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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 was also pleasing to note that the Committee was able to scrutinise elements of the budget earlier than in previous years which made our work easier.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has worked to ensure that Council services are fit for purpose and enhance the wellbeing of our residents. It has also embarked on a number of Task Group and Short Sharp reviews. In particular, the work undertaken on our services for the LGBT community was particularly successful in making proposals to improve the lives of those residents.

This year we have welcomed two Portfolio Holders to meetings when significant services within their remit were the subject of review. Councillor Witherspoon, Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism, and Councillor John Fisher, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management, contributed during debates about the future delivery of leisure services in the Borough and the Medium Term Financial Plan respectively. I feel that having an opportunity to consult with the Portfolio Holders was really helpful, ensuring that our discussions were informed by decision makers and that those decisions could be held to account where appropriate. I would like to thank them both and I hope that we can continue to build on this process of involving Portfolio Holders constructively in scrutiny debates in the future.

I would also 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.



**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 the 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



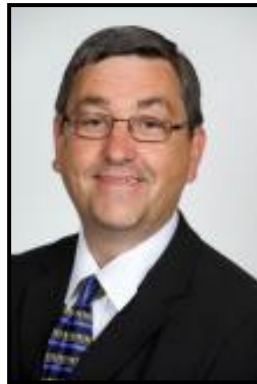
Councillor Gay Hopkins
Vice Chair



Councillor
Joe Baker



Councillor
David Bush



Councillor
Andy Fry



Councillor
Gareth Prosser



Councillor
Paul Swansborough



Councillor
Jenny Wheeler



Councillor
Nina Wood-Ford

CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY

Membership: Councillors Gareth Prosser (Chair), Wanda King, Jane Potter, Paul Swansborough and Nina Wood-Ford.

The Police and Justice Act 2006 required every local authority in England and Wales from April 2009 to have a designated Committee with 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. In Redditch the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel, established in 2010 as a Sub-Committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, has been allocated responsibility for scrutinising the work of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership.

The Panel held its annual meeting on 16th September 2015 when it considered a briefing paper which provided an update on the work of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership covering the previous 12 months. This included updates on the following areas:

- A recent review of Community Safety Partnership arrangements in the county.
- The future introduction by the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner of a new commissioning approach to funding community safety projects.
- Work on Hate Crime Awareness Week.
- The Worcestershire Safer Places Scheme.
- Redditch Roadway Arts.
- Delivery of Crime Prevention training to Council staff.

HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Councillor Nina Wood-Ford was the the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) in 2015/16. District and Borough 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.

Councillor Wood-Ford has provided regular updates on a range of issues which had been discussed by HOSC including the following topics:

- Primary Care commissioning and GP access.
- Ongoing developments with the review of Worcestershire Acute Hospitals Trust and the outcomes of an unannounced Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection.
- The work of the Patient Flow Centre at Wildwood in facilitating the return of patients from hospital to their homes.
- Maternity and Paediatric Services.
- The draft Joint Health and Well-Being Strategy for Worcestershire.
- Oncology services in the county.

A SNAPSHOT OF REPORTS / PRESENTATIONS RECEIVED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

During the course of the year the Board received a number of reports and presentations on a variety of subjects, including the following:

Leisure Services Pre-scrutiny

During the first three meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June and July 2015 Members undertook detailed pre-decision scrutiny of an item listed on the Executive Committee Work Programme: *Review of the Operation of Leisure Services*. This report outlined findings from an Options Appraisal of leisure and cultural services that had been completed by external consultants on behalf of the Council. Members felt that this scrutiny work was appropriate as it followed directly on from the completion of a Task Group review of the Abbey Stadium in June 2014 and a decision made by the Executive Committee that month that the Council should explore the options for a leisure trust to manage some or all of its leisure facilities, including the Abbey Stadium.

At a meeting of the Executive Committee on 14th July 2015 Members considered the Options Appraisal. During this meeting Members agreed that further work by Officers was required prior to a decision on the future delivery of leisure and cultural services being taken. Meanwhile a decision was taken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to launch a Short, Sharp Review of the future options for the delivery of the Council's leisure and cultural services (further information about this review is provided on page 11).

The scrutiny review reported back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2015 alongside a report from Officers on the outcomes of the additional work they had undertaken. In respect of the Officers' work it was concluded that additional investigations were required into the current operation of leisure and cultural services. To ensure that the Executive Committee could make a considered decision about the future of leisure and cultural services at the Council Members agreed to postpone making any decisions about the scrutiny group's recommendations until the additional work had been completed.

