

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 14 January 2020

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), Councillor David Thain (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Greg Chance, Brandon Clayton, Julian Grubb, Bill Hartnett, Mike Rouse and Craig Warhurst

Also Present:

Councillor Joe Baker (Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee) Councillors Roger Bennett, Peter Fleming and Nyear Nazir

Officers:

Helen Broughton, Lisa Devey, Kevin Dicks, Claire Felton, Clare Flanagan, Sue Hanley, Ostap Paparega, Jayne Pickering and Judith Willis

Senior Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

82. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

83. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

84. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader circulated a list of his announcements at the meeting.

85. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Thursday 19th December 2019 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

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Chair

**86. SUPPORT TO THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR
2020/21**

The Head of Community Services presented a report on the subject of support to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in 2020/21. During the presentation of the report the following matters were highlighted:

- The report outlined six options for the provision of support to VCS organisations over the following three years.
- The options all focused on the Council's Concessionary Rents Scheme and VCS grants programme and the different ways in which these could operate.
- The Council also had a contract with the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) to provide financial advice to residents and this had been considered as part of the review.
- Consultation had been undertaken with VCS organisations. The organisations had reported that they would prefer to receive core funding from the Council, rather than funding for specific projects, as this was the area where VCS organisations tended to struggle to secure funding.
- The VCS organisations had also highlighted the social value of their work to the local community during the consultation process.

During consideration of this item an additional Option Seven was proposed by Councillor Hartnett for future support to be provided to VCS organisations. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Greg Chance.

The proposed seventh option was as follows:

"1. End the current Councillor community grants scheme and revert back to the Grants Panel of elected Members for the distribution of grants which is now £145,000 and to be distributed as previously to set criteria as set by the Council and its priority.

2. Support to continue to pay the £75,000 financial advice and problem solving contract".

In proposing Option Seven Councillor Hartnett commented that he was opposed to all of the options detailed in the report. He suggested that those options sent a message to VCS organisations that the Council would not support the VCS and did not value VCS organisations. In addition, Councillor Hartnett expressed concerns about the potential impact of requiring VCS organisations to pay a commercial rent and he suggested that this could impact on the long-term viability of some VCS groups as a consequence.

Councillor Hartnett commented that many VCS organisations provided services that should be delivered either by Redditch Borough Council or Worcestershire County Council. Furthermore, he questioned what organisations would fill the gap that might emerge in local service delivery if those VCS organisations were no longer able to operate as a consequence of the withdrawal of a concessionary rent. Councillor Hartnett suggested that this could have a negative impact on the community and could result in increased demand for services from the NHS, Redditch Borough Council and Worcestershire County Council. To address this situation Councillor Hartnett suggested that a Member-led Grants Panel should be reintroduced to consider grants applications from VCS groups and the Council should continue to allocated £75,000 to a contract with a VCS organisation to provide financial advice to local residents.

Also in support of his proposal Councillor Hartnett commented that VCS organisations undertook valuable work in the local community. He suggested that for every £1 spent on the sector the community received £10 in value. Councillor Hartnett expressed concerns that VCS organisations did not appear to think that the Council understood the value of their work. However, the Council did value their work and Councillor Hartnett suggested that this should be reflected in the support that the Council provided to the sector. Councillor Hartnett concluded by acknowledging that the Council was in financial difficulties but he suggested that this should not result in a reduction in support for VCS groups.

In seconding Option Seven Councillor Greg Chance noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had recommended in November 2019 that the review of the concessionary rents scheme should end and that alternative Council savings should be identified. This recommendation had not been approved at the previous meeting of the Executive Committee. Councillor Chance also commented that when support for VCS organisations had previously been reviewed this had occurred only with the support of the sector. Councillor Chance suggested that Option Seven would ensure that funding for local VCS groups was sustainable and the groups would remain viable.

