

# Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Thursday, 2nd December,  
2021

## MINUTES

### Present:

Councillor Debbie Chance (Chair), Councillor Jennifer Wheeler (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Salman Akbar, Karen Ashley, Michael Chalk, Brandon Clayton, Alex Fogg, Julian Grubb, Lucy Harrison and Matthew Dormer

### Also Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer – Portfolio Holder for for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships

### Officers:

Kevin Dicks

### Democratic Services Officers:

Jo Gresham

## 39. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

No apologies for absence were received for this meeting.

## 40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

Councillors, Akbar, Ashley, Clayton and Harrison declared an 'Other Disclosable Interest' in respect of minute item 43 due to their involvement as formal volunteers for a Community Speedwatch Group in the Borough. It was agreed that these Members would remain present for consideration of this item.

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

Chair

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## 41. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021 were presented for Members' consideration.

### **RESOLVED that**

**the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.**

## 42. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no public speakers registered on this occasion.

## 43. WEST MERCIA ROAD SAFETY TEAM PRESENTATION

The Chair welcomed members of the West Mercia Police Road Safety Team, who were in attendance on Microsoft Teams. During the presentation the following was highlighted for Members' attention:

- The West Mercia Police Road Safety Team were based at Droitwich Police Station and covered the whole of the West Mercia region which included 4 upper tier Local Authorities. It was clarified that the team was funded solely by the funding from Speed Awareness courses and not from an existing Police budget. Members were informed that any revenue received from the enforcement of fines was returned to the Treasury.
- All of the campaigns undertaken by the team were data driven and a specialist collision data analyst worked as part of the team to analyse the wealth of data available.
- There had been 129 people killed on the roads in West Mercia during the previous three years and 1313 people had been seriously injured. In the past five years the number of those killed on the roads specifically in Redditch was 6 people and 111 people had been seriously injured.
- The role of the team did not solely focus on enforcement but also on education and engineering including traffic

management. It was explained to Members that the following groups were targeted in education campaigns:

- Motorcyclists
  - Pedestrians
  - Cyclists
  - Drink / drug drivers
  - Young drivers and passengers
  - Older drivers
  - Drivers of HGV and LGV vehicles
  - Business drivers
  - Rural road users
- Currently several initiatives were underway including the National Drink Driving campaign, 'Dying to Drive' and a 'Be Safe, Be Seen' initiative which, it was explained, was a data led campaign launched during the darker months to encourage pedestrians and cyclists to wear bright clothes. The campaign also provided free lights and reflective items to pedestrians and cyclists who were identified by the Police whilst out patrolling across West Mercia.
  - The West Mercia Police Road Safety Team provided engineering advice through the Traffic Management Advisors to Local Authorities and occasionally were also involved in planning applications.

The Chair thanked the West Mercia Road Safety Team for their detailed presentation and the Committee were invited to ask any questions regarding the information that had been provided. Members were pleased to see that the numbers of road collisions had decreased over the past year and were interested in whether these might be attributed to traffic calming measures that had been introduced across the Borough. The West Mercia Road Safety Team indicated that the officer that would have further insight in this particular area had unfortunately not been able to attend the meeting. However, they undertook to request the information and distribute to the Committee at a later date.

The 'Dying to Drive' initiative and associated event was raised by Members. It was queried whether there would be a possibility of holding a similar event in Redditch to the one held in Wyre Forest.

In addition to this, Members questioned whether schools within the Borough were invited to such events when they took place outside of Redditch. The West Mercia Road Safety Team informed Members that Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue were the lead partner for the 'Dying to Drive' initiative and associated events and that schools from Redditch were routinely invited, however the schools were not always able to attend.

Some Members expressed concern about the rising numbers of e-scooter incidents in the Borough and whether there were any plans to look into increasing the guidance and enforcement powers. It was reported that this was a very difficult area to manage and that many of the e-scooters currently available were not part of approved schemes. It was also noted that there had been an increase in social media campaigns regarding e-scooters in order to highlight any dangers associated with them. Members requested whether there was currently any data regarding the number of incidents involving e-scooters and officers undertook to provide this information to Members.