Future Management of Redditch Outdoor Market

In 2012/13 Members completed a scrutiny review of Redditch outdoor market. The group proposed a considerable number of recommendations, the majority of which were approved. In summer 2015 Officers reported to the Council regarding proposals for the future management of Redditch market. Given the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's previous investigation of this subject and the likely public interest in the matter the Committee concluded that Redditch Outdoor Market was suitable for pre-decision scrutiny.

At the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2015 Members considered a report on the subject of the market. This report detailed actions that had already been taken to implement the scrutiny group's recommendations. Various options for the future management of the market were also detailed within the report. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee supported the option that Members felt would be best for the future sustainability of the market, market stall holders and the public. This proposed that the Council should conduct a procurement and contracting process to select and appoint a contractor to manage Redditch Outdoor Market. This proposal was

approved by the Executive Committee and a procurement process was subsequently undertaken.

Voluntary Sector Grants Programme

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee continues to monitor the implementation of recommendations that have been made as part of the scrutiny process on a quarterly basis. In September 2015 Members raised concerns about limited progress in relation to the implementation of the recommendations that were made by the Voluntary and Community Sector Task Group in July 2014. An update was provided by relevant Officers in October 2015 and Members welcomed reports that these recommendations would be implemented once Officer support for the Council's grants programme had been resolved.

Gas Safety Testing

Members were concerned to learn in the summer of 2015 that gas safety inspections had been overdue at some Council houses in the Borough. The Committee was advised that in response the Council had self-referred to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and the matter would be reviewed by their Consumer Regulations Panel. Members welcomed the action that was taken by Officers in various teams to ensure that all outstanding inspections were resolved. However, the Committee noted that Members were also keen to ensure that the local authority learned lessons so that this problem did not recur in future. It was anticipated that the Internal Audit report which investigated this issue in detail would help the Council achieve this objective.

Quarterly Recommendation Monitoring Report

The Committee continued to monitor recommendations made through the scrutiny process to ensure that wherever possible these are implemented in a timely fashion. In consultation with the Chair this document was revised in the previous municipal year in order to make it more "user friendly". It now includes "smiley" and "sad" faces so Members can see at a glance when recommendations are progressing either satisfactorily or no action has been taken. This approach has been well received by Members and enabled the Committee to urge additional action where they have considered this to be appropriate

Budget Scrutiny

This year the Committee has also continued to make an active contribution to the Council's budget setting process. To a significant extent this has been conducted through pre-decision scrutiny including consideration of; the fees and charges 2016/17, Bereavement Services' fees and charges, and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The Committee would like to thank the Executive Committee for agreeing to release the fees and charges report for publication earlier than usual as this provided the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with sufficient time to consider the proposed charges in detail and enabled Members to make informed recommendations on the subject. It is hoped that a similar arrangement will be implemented in future years to the benefit of the Council's finances.

In line with previous years the Committee has also considered and commented on the Council's overarching budget. Various reports, including drafts of the Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/17 to 2018/19, have been considered by the Committee. Members

have been mindful of the challenging financial circumstances facing Redditch Borough Council, like many local authorities, and this has informed the debate at meetings. Despite the fact that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee did not make any recommendations Members were pleased to note that the points raised during consideration of the Medium Term Financial Plan were noted and informed the Executive Committee's decision making on this subject in February 2016.

Housing Provision

An Overview and Scrutiny training session was provided to all Non-Executive Committee Members at the beginning of the municipal year. During this training exercise there were interactive workshop sessions designed to enable Members to identify items of interest to the local community, which linked to the Council's strategic purposes, that would be suitable for scrutiny during the year. One of the issues that was identified during this training session was the quality, quantity and accessibility of private, social and Council housing in the Borough.

At a meeting of the Committee in October 2015 Officers from the Council's Housing and Strategic Housing teams provided further information about the housing available to residents living in the Borough. As part of this process Members considered data relating to demand for social housing, the Council's allocations system and policy, the Council's holistic approach to allocating housing and supporting tenants in their own homes and action taken to resolve problems with any void properties.

Housing Benefits

The subject of housing benefits was also identified by Members as an issue of concern to local residents during the Overview and Scrutiny training session. In March 2016 Members received a detailed presentation which outlined the nature of changes that had been made to welfare support and housing benefit payments since 2013. The Committee learned about the impact that these changes had had locally and action that had been taken by Council staff to make sure that appropriate support could be provided to residents affected by the changes. This had included the introduction of a hardship scheme to vulnerable customers in need of support. Information was also provided about the introduction of Universal Credit in the Borough and the number of residents who were subject to the new benefits rules under this system.