Members discussed the proposed Option Seven and in doing so noted that a similar proposal had been made at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9th January 2020 when Members had pre-scrutinised the report. However, this proposal had been defeated at that meeting. In addition, Members commented that previous reviews had been undertaken of the Council's grant scheme and the Concessionary Rents Scheme had been introduced some years ago.

During consideration of this item a named vote was requested on Option Seven in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 17.5.

Members voting FOR Option Seven below:

Councillors Greg Chance and Bill Hartnett. (2)

Members voting AGAINST Option Seven below:

Councillors Brandon Clayton, Matthew Dormer, Julian Grubb, Mike Rouse, David Thain and Craig Warhurst. (6)

The proposal was therefore lost.

Also during the debate on this item Members considered a recommendation that had been made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the subject of this report at a meeting held on Thursday 9th January 2020. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Joe Baker, presented the recommendation and in doing so explained that the Committee had heard from a number of local residents who had spoken on the subject of support for VCS organisations in the Borough. The residents had made a number of points, including the suggestion that a market appraisal should be undertaken of the sector. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had aimed to highlight the views of local residents and VCS organisations with the Executive Committee and had taken into account those views when agreeing their recommendation. This recommendation proposed that the Executive Committee should reconsider the inclusion of 'meanwhile type' leases in any proposed options.

Members discussed the recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was noted that this had originally been suggested as an action that could assist the sector by representatives of local VCS groups. However, concerns were expressed that it would not be appropriate from a governance perspective to offer meanwhile leases to VCS organisations. Instead, a range of options might be available and these would need to be reviewed in context on a case by case basis. For these reasons the recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was noted.

The Committee subsequently discussed the following matters relating to the support the Council provided to VCS organisations and the options detailed in the report:

- The Council's existing support to VCS organisations, which had been reviewed at a time when Council finances were

challenging and following the external auditor's issuing of the Section 24 Notice for the authority.

- The potential for Option Five to be adopted by the Council.
- The focus of Option Five, which would provide VCS organisations with an opportunity to prepare for changes to both the support received from the Council in concessionary rents and grants over a phased period.
- The reduction in concessionary rents that would be available to effected VCS organisations over a three year period should Option Five be approved.
- The proposal to continue to provide £175,000 in grant funding to VCS organisations over the three year period under Option Five.
- The potential for a Redditch Community Foundation to be established in the future to support local VCS organisations which could operate in a similar manner to other community foundations in the country.
- The nine organisations that were in receipt of a concessionary rent from the Council. Members acknowledged that there were more VCS organisations in the Borough that did not receive a concessionary rent than did.
- The need for Members to make difficult decisions in order to balance the Council's budget.
- The potential impact that decisions about the Council's budget could have on local VCS organisations.
- The reductions that had been made over recent years to the funding available to VCS organisations through the grants programme and in the contract to provide financial advice.
- The work of the Member-led Grants Panel in previous years and the potential to replace this with an Officer-led Grants Panel.
- The suggestion that had been received from VCS organisations that there should be an Officer-led Grants Panel which would notify VCS organisations of the reasons why they had been unsuccessful in securing Council funding so that lessons could be learned for the future.
- The need for the Officer-led Grants Panel to comply with strict criteria when assessing grant applications.
- The financial support provided to VCS organisations by Councils in other parts of the country. It was suggested that it was unusual for a Council to provide concessionary rents to VCS groups.
- The demographics in Redditch and the increasing use of food banks by local residents. Members noted that VCS organisations had an important role to play in providing services to the most vulnerable people in society.
- The potential for the Council to assist VCS organisations by helping them to identify alternative sources of funding that was not provided by the local authority.

At the end of a lengthy discussion a named vote was requested in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 17.5 about the proposals detailed in the report, including the proposal to adopt Option Five moving forward.

