

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 23rd March, 2021

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), Councillor Mike Rouse (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Greg Chance, Brandon Clayton, Bill Hartnett, Anthony Lovell, Nyear Nazir, David Thain and Craig Warhurst

Officers:

Matthew Bough, Claire Felton, Chris Forrester, Sue Hanley, James Howse, Kath Manning and Simon Parry

Senior Democratic Services Officer:

Jess Bayley

90. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

91. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

92. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised that the Budget Scrutiny Working Group had pre-scrutinised the Financial Monitoring Report – Quarter 3 at a meeting held on 17th March 2021. However, as no recommendations had been made on the subject, the minutes of that meeting had not been provided for Members' consideration.

During consideration of this item the Leader advised Members that the Council had entered into the pre-election period. Members were asked to be mindful of this moving forward.

93. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

Chair

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Monday, 22nd February 2021 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

94. GREEN HOMES FUNDING

The Climate Change and Energy Support Officer presented a report which detailed the Council's application for funding that could be used to improve the energy efficiency of homes located in the Borough.

The distribution of the grant funding that was available was managed by Local Energy Hubs. Redditch was located in the West Midlands and the Midland Energy Hub (MEH) was managing the distribution of funding locally. There was additional funding available to support Councils and partner organisations with the administration of the scheme.

The intention was for the grant funding to be used to improve the energy efficiency of the worst performing properties, which had received energy efficiency ratings of E, F G. Many of these properties were managed as social housing, including Council houses managed by Redditch Borough Council, and therefore the Housing Department would be actively involved in the project. Residents in these properties were often impacted by fuel poverty and therefore the work would have a beneficial impact on their finances. The deadline for the completion of funded projects would be 31st December 2021 and the funds would need to be spent in accordance with the grant guidance.

There were risks attached to the project, particularly in respect of the relatively tight timescales available to complete the works. In addition, there were risks associated with Coronavirus, though Covid secure practices would be adopted.

Following the presentation of the report, Members discussed a number of points in detail:

- The average expenditure of £10,000 per property and the works that could be funded at this level.
- The works that would be undertaken on Council house properties. Officers explained that measures such as the

installation of loft, wall and garage insulation would feature in these works.

- The match funding required from the Council in respect of Council properties that were supported through this process. Members were advised that this funding would be provided as part of the capital programme for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
- The availability of some of the funding for other social housing providers.
- The number of houses that would benefit from the programme. Officers explained that it was difficult to quantify the number of houses that would benefit at this stage.
- The extent to which a plan had been developed to ensure that the funding could be spent and works completed by the deadline of 31st December 2021. Officers advised that there was an aim to get on site quickly and to complete the works as efficiently as possible within the time available.
- The Council's energy efficiency programme. Members were informed that this project formed part of that programme.
- The extent to which the funding was available to support improvements to the energy efficiency of properties in the private sector. Officers advised that many privately owned homes were already performing well but there were some exceptions and applications could be submitted in relation to these properties.
- The criteria for applications for the funding and the potential for some applicants to be turned down. Officers clarified that all eligible properties in the private sector would be provided with an opportunity to apply for funding, with funding being granted on a first come first serve basis. However, the Council was not anticipating that demand would outstrip supply.
- The detrimental impact that fuel poverty could have on households.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) **the Capital and Revenue Budgets (Housing and General Fund) are increased to receive Redditch Borough Council's Green Homes Grant scheme Local Authority Delivery Part 2 allocation of £280,700; and**

- 2) **delegated authority is granted to the Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services and Head of Community and Housing Services following consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Housing and Climate Change to administer the funding received in line with the grant conditions.**

95. FINANCE MONITORING QUARTER 3 2020/21

The Head of Finance and Customer Services presented the Financial Monitoring Report for the third quarter of the 2020/21 financial year.

Members were advised that Officers were anticipating a £150,000 overspend at the end of the financial year. The Council had recently been informed that the Government would be allocating a further £35,000 to the authority to help cover lost income from fees and charges, which would help to offset this overspend.

Additional expenditure was anticipated in respect of the benefits subsidy and payments. This was because there had been no court processes during the Covid-19 pandemic and this work would need to be addressed at a later date.

The budget for Enabling Services was overspent by £172,000. A significant contribution to this overspend had been pressures arising from the Local Government Pension Scheme. This overspend had been partly offset by salary savings from vacant posts.

There was a significant underspend in the capital programme and this was projected to continue over the three year period of the programme. Senior Officers were in the process of reviewing the content of the Capital Programme to ensure that expenditure aligned more closely with the budget in future years. However, Members were asked to note that many of the delays to expenditure in the capital programme had been caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In respect of the HRA, the Council was anticipating a significant surplus by the end of the financial year of £750,000. In part, this was due to a delay in respect of work by the Repairs and Maintenance department, as during the Covid-19 pandemic the

focus had been on delivering essential works. The works that had not been completed at this time would eventually need to be progressed and therefore the surplus generated in 2020/21 had not been incorporated into the budget for future years out of recognition that these funds would need to be spent.