Further legislative changes relating to housing benefits and the welfare system were announced in July 2015. These changes have not yet been implemented by the Government and, at the time of writing, it was unclear when this would take place. However, Members recognised that this subject can have significant implications for customers, particularly some of the more vulnerable residents living in the Borough. The Committee has therefore requested a further update on the impact of these changes at a future meeting once they have been implemented.

Redditch Partnership

In 2010 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was allocated responsibility for monitoring the work of the Redditch Partnership and progress in respect of local partners' priorities, as detailed in the Redditch Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS).

This year the update report was received in March 2016. Members were interested to learn about the work of various theme and sub-groups which form part of the

partnership, and particularly welcomed the work of the local Economic Development Theme Group. The Committee was also advised about amendments that had been made to the partnership's priorities. A new priority had been introduced committing the partnership to act as a lead on transformational change of services for residents in Redditch initially through a pilot project; the Connecting Families programme.

Whilst Members remained supportive of the work of the partnership there was general agreement that further action could be undertaken to monitor and report back on the impact of work undertaken by the partnership. Members also agreed that it would be useful for contact details for key partner organisations and projects to be provided for Members' consideration in order to facilitate effective signposting where appropriate. It is anticipated that Officers will address these concerns prior to the next annual update report to the Committee.

S106 Funding

Whilst the Overview and Scrutiny Committee did not propose any recommendations during consideration of the Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/17 to 2018/19 Members did identify that further information about s106 funding would be useful. A briefing on this subject has therefore been arranged for the meeting of the Committee that is due to take place on 12th April 2016. Due to general interest in this subject all Members have been invited to attend this meeting.

Performance Dashboard

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has an important role to play in monitoring the performance of Council services. In recent years a dashboard, containing comprehensive information about service performance in relation to the Council's strategic purposes, has been developed. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is keen to explore opportunities for the Committee to access and use the information provided on the dashboard. In order to identify the most appropriate way to utilise this resource a presentation on the subject of the dashboard is due to be provided for the Committee's consideration on 12th April. As this will continue to be a resource available to Members the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may want to revisit the dashboard and the findings from this presentation in the new municipal year.

TASK GROUPS AND SHORT, SHARP REVIEWS

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

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 was completed in July 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 (LGB&T) community. Councillor Baker was approached after the gathering had taken place by a number of representatives of the LGB&T community who were concerned about the support available to them and who sought reassurance about the action being taken locally to address homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee subsequently agreed to undertake a review of the support networks available to the LGB&T community in the Borough.

The Group's investigations included 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 senior representatives of West Mercia Police.
- An interview with the Council's Head of Leisure and Cultural Services.
- An Interview with representatives of Stonewall.
- A visit to the Birmingham LGB&T community group and interview with a representative.
- An interview with representatives of Arrowside Sexual Health Clinic.
- An interview with a representative of the Redditch and Bromsgrove Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

At the end of the review the group proposed six recommendations based on the evidence they had gathered. The recommendations promoted policies and services that benefitted the health of members of the LGB&T community and highlighted the need for improved communications locally to help better inform the LGB&T community about local support services. Recommendations were also proposed which focused on enhancing the support provided by Redditch Borough Council to LGB&T staff and by Worcestershire County Council to LGB&T pupils in local schools as well as to their families. Each of these recommendations was endorsed by the Executive Committee, though a number require action from external partner organisations. The response to the group's review and findings has been overwhelmingly positive. Updates provided to date indicate that action is being taken locally to implement the group's proposals with a leaflet for the LGB&T community having been launched in February 2016 to coincide with LGBT History month.

LEISURE SERVICES SHORT SHARP REVIEW

Membership: Councillors Jane Potter (Chair), Tom Baker-Price, Gay Hopkins and Paul Swansborough.

Deadline: The work of the Task Group was completed in December 2015.

In September 2015 a Short, Sharp Review of all of the Council's Leisure and Cultural Services was launched. Members agreed it was appropriate to launch this review partly due to the expertise that Members had developed during the Abbey Stadium Task Group exercise in 2014/15 as well as through pre-scrutiny of reports on this subject in June and July 2015. The review was tasked with addressing a number of objectives including the following:

- To consider the general requirements of a number of different operating models for the delivery of leisure and cultural services.
- To review the financial implications for the Council of all of the delivery models.
- To assess the implications of each delivery model for the quality of services delivered to the customer.
- To consider the governance arrangements that would apply in relation to each model.
- To consult with other local authorities about the operational models that they have adopted for the delivery of leisure and cultural services.
- To identify suitable delivery models for leisure and cultural services. This included considering whether different delivery models might be suitable for different elements of leisure and cultural services.