Members voting FOR the proposals below:

Councillors Brandon Clayton, Matthew Dormer, Julian Grubb, Mike Rouse, David Thain and Craig Warhurst. (6)

Members voting AGAINST the proposals below:

Councillors Greg Chance and Bill Hartnett. (2)

The proposals were therefore carried.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) Option Five in the report be approved, whereby the Council ends the Concessionary Rents Scheme but provides a stepped down transition over a 3 year period paid for out of a reduced VCS grants pot of £175k of which £50k will be allocated to a Financial Advice and Problem Solving grant;**

RESOLVED that

- 2) that an officer panel to be established to deal with applications for any grant awarding activity to include allocation of Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) funding, the Financial Advice and Problem Solving grant and general VCS Grant funding; and**
- 3) that delegated authority be given to the Head of Community and Housing Services following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, to agree a new VCS Grants Policy in accordance with the preferred option.**

87. ESSENTIAL LIVING FUND POLICY

The Customer Support Manager presented a report outlining proposals to introduce a new policy for the Essential Living Fund (ELF). The policy would ensure that the Council adopted a consistent approach to providing financial support to the most vulnerable local residents from the ELF fund.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the Essential Living Fund (ELF) policy be approved; and
- 2) the policy be implemented from the 1st April 2020.

88. FLEXIBLE HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT GRANT AWARD FOR 2020-21

The Head of Community Services presented a report which detailed proposals for the use of the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant in 2020/21. The Committee was informed that the grant was received on an annual basis and this year the Council had received £193,000. The report proposed to distribute the majority of the fund amongst various organisations and projects that would help to prevent homelessness.

Members discussed the grant and noted that this funding made a valuable contribution to supporting some of the most vulnerable people in the local community.

Questions were raised about the use of the remaining funds in the grant that had not been allocated. Officers explained that the remaining funds could be used flexibly throughout the year to meet emerging needs. A similar approach had been adopted in previous years.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant is allocated to the following initiatives:

Initiatives	£ (up to)
Redditch Nightstop - Outreach Worker to support 21 to 35 year olds and prevent homelessness or work towards planned moves into suitable and sustainable accommodation. .	30,000
CCP Rough Sleeper Outreach Service and Housing First support provider	62,080
Fry Accord – 18 units of supported accommodation for Ex-Offenders or those -likely to offend	22,000
St Basils – Provide 23 units of Foyer accommodation for young people aged 16- 23 years of age additional funding to provide 24 hour cover following a reduction in funding from County Council	14,123
Total	£128,203

- 2) **delegated authority be granted to the Head of Community Services following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing to use any unallocated Grant during the year or make further adjustments to current initiatives as necessary to ensure full utilisation of the Grant for 2020/21.**

89. **WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES - BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented recommendations on behalf of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Board. The Board had discussed budget contributions from each of the six district Councils in the shared service at a meeting held on 28th November 2019. No changes were proposed to the budget contribution from Redditch Borough Council. However, there were additional pension pressures for WRS staff which had already been incorporated into the Council's budget.

Members were advised that the WRS Board comprised two representatives from each Council. The representatives of the Councils took it in turn to Chair the meetings. In 2019/20 Councillor Julian Grubb was the Chair and he reported that the budget proposals had been comprehensively reviewed and had been endorsed by representatives of all the Councils at the Board meeting.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **Redditch Borough Council's base revenue partner contribution for 2020/21-2022/23:**

Redditch Borough Council	£529k
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- 2) **Redditch Borough Council's partner percentage allocation for 2020/21 onwards:-**

	%
Redditch Borough Council	17.53

- 3) **Redditch Borough Council’s additional partner liability for 2020/21 in relation to unavoidable salary pressure and increase in WRS pension forward funding rate.**

Redditch Borough Council	£16k
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- 4) **Redditch Borough Council’s additional partner liabilities for 2020/21 in relation to three additional Technical Officers.**

Council	Tech Officer Primary Authority – 3 Months £000	Tech Officer Animal Activity £000	Tech Officer Gull Control £000
Redditch Borough Council	1	1	

- 5) **the 2020/21 gross expenditure budget of £3,547k as shown in Appendix 1 to the report; and**
- 6) **the 2020/21 income budget of £530k as shown in Appendix 3 to the report.**