There was interest from Members regarding the enforcement data available in the public domain in respect of road traffic collisions. It was felt that if this kind of data was more readily available to the public it might instil more confidence that action was regularly taken against those who committed speeding offences and were involved in road traffic collisions. The West Mercia Road Safety Team explained that it would be difficult to share this information in the public domain prior to court action in case it compromised any proceedings.

**RESOLVED that**

**The West Mercia Road Safety Team Presentation be noted.**

**44. REDDITCH TOWN DEAL INVESTMENT PLAN - 6 MONTHLY UPDATE**

The Chief Executive presented the 6-monthly update in respect of the Redditch Town Deal Investment Plan and in doing so the following was highlighted for Members' attention:

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- The Towns Fund was a government funding scheme intended for towns across the country to improve their economy. In 2019, Redditch was identified as one of the towns eligible to bid for up to £25m from the Towns Fund.
- The Town Investment Plan (TIP) was submitted by the Town's Deal Board in January 2021 and the funding and Heads of Terms were announced in June 2021. As Members were already aware, not all of the funding for the projects had been awarded. Therefore, as a result of the shortfall, a reprioritisation exercise had been undertaken in August 2021, using the reprioritisation tools provided by central government. Prior to the reprioritisation sessions, several parameters were put in place by the Town's Deal Board that were to be considered as part of the reprioritisation process. Once the reprioritisation had taken place, the confirmed projects were submitted to Government at the end of August 2021. The Grant Offer letter was received in November 2021 which confirmed that a grant amount of £15.6m had been awarded and the requirements of Redditch Borough Council as the accountable body were outlined.

During the Redditch Town Deal Investment Plan update, Members were further informed that the following projects had been approved and allocated Towns Deal funding. It was explained that specific conditions for the approved projects were detailed as part of the Heads of Terms and would be fully developed and addressed at the business case development stage. Further clarification on each project was presented for Members' information. This included the following:

#### Redevelopment of Redditch Library Project

- Worcestershire County Council (WCC) were fully engaged in the Redditch Library project and Members were assured that the needs of the service and infrastructure would be considered prior to any relocation, ensuring accessibility for all customers. It was confirmed that WCC understood that one of the requirements for relocation of the library was that it must be a Town Centre location. Members were also assured that a full consultation would be undertaken once relocation options were known.

Further detail regarding the Library project was reported to Members in respect of the inclusion of the broader range of project outcomes which were as follows:

- Perceptions of place by residents and businesses – this would involve the design of new and improved public spaces that connected the ‘old town’ with the main shopping centre and would include the establishment of a new and attractive public space for residents and businesses to use.
  - Increased land values through increased demand around the new public space.
  - Increased visitors to the town by providing a new space for events and activities.
  - Improved permeability for residents and visitors through the provision of easier access to key nodes in the town and by opening up access between the ‘old town’ and the main shopping centre.
  - Improved perception of safety which would be implemented through improved street scene and by designing out poor visibility.
  - Improved community cohesion through the provision of a new events space at the heart of the town.
- A Redditch Library project group had been established which was to be led by North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWEDR). The group also included representatives from the Property, Legal and Finance teams at Redditch Borough Council. Members were also informed that Mott MacDonald had been procured to develop the business case associated with this project.

#### Town Centre Public Realm Project

- A project group would be established for the Town Centre Public Realm project and that WCC were the lead partner in this project. In addition to WCC it was reported that NWEDR, Mott MacDonald and representatives from Redditch Borough Council’s Planning, Environmental Services and Conservation teams were also part of the project group. Mott

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MacDonald were also involved as part of the development of the business case.

## Innovation Centre

- A project group was to be established and would be led by NWEDR and also include Mott MacDonald and Property, Legal, Finance and Planning teams from Redditch Borough Council. In addition to this, procurement was currently underway regarding consultants who would potentially be involved in the design and build of the Innovation Centre alongside Mott MacDonald.