After the report had been presented Members discussed the following points in detail:

- The repairs and maintenance jobs that had not been completed during the Covid-19 pandemic and the extent to which this had created a backlog.
- The potential for a plan to be developed in respect of undertaking the repairs and maintenance jobs that had not been undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic. Officers advised that proposals were being developed to ensure that an organised approach was adopted to addressing this matter. Health and safety would need to be considered as part of this process, with staff currently working for a maximum of three hours at properties in order to keep people safe.
- The possibility that assistance might be required from external contractors in order to address the backlog in repairs and maintenance. Officers confirmed that it was anticipated that a limited amount of support would be required from external contractors for this purpose.
- The potential for Members to be notified once the Council started to address the backlog in repairs and maintenance.
- The reserve that had been included in the budget to offset any business rates that were lost at appeal. Officers explained that this reserve had been considered prudent to include in the budget to ensure that the Council had financial reserves to fill any gaps that might arise as a result of companies successfully appealing against the level of their business rate payments.
- The reserve of £432,000 recorded for the Financial Services team and the purpose of this reserve. The Committee was advised that this reserve was intended for expenditure on the new finance system and would be largely spent by the end of the financial year.
- The purpose of the reserve that had been recorded for Green Lane, Studley, which had been recorded as funding for negotiations through the planning process. Members commented that this reserve was intended to help fund

ongoing negotiations with Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwickshire County Council in respect of the assets owned by Redditch Borough Council at that location.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **the current financial position in relation to revenue and capital budgets for the financial period April 2020 – December 2020 be noted;**

RECOMMENDED that: -

- 2) **an increase to the Capital programme 2020/21 of match funding with the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for a digital upgrade of CCTV £21,000 be approved; and**
- 3) **the revised fees and Charges for Bereavement services be approved for 2021/22.**

**96. WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BOARD -
BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Head of Finance and Customer Services presented the minutes of the meeting of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Board held on 11th February 2021. Members were advised that during this meeting Wyre Forest District Council had advised that they would be withdrawing a request for additional income to host the IT service and premises provided to WRS. The recommendations detailed in the minutes of the Board meeting outlined the resulting changes to the budget for WRS in 2021/22 accordingly.

Members discussed the minutes and in doing so welcomed the change in the position that had been adopted by Wyre Forest District Council in respect of this matter.

RECOMMENDED that the following figures be approved for 2021/22 and 2023/24:

- 1) **the 2021/22 gross expenditure budget of £3,726k;**
- 2) **the 2021/22 income budget of £529k;**

- 3) the revenue budget and partner percentage allocations for 2021/22 onwards:

Council	£'000	Revised %
Redditch Borough Council	562	17.57

- 4) the additional partner liabilities for 2021/22 in relation to unavoidable salary pressure.

Redditch Borough Council	£10k
Total	£60k

- 5) the additional partner liabilities for 2021/22 in relation to three Technical Officers.

Council	Tech Officer Income Generation £000	Tech Officer Animal Activity £000	Tech Officer Gull Control £000
Redditch Borough Council	6	2	0

97. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Members were advised that there were no recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration on this occasion.

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

Members were advised that there were no referrals from either the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or any of the Executive Advisory Panels for consideration on this occasion.

99. ADVISORY PANELS - UPDATE REPORT

The following updates were provided in respect of the Executive Advisory Panels and other groups:

- a) Climate Change Cross Party Working Group – Chair, Councillor Anthony Lovell

Councillor Lovell explained that consideration was being given by the Council to electric charging points for vehicles and the grant funding available for this purpose. The Council would aim to submit bids for this funding moving forward.

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

Councillor Dormer informed Members that a meeting of the Constitutional Review Working Party was scheduled to take place on 29th June 2021.

- c) Corporate Parenting Board – Council Representative, Councillor Nyear Nazir

Councillor Nazir advised that the minutes of the previous meeting of the Board had not yet been published. There was a further meeting of the Board scheduled to take place on 27th May 2021.

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

Councillor Dormer commented that a meeting of the Member Support Steering Group had taken place on 2nd March 2021. During this meeting Members had discussed the induction process for Councillors due to be elected in May 2021. Reference had also been made to the potential for the Council to continue to live stream meetings once meetings resumed in person. An additional meeting of the group, prior to the end of the municipal year, had been requested to enable Members to discuss the available webcasting options further.

During the delivery of this update, Councillor Dormer explained that the Member Support Steering Group had

discussed the requirement for local authorities to return to holding meetings in person from 7th May 2021 onwards. This would apply to formal Committee meetings and the group had agreed that informal and private meetings, such as meetings of the group, Portfolio Holder Briefings and Scrutiny Task Group meetings, should continue to take place virtually wherever possible. Concerns had been raised by Members of the group that it would be too early to return safely to physical Committee meetings by 7th May 2021, particularly as the Covid-19 pandemic remained in place. For this reason, the Leader had spoken to the leader of the opposition and they had agreed to write together to the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to set out their concerns on behalf of the Council.

e) Planning Advisory Panel – Chair, Councillor Matthew Dormer

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

The Meeting commenced at 6.42 pm
and closed at 7.30 pm