90. NORTH WORCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH STRATEGY

The Head of Economic Development and Regeneration for North Worcestershire presented the North Worcestershire Economic Growth Strategy. During the presentation of this report the following points were highlighted for Members’ consideration:

- The strategy had been developed in accordance with key national and local economic development priorities.
- The review had occurred at a time when nationally a review was being undertaken of the boundaries for Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).
- In each LEP area there was a Local Industrial Strategy and a Shared Prosperity Fund. The funding from this stream would help to support projects and initiatives in the country following the UK’s departure from the EU.
- The Shared Prosperity Fund would be distributed by the LEPs. Therefore, it was important to have a local Economic Development Strategy that matched the aims and objectives of the LEP in order to secure funding from this source.
- Investment Managers working in the local investment market advised their clients on whether to invest in opportunities

based on three key considerations; local talent and skills, quality premises and technology.

- Redditch was considered an attractive place for business from a technology perspective as there was an excellent fibre network and it was possible that the town would be involved in the introduction of the 5G network.
- However, there was a lot more to do in respect of skills in the local workforce.
- Automation had been identified as a risk to employment in the Borough. Automation was a particular risk in areas such as manufacturing, retail and wholesale businesses and 46% of employment in Redditch was in these sectors.
- The Government had asked LEPs to identify projects that could be taken forward under local strategy delivery plans and it was possible that Redditch would benefit from this initiative.

Once the report had been presented Members discussed the following matters in detail:

- The average qualifications of Redditch residents. Members expressed concern that only 21% of the population had achieved NVQ level 4 or equivalent qualifications compared to 45% of residents in Bromsgrove district and 38% of the population nationally.
- The good digital connectivity in the Borough and the opportunities that this could present for the Redditch economy.
- The progress that had been achieved with the LEP review. Members were informed that letters had been submitted according to deadline in respect of this review but it was anticipated that no announcement would be made by the Government on LEP membership until later in the month.
- The Towns' Fund and the extent to which progress had been achieved with convening a meeting of the Redditch Town's Fund Board prior to the Government's deadline of 31st January 2020. Officers advised that a meeting of the Board was due to take place on 30th January 2020.
- The membership of the Town's Fund Board. The Committee was advised that a number of organisations and individuals had been invited to appoint representatives to serve on the Board. However, the final membership remained to be confirmed.
- The guidance in respect of the role of the Town's Fund Board which had not yet been published by the Government.
- The progress that had been achieved by the Council already in terms of the town centre regeneration work and the advantage that this would provide in terms of the potential to access funding from the Towns' Fund in the future.
- The techniques that had been used by the Council to interact with local business leaders. Members were advised that the

Council had worked with and supported a number of local businesses.

- The work of Metis Aerospace, based in Redditch, which had launched the first Wifi 6 business trial in the world.
- The work of Astwood Infrastructure which produced equipment for vertical farming and also managed a microbrewery.

RESOLVED that

the report and its strategic priorities and interventions be agreed.

91. FEES AND CHARGES 2020/21

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources presented the proposed fees and charges for 2020/21. The fees and charges had been reviewed in detail by Heads of Service in the preparation of the report. Officers were requesting delegated authority to vary fees and charges for Leisure and Cultural Services by 20% and Bereavement Services by 25%.

Members discussed the fees and charges report in some detail and in so doing noted the following:

- The circumstances under which Officers might need to vary fees and charges for Leisure and Cultural Services and Bereavement Services. Officers highlighted the case of sporting activities where a small number of people had booked to participate as an example where fees could be reduced to incentivise other people to participate to the benefit of their health and wellbeing.
- The need for the Council to consider supply and demand when varying fees for Leisure and Cultural Services and Bereavement Services. Officers confirmed that the Council would aim to avoid pricing the Council out of the market.
- The criteria that would be applied by Officers in respect of the requested authority to vary fees and charges by 20% for Leisure and Cultural Services and 25% for Bereavement Services.
- The need for the officers with expertise in Bereavement Services and Leisure and Cultural Services to have some flexibility. Members noted that this might enable these services to operate more efficiently.
- The need for transparency in setting fees and charges for services. Concerns were raised that the requested authority to vary fees for Bereavement Services and Leisure and Cultural Services would not enhance transparency.
- The benefits of providing the ability to vary fees for Bereavement Services as rapid technological changes made it

