healthy lifestyles.
- Education attainment levels and raising aspirations of young people.
- The economy of Redditch with a focus on providing a larger and more diverse job offer.
- Areas of deprivation with an initial focus on Winyates and Church Hill.

Whilst Members welcomed improvements to education attainment rates within the Borough the Committee was concerned about health inequalities which remain a significant issue in Redditch.

The Committee also noted the importance of transparency regarding the work of the Local Strategic Partnership. Members were keen to ensure that minutes from meetings of the Redditch Partnership Executive Group and Redditch Community Wellbeing Trust be provided for Members' consideration. These have since started to be published on the Council's agenda management system, modern.gov, and should be available for all Councillors and residents to access via the Council's website and modern.gov app.

Quarterly Recommendation Monitoring Report

The Committee continues to monitor recommendations made by it or through Task Groups to ensure that wherever possible these are implemented in a timely fashion. In consultation with the Chair this document was revised early in the municipal year in order to make it more “user friendly”; it now includes “smiley” faces so Members can see at a glance when recommendations are progressing either satisfactorily or no action has been taken. Following consideration of this document the Committee received a detailed report in respect of the Market Scrutiny Task Group recommendations, which had taken time to be implemented. As a result of these discussions the Committee has agreed to pre-scrutinise a report on the subject of the future of the market which has been produced by external consultants.

Budget Scrutiny

The Committee has carried out scrutiny of the budget and pre-scrutinised a number of reports relating to the budget, including the Fees and Charges Report, the Housing Revenue Account Rent and Capital 2015-16 Report and the Medium Term Financial Plan 2015/16 – 2017/18. The Committee also held detailed discussions with the relevant officers in respect of Concessionary Bus Travel and Free Swimming, both of which impact on the Council’s budget.

Officers have acknowledged that improvements could be made to the budget scrutiny process in future. In particular the council is aiming to make scrutiny a more integral part of the budget setting process in future years. For this reason Officers will be seeking Members’ views on the most appropriate ways to implement budget scrutiny early in the autumn of 2015.

TASK GROUPS AND SHORT, SHARP REVIEWS

The detailed final reports of all completed investigations can be found on the Council's website within the Overview and Scrutiny section.

ABBEY STADIUM TASK GROUP

Membership: Councillors Carole Gandy (Chair), Andy Fry, Alan Mason and former Councillor Derek Taylor

Deadline: The review was completed in June 2014.

The Abbey Stadium Task Group review was launched in September 2013. The objectives of the review were:

- To review the business case for the revamped Abbey Stadium.
- To investigate the potential to expand the facilities at the Abbey Stadium.
- To assess the potential to provide more employment and apprenticeship opportunities for young people at the Abbey Stadium.
- To Investigate the potential for Hopper Bus service links to be expanded between the Abbey Stadium and other sites in the Borough.
- To review the financial costs involved in delivering any actions that could be taken to expand the Abbey Stadium.

During the course of the review Members gathered evidence from a variety of sources. A number of expert witnesses were interviewed, including Officers representing the Council's Leisure Service, Human Resources and Finance teams as well as the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism. The group also visited the Abbey Stadium, Evesham Leisure Centre and Stratford Leisure Centre to learn about the methods of service delivery adopted at other leisure venues in the region.

The Task Group held 15 meetings in total and their final report was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17th June and the Executive Committee at a meeting on 24th June 2014. All of the recommendations were eventually approved, though the group's third and fourth recommendations were only endorsed in an amended form in September 2014. As part of the budget setting process Officers have reported in recent months that the Council is reviewing a number of leisure services, potentially including the Abbey Stadium, and whether these could be managed in a different manner. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is scheduled to pre-scrutinise any proposals on this subject when they are forthcoming.

Recommendations: The group proposed six recommendations which in a summarised form below were that:

- The Abbey Stadium should be managed by a leisure trust.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee should pre-scrutinise any business case for a leisure trust.
- Provision of therapeutic services should be considered as part of the trust arrangements.
- Provision of a sauna/steam room should be considered as part of the trust arrangements.
- Officers should identify ways to market membership of the stadium to those aged 55 or more.
- There should be an enhanced retail offer at the stadium.

VOLUNTARY SECTOR TASK GROUP

Membership: Councillors Pat Witherspoon (Chair), Andrew Brazier and Roger Hill. (Councillor Baker resigned from this group in November 2013).

Deadline: The review was completed in July 2014.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee launched the Voluntary Sector Task Group review in October 2013. The review was established:

- To provide Members with an opportunity to investigate the support provided to local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations by both the Council and partner organisations
- To identify whether additional support could be provided in a difficult economic climate.