During the course of the review the group addressed these objectives by gathering evidence from a variety of sources. This included interviews with relevant Officers, consideration of appropriate documentation and consultation via questionnaires with other district Councils which deliver services to residents in an area with similar demographics to the Borough of Redditch. Members were pleased to receive completed questionnaires from 12 local authorities. The group was also very impressed by information provided by the Leader of Tamworth Borough Council during an interview and by representatives of Cannock Chase District Council during a visit to Chase Leisure Centre.

At the end of the review Members proposed three recommendations about the future delivery of leisure and cultural services. These recommendations, as detailed in the group's final report, were considered at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8th December 2015. The Committee also received an update on the work of Officers in respect of leisure and cultural services at this meeting. As Officers were suggesting that they needed to undertake further work in their review of leisure and cultural services Members agreed that it would be premature for the Executive Committee to make a decision about the scrutiny group's recommendations in December 2015. For this reason the Committee agreed to postpone a vote on the group's recommendations and on referring the matter to the Executive Committee until the outcomes of this additional work by Officers is available for Members' consideration. At the time of writing it was anticipated that this additional work would be completed by April 2016.

IMPROVING DISABLED PEOPLE'S ACCESS TO REDDITCH'S TAXI FLEET SHORT, SHARP REVIEW

Membership: Councillor Gay Hopkins (Chair) and Councillor Tom Baker-Price (the rest of the membership remained to be confirmed at the time of writing).

Deadline: April 2016.

In 2011-12 a Task Group investigation of action that could be taken to improve access for people with disabilities to Redditch town centre took place. The group proposed a number of recommendations, including two which were designed to enhance provision of taxi services to passengers with disabilities living, working in or visiting the Borough. These two recommendations were approved by the Licensing Committee and action has been taken to implement these proposals.

However, in January 2016, during a meeting of the Taxi Licensing Forum, concerns were raised about the taxi services that were available to people with disabilities in the Borough. The Forum was advised about the recent experiences of a lady with disabilities who had become stranded at local shops because she had not provided 48 hours' notice to a taxi firm of her requirements for travel. Information was also provided about issues that had been raised with Disability Action Redditch (DAR), which had learned about customers with disabilities being charged three times more than people without disabilities for undertaking the same journey. Furthermore, concerns were raised that some taxi firms were refusing to take bookings for passengers who used wheelchairs.

In this context in February 2016 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee concluded that a review of action that could be taken to improve access of people with disabilities to Redditch's taxi fleet would be useful and help to address public concerns.

The group has been tasked with addressing three key objectives:

- 1) to identify ways to prevent taxi firms from overcharging passengers who have disabilities for using their services;
- 2) to determine action that could be taken to encourage firms to increase the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles operating in local taxi fleets; and
- 3) to identify appropriate action that could be taken to reduce the length of notice required when booking a wheelchair accessible vehicle.

As this investigation is being conducted as a Short, Sharp Review Members are aiming to complete this exercise by April 2016.

JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY INVESTIGATIONS

INCREASING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY JOINT SCRUTINY TASK GROUP

Review Host: Worcestershire County Council

Redditch Borough Council representative: Councillor Gareth Prosser

Deadline: Original deadline January 2016, final deadline date to be confirmed.

The Worcestershire County Council (WCC) Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) at a meeting on 26th February 2015 discussed the Worcestershire Public Health Annual Report 2014. A key theme in this report is a local aim to increase opportunities for participation in physical activities. The report highlighted that "*...physical activity rates decrease quite steeply after the age of 45...*" (although) "*...when comparing with the region and England, Worcestershire participation rates are relatively high...*" It also noted that "*...there is fragmentation of responsibility between County, District and national (Sport England) levels...*" The County Council was keen to ensure opportunities to access sport and physical activity were available to all, and were interested to find out what impact the 2012 Olympics had had on participation rates. For these reasons the Board concluded that a review of this subject would be worthwhile.

The Board recognised that, due to the involvement of district Councils with the delivery of leisure and cultural services at the local level, it would be appropriate for this review to be conducted as a joint exercise. The Redditch Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the terms of reference for this review on 7th July 2015. The Committee agreed that this was an important subject and noted that participation would correspond with addressing two of the Council's strategic purposes including: provide good things for me to do, see and visit and help me to live my life independently (including health and activity). The review could also help to address significant issues relating to health inequalities which the local authority is committed to addressing as a member of the Redditch Partnership. Furthermore, Members noted the links to a previous review completed by the Committee, a review of action that could be taken to tackle obesity levels in the Borough, which was completed in March 2015.

Worcestershire County Council is hosting this joint scrutiny exercise. At the time of writing the deadline for the review and the substance of the group's proposals remained to be confirmed.

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

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://www.redditchbc.gov.uk/council/the-council/overview-and-scrutiny.aspx>