- difficult to benchmark charges for some services and would allow officers to amend charges where needed mid-year.
- The proposed £15 registration fee for Dial a Ride and how frequently this would apply. Officers explained that this would be an annual fee.
 - The consultation that had been undertaken with customers of the Dial a Ride service about changes to the fees. Officers explained that customers had been consulted in the summer of 2019 and the majority had recognised the need to increase fees.
 - The estimated income from the increase to fees for the Dial a Ride service. The Committee was informed that the Council currently received £52,000 income from the service and the increase in fees would result in a corresponding increase in income up to £64,000.
 - The increase in fees for the Shopmobility service and the income this would generate. Officers advised that this would lead to an increase of £44,000 in income for the service.
 - The fees listed for the Garden Waste Service and whether these were new or existing charges. The Committee was informed that the fees applied to new households and that there were existing fees for the service which had been delivered by the Council for some time.
 - The reduction in the fee for the supply of logs per cubic metre. Members were advised that this service was no longer provided by the Council.
 - The service charge for the sheltered schemes. Officers explained that a mistake had been made in the report and a charge should have been recorded for this service at £3.
 - The charges that would apply for repairs to Council houses and when charges would apply. The Committee was advised that charges would be applied in accordance with the requirements set out in the Tenants Handbook and Recharge Policy and would apply to wilful damage but not to wear and tear.
 - The new charge of £17 proposed for the personal care package at St David's House and the reasons for introducing this charge. Members were informed that this charge had been in place for some time and was set at a level suggested by Worcestershire County Council. Officers had concluded that the charge should be included in the report to ensure transparency.
 - The reasons why the concessionary charges for football appeared to have been removed from the report.

During consideration of this item Members noted that the fees and charges 2020/21 report had been pre-scrutinised by both the Budget Scrutiny Working Group and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at meetings held on 2nd December 2019 and 9th January

2020 respectively. Based on detailed scrutiny of the report, the Budget Scrutiny Working Group had proposed that to help provide clarity for Members more detail needed to be included in the fees and charges report in future years. Members concurred that this proposal would be helpful as the style of the report was in places confusing. For this reason the proposal from the group was approved.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **all of the proposed fees and charges as set out in Appendix 1 be approved;**
- 2) **discretion on Leisure services and Bereavement Services fees and charges throughout the financial year 2020/21 be approved. The discretion is requested to be up to 20% (either increase or decrease) for Leisure services and 25% (either increase or decrease) for Bereavement services against the charges as detailed in the report. However, the fees and charges should still remain within the industry and regional norms for the activities provided.**
- 3) **all fees and charges that are included in Appendix 1 are charged commencing 1st April 2020.**

RESOLVED that

more detail should be included in the fees and charges reports in the future and there should be greater reconciliation between the old and new fees for a service in the report to help clarify how they relate to each other.

92. COUNCIL TAX BASE

The Executive Director of Finance and Resources presented the Council Tax Base report. The Committee was informed that the contents of the report were used to inform the Council Tax calculations for 2020/21.