The group was aware that the Council's grant funding policy had been reviewed by the Third Sector Task and Finish Group in 2008. Members considered this previous group's report and were keen to build on their findings. During the review the group also interviewed a number of expert witnesses about; the Council's grants programme, Council tax rate relief, the links between the Redditch Local Strategic Partnership and the VCS, links between the Area of Highest Needs project and VCS organisations, and the existing partnership working between various Council departments and VCS organisations. Members were also impressed to learn about the significant value of the contribution made by local volunteers to Council services.

The Task Group held 20 meetings in total and put forward 10 recommendations, which were considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22nd July and the Executive Committee on 29th July 2014. The Executive Committee endorsed all of the group's recommendations, though in some cases this was in a slightly amended form. Progress with the implementation of the group's recommendations will continue to be monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendations: 10 recommendations were proposed as summarised below:

- Amendments were requested to the Council's grants process.
- Training for members of the panel to be provided.
- Officers to amend grants processes to take account of the Local Government Transparency Code 2014.
- An apprentice was requested to assist the Grants process.
- The framework for the provision of debt and budgeting advice in the locality areas was endorsed.
- An informal working group of Officers was to be set up to share best practice when working with the voluntary and Community Sector.
- The staff volunteering policy was to be refreshed
- A voluntary sector event was requested.
- A Redditch Hour was requested for social media.

FOOTBALL PROVISION TASK GROUP

Membership: Councillor David Bush (Chair) and Councillors Andrew Brazier, Andrew Fry, Carole Gandy, Pattie Hill and Pat Witherspoon.

Deadline: completed September 2014

The Football Task Group was established in January 2014. The group was tasked with:

- Reviewing football provision generally within the Borough of Redditch including that which is delivered by Redditch United Football Club.
- Reviewing the relationship between the Borough Council and Redditch United Football Club following the Executive Committee's rejection of the Club's proposal to relocate in November 2013.

The group interviewed a number of Council Officers, the Chairman of Redditch United Football Club and volunteers involved with community football delivered by the club. It also considered a Football Participation Report for Redditch prepared by the FA. Representatives of the FA were invited to attend a meeting and the Task Group held a meeting to which local stakeholders were invited to discuss current/future football provision and needs within the Borough.

The group produced an interim report in April 2014, though the review did not conclude until 2nd September 2014. The group's recommendation was approved by the Executive Committee on 8th September 2014. Progress with the implementation of the group's recommendations will be monitored in the Overview and Scrutiny tracking report.

Recommendations The group proposed two recommendations for the Executive committee's consideration:

- That Redditch United Football club be encouraged to discuss with officers how to make the best use of the current football club site.
- that Executive ensure that the playing pitch strategy identifies clear links to the emerging local plan requirements for playing pitch provision.

PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE BY TUDOR GRANGE ACADEMY SHORT, SHARP REVIEW

Membership: Councillors Pat Witherspoon (Chair), Pattie Hill, Carole Gandy, David Thain and Nina Wood-Ford

Deadline: The review was completed in November 2014.

In June 2014 elected Redditch Borough Councillors collectively received a significant amount of email correspondence from local residents about proposals made by Tudor Grange Academy Redditch, to change their admissions policy to take pupils from Year 7 and the consultation process that had been followed by the school. Whilst Redditch Borough Council has no responsibility for education it was recognised that elected Borough Councillors had a moral responsibility as community champions to investigate the concerns of residents further. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee therefore agreed in July 2014 to launch a review of the process that had been followed.

The objectives of the review were:

- To understand the proposals by Tudor Grange Academy to extend the age range of pupils;
- To assess the potential impact on schooling arrangements in the Borough if the proposals were to be implemented;
- Through investigation of this proposal and the basis on which academy schools operate, to support Ward Councillors and residents in understanding how they can best contribute most effectively to the debate and decision on this matter

Members gathered evidence from a variety of sources including Worcestershire County Council, Tudor Grange Academy Redditch, Karen Lumley MP, Councillor Rebecca Blake (due to her involvement with a petition launched in response to the school's consultation process), and the Redditch Democratic Alliance. Information was also obtained from national guidance concerning school admission processes.

The Task Group held nine meetings in total and proposed three recommendations, which were considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 24th November 2014 and the Executive Committee on 16th December 2014. The Executive Committee endorsed all of the group's recommendations. However, two of the recommendations required a decision to be made by Worcestershire County Council. Members have been notified that the County Council feels in a position to only endorse one of the group's recommendations. As part of this process the County Council has committed to involving Borough Councillors in developing new working relationships with local schools.

Recommendations: The three recommendations are summarised below:

- The Chief Executive of the Council was asked to write to the Secretary of State for Education and Minister of State for Schools to raise concerns about the process for making changes to school admissions processes in a three-tier education system.
- Worcestershire County Council was asked to engage with Borough Councillors when commissioning services in the remit of the Head of Learning and Activity.
- Worcestershire County Council was asked to produce easy to read guides to the process for making changes to school admissions processes.