Members were advised that there had been a typographical error in the report which should have recognised that the Executive Committee had the authority to approve the proposals detailed in the report rather than Council.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the calculation of the Council's Tax Base for the whole and parts of the area for 2020/21, be approved; and**

- 2) in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992, the figures calculated by the Redditch Borough Council as its tax base for the whole area for the year 2020/21 be 26,276.50 and for the parts of the area listed below be:

Parish of Feckenham	367.50
Rest of Redditch	<u>25,909.00</u>
Total for Borough	<u>26,276.50</u>

93. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2020/21 TO 2023/24 - PRESENTATION

The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources delivered a presentation on the subject of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2020/21 to 2023/24 (Appendix 1). During the delivery of this presentation the following matters were highlighted for Members' consideration:

- The starting point for the budget was a deficit of £1.170 million in 2020/21 rising to £1.5 million in 2023/24.
- There were pressures on the budget, including a likely 2% salary increase in 2020/21 as well as anticipated increases in utility fees. In addition, there was a £50,000 pressure from Parks and Open Spaces and further pressures arising from bad debts and WRS pension liabilities.
- However, over £300,000 savings had also been secured and £50,000 had been released from reserves.
- The Council had been awarded New Homes Bonus (NHB) funding in 2020/21 which had not been anticipated, though the Government had been clear that there would be no legacy payments in subsequent years.
- There had also been positive news about an increased return on investments in the pension fund which had resulted in savings over the four years of the plan.
- Officers were proposing that there should be £200,000 set aside in a reserve for the pension fund in case less positive news emerged about the fund between 2021/21 to 2023/24.
- There had been a review of borrowing costs which had resulted in savings. A significant proportion of these savings derived from a review of the fleet replacement programme.
- The Government had announced that district Councils could only increase Council Tax by 2% in 2020/21. This was less than had originally been anticipated in the MTFP in February 2019 so had financial implications for the Council moving forward.
- By the date of the meeting the gap in the budget for 2020/21 was £217,000.

- Should Members agree to close the One Stop Shops and to make the proposed changes to the support the Council provided to VCS organisations the budget gap would reduce significantly further in 2020/21.
- Officers were aiming to review overhead costs in order to reduce the costs of delivering Enabling services.
- However, there remained a gap of £1.6 to 1.7 million to find in the subsequent three years of the plan. Therefore Members would still need to make difficult decisions in order to balance the budget moving forward.
- Furthermore, the future funding arrangements for local government remained uncertain and any decisions at a national level in respect of this matter over the next few years could have implications for the Council's budget.
- In respect of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) in 2020/21 the budget could only currently be balanced using funding from balances. This would mean that in the first two years of the plan the HRA would go below the recommended level of balances.
- However, in year three it was anticipated that the budget position for the HRA would improve significantly as a result of increasing rents.

Members subsequently discussed the MTFP and in doing so noted the following:

- The challenging financial position of the Council and the need for Members to make difficult decisions in order to balance the budget.
- The need for the Government to provide local Councils with certainty about future funding arrangements.
- The reduction in the revenue support grant that had been received from the Government by the authority over the years and the impact that this had had on the Council's finances.
- The risk that the Government would impose further reductions on Council House rents in future years and the implications of this action for the HRA.
- The stock condition survey that was being undertaken. Officers explained that the information obtained in this survey would help to ensure that a robust approach was undertaken to repairs and maintenance work in future years.
- The Council's Financial Services team. Members thanked officers in the team for their hard work.

RESOLVED that

the report be noted.

94. MANAGEMENT REVIEW

The Chief Executive presented the Management Review and in so doing highlighted the following points for the Committee's consideration:

- A single management team shared with Bromsgrove District Council had been agreed in 2009 and introduced in 2010.
- In the Efficiency Statement agreed in 2016 it had been proposed that there should be a review of the single management structure. It had not been possible to undertake this review until 2019/20 due to a variety of factors detailed in the report.
- In undertaking the review the Chief Executive had consulted with the Leaders of Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District Councils regarding their preferred approach. They had been clear that they did not feel a fundamental review of the management structure was needed at this time.
- The Chief Executive had also reviewed capacity within the management team and had looked to identify any skills gaps and challenges for the Council. These had been identified as commercialism, development projects and Financial Services.
- In respect of commercialism the Chief Executive had concluded that all staff needed to be more commercial rather than one senior officer taking responsibility for commercialism.
- There were a number of opportunities available to the Council in relation to development projects, including the potential to access funding from the Towns' Fund. Again the Chief Executive had concluded that it would not be appropriate to appoint one senior officer responsible for these projects. However, the authority could work closely with bodies such as the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to take advantage of all opportunities.
- The one area where a new senior post was proposed was in respect of Financial and Customer Services. Improvements had been made in the management of the Council's finances in recent years and this proposal was not intended as a criticism of the Financial Services staff. However, a new post would provide the Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources with the capacity to focus on more strategic matters which would benefit the authority.
- The report also proposed to formalise the arrangement whereby the Heads of Community Services and Environmental Services had assumed responsibility for Housing (Tenancy) Services and Housing (Property) Services respectively as this arrangement had been working well.
- In addition, the report proposed to continue the arrangement whereby the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services had assumed responsibility for Property Services

since this had returned to Council control from the Place Partnership Ltd.

- The report also proposed that the Head of Planning and Regeneration Service should assume responsibility for Leisure and Cultural Services so that she could take a lead on place shaping in the Borough.
- Subject to Members approving the proposed structure it would subsequently be put out to formal consultation.

During consideration of this item Members noted that the Budget Scrutiny Working Group had pre-scrutinised the Management Review report at a meeting held on Monday 13th January 2020. The group had concluded that the structure proposed in the report would be the most appropriate for the Council at this time. Scrutiny Members had been particularly keen to avoid taking any action that might destabilise the authority at a challenging financial time for the Council. The group had therefore endorsed the recommendation detailed in the report.

RECOMMENDED that

the proposed changes to the Single Management Structure attached at Appendix C be approved and put out to formal consultation with the affected staff and trade unions.

95. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chair advised that there were no outstanding recommendations arising from meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 5th December and Monday 16th December 2019 requiring Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 5th December and Monday 16th December 2019 be noted.

96. MINUTES / REFERRALS - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, EXECUTIVE PANELS ETC.

Members were advised that there were no further recommendations or referrals from other Committees that required consideration at this meeting.

97. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

The following updates were provided by Members in respect of Executive Advisory Panels:

- a) Climate Change Cross Party Working Group – Chair, Councillor Brandon Clayton

Councillor Clayton advised that the latest meeting of the group had taken place on Monday 13th January 2020. A further meeting of the group was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 7th April 2020.

- b) Constitutional Review Working Party – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

Councillor Dormer informed the Committee that the following meeting of the Constitutional Review Working Party would take place on Tuesday 14th July 2020.

- c) Corporate Parenting Board – Council Representative, Councillor Julian Grubb

Councillor Grubb advised Members that a meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board was scheduled to take place on Thursday 6th February 2020. At this meeting Councillor Grubb was aiming to clarify District Councillors' roles and responsibilities as corporate parents.

- d) Member Support Steering Group – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

Councillor Dormer explained that a meeting of the Member Support Steering Group was due to take place on Tuesday 4th February 2020.

- e) Planning Advisory Panel – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

Councillor Dormer advised that no meetings of the Planning Advisory Panel were scheduled to take place.

98. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED 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 matters on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act, as amended.

Item 18 – Far Moor Lane, Redditch – Land Disposal to Homes England.

99. FAR MOOR LANE, REDDITCH - LAND DISPOSAL TO HOMES ENGLAND

The Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services presented a report in respect of the disposal of land owned by the Council at Far Moor Lane to Homes England.

The Council had already agreed to declare the land surplus at a meeting of the Executive Committee held in March 2015. The report provided an update on the position that had since been reached by the Council.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the disposal of the site off Far Moor Lane (noting as per Executive decision in 2015) be noted and to approve the terms for this disposal as outlined in the exempt report at appendix 2; and**
- 2) that authority be delegated to the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services and the Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management to negotiate and agree the Heads of Terms in accordance with the terms agreed and to proceed with the sale accordingly.**

(During consideration of this item Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed relating to the financial affairs of any particular body (including the authority holding that information)).