TACKLING OBESITY TASK GROUP

Membership: Councillors Jane Potter (Chair), Joe Baker, Andrew Brazier, Natalie Brooks and Paul Swansborough
Deadline: March 2015.

The subject of obesity was identified as a key area of concern during the Overview and Scrutiny training in June 2014. In particular Members identified a need to tackle obesity as a key element of the health inequalities within Redditch.

The Tackling Obesity Task Group was launched in August 2014. The group was tasked with

- Assessing the work undertaken by the Redditch Partnership and relevant partner organisations to address obesity levels in the Borough.
- Identifying local barriers that might be preventing people from losing weight
- identifying opportunities to enable residents to live healthier lifestyles.

During the course of the review the group has obtained evidence from a variety of key sources including: representatives of Worcestershire County Council's public health team, the leisure services team, the Redditch Partnership manager, Redditch and Bromsgrove Clinical Commissioning Group, the Neighbourhood Development Manager, the Web Development team, the Planning Department, the Communications Manager, the Leader of the Council, Councilor Bill Hartnett (in his capacity as the Portfolio Holder for Leadership and Partnership including health and the voluntary sector) and the Chief Executive of the Council.

Written documentation has also provided useful evidence for the review including; scrutiny reports on the subject of obesity produced by other local authorities; the health profiles for Redditch for the period 2010 to 2014, the Worcestershire Obesity Plan and the Obesity Action Plan from the Redditch Sustainable Community Strategy.

At the time of writing the group was in the process of concluding their review. Subject to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorsing the group's recommendations these will be considered by the Executive Committee on 10th March 2015.

Recommendations: At the time of writing the group's recommendations and whether these would be endorsed by the Executive Committee, remained to be confirmed.

PROVISION OF SUPPORT NETWORKS FOR THE LGBT COMMUNITY TASK GROUP

Membership: Councillors Joe Baker (Chair), Natalie Brooks, Gay Hopkins and David Thain

Deadline: The work of the Task Group is due to be completed in June 2015.

A gathering took place at Redditch Town Hall in June 2014 to enable participants to demonstrate solidarity with the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. Councillor Baker was approached after the gathering had taken place by a number of representatives of the LGBT community who were concerned about the support available to them and who sought reassurance about the action being taken locally to address homophobia.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee subsequently agreed to undertake a review of the support networks available to the LGBT community in the Borough. It was not possible for this review to start until December 2014 once other scrutiny reviews had been completed.

The review is currently at an early stage. However, Members have already made significant progress having undertaken the following actions:

- An interview with the Council's Policy Manager
- Consideration of scrutiny reports on similar subjects produced by other local authorities.
- Assessing the content of the Homophobic Hate Crime report produced by Stonewall in 2013.
- An interview with a representative of the Council's Community Safety team.
- An interview with Inspector Rebecca Love from West Mercia Police.

During the course of the review the group is also hoping to meet with representatives of Stonewall and to consult with members of the LGBT community.

The group remains on track to complete their review by July 2015.

JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY INVESTIGATIONS

JOINT WRS TASK GROUP

Redditch Borough Council representatives: Councillors Mason (lead) and Hopkins (substitute).

Deadline: The review was completed in June 2014.

The Joint WRS Scrutiny Task Group was established in 2013 to review the shared Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS). Elected Members from each of the Councils in Worcestershire, including Redditch Borough Council, were appointed to the review which was hosted by Bromsgrove District Council as the host authority for the shared service.

The key objectives of the review were for the group:

- To review the final business case for the shared service.
- To compare previous service levels at individual local authorities with current service levels in the shared service.
- To assess the performance of the services compared to previous performance levels
- To investigate levels of customer satisfaction.
- To review the governance arrangements for the shared service.

The final report, which contained 12 recommendations, was considered by all those participating authorities' Overview and Scrutiny Committees and by this Committee at its June 2014 meeting. The recommendations were passed to the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee, the decision making body for WRS, in October 2014.

The Committee approved a number of the group's proposals, though rejected all recommendations relating to changes to the governance arrangements for WRS. Bromsgrove District council, as the host authority for the review, will be monitoring the implementation of the approved recommendations. Any updates received from Bromsgrove District Council on this subject will be reported for Members' consideration.

The final report is available to view on the Council's website within the Overview and Scrutiny section.

Recommendations: The Task Group proposed recommendations following on the following themes:

- Communications about the work of the partnership.
- Governance of the partnership.
- Finances and the sustainability of the partnership

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY CONTACT DETAILS

For additional copies of this report, or to find out more about Overview and Scrutiny at Redditch Borough Council, please contact:

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Further information about the Overview and Scrutiny process at Redditch Borough Council can also be found on the Council's dedicated web pages. To access these web pages please use the web address attached here:

<http://redditch.whub.org.uk/cms/council-and-democracy/councillors-and-committees/overview-and-scrutiny.aspx>