The Committee was informed that the next steps for the projects would be to work on the detailed business cases which were due to be submitted in June 2022.

During the detailed update it was accepted that communications in respect of some aspects of the Towns Deal funding had not been as successful as hoped thus far. However, Members were informed that this was to be addressed in January 2022 and that an enhanced Communications strategy was to be implemented going forward which would include social media updates, newsletters and the establishment of an interested party database.

The Chair thanked the Chief Executive for his comprehensive update and invited the Committee to ask any questions.

During detailed discussion Members were interested in the following areas:

- The reprioritisation of the projects and how this had been carried out particularly in light of the decision to no longer pursue the Transport Interchange and Railway Quarter project. Members' attention was drawn to Appendix 1 of the report which contained the information regarding the reprioritisation process and explained that it was the Town's Deal Board and not the Council's decision regarding the parameters applied to this process. As discussed earlier in the meeting, the reprioritisation tool provided by central government had been used and through this process each

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project was scored and selected accordingly. Councillor M. Dormer, who was in attendance in his role as Portfolio Holder for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships confirmed that although the Interchange and Railway Quarter project was not being undertaken as part of the Town's Deal Fund, work was still underway in this area and meetings were taking place with relevant partners, including West Midlands Combined Authority, to articulate the project in the hope that it could still go ahead in the future.

- The impact to Redditch Borough Council if any increase of costs for the three projects was experienced – It was stated to the Committee that the projects had been carefully costed with contingencies and that it was hoped that any increase in costs would be avoided. However, it was noted that unavoidable delays or an increase of costing to supplies might be experienced that were out of the control of the Council and would be mitigated if they became apparent.
- Effective spending of the allocated funding – It was highlighted to Members that the projects would be subject to robust business cases and would need to be signed off by the Section 151 officer at Redditch Borough Council and Town's Deal Board Chair prior to their submission in June 2022. In addition to this, the business cases would address any project specific conditions that had been set out in the Head of Terms received previously.

Some Members were concerned with the transparency of the process and decisions made by the Board to date. As previously stated, the Chief Executive reiterated that the communications plan was to be improved for the future and that all projects were subject to strict conditions and that a consultation period would be completed. It was commented on that the establishment of an ambassador for each project would increase the visibility of the projects going forward. In addition to this, the Chair of the Board acting as the 'Communications Ambassador' would increase engagement on any future project consultation.

The Chair once again thanked officers for their detailed update and looked forward to being updated again in 6-months' time.



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**RESOLVED that**

**Redditch Town Deal Investment Plan - 6 monthly update be noted.**

**45. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES AND SCRUTINY OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME - SELECTING ITEMS FOR SCRUTINY**

The Minutes from the Executive Committee meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2021 and the Executive Committee's Work Programme were presented for Members' consideration.

**RESOLVED that**

**Executive Committee Minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2021 and the Executive Committee's Work Programme were noted.**

**46. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

**RESOLVED that**

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme be noted.**

**47. TASK GROUPS, SHORT SHARP REVIEWS AND WORKING GROUPS - UPDATE REPORTS**

**a) Budget Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Jennifer Wheeler**

The Chair reported that the last meeting of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group, due to take place on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021, had been cancelled due to lack of available reports. Councillor Wheeler expressed her disappointment that there had only been one Budget Scrutiny Working Group meeting this municipal year and felt that this posed a risk to the Council and its finances for the future. Although she understood that there had been pressures placed on officers due to the Covid-19 pandemic, staffing issues and the implementation of the new Enterprise Resource Planning

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system it was vitally important that this group met regularly and received the relevant reports in order to effectively scrutinise the Councils' budget.

Councillor Wheeler informed the Committee that she hoped that the working group meetings would take place in 2022 in order that this important scrutiny function be carried out regularly.

Members were informed that the next meeting of the group would take place on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

During consideration of this item a request for nominations was made for a new Member of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group. Councillor Chalk was nominated, however it was confirmed that, as he was already a member of the group, he did not need to be nominated. It was decided that nominations would be requested again at the first meeting of the Committee due to be held on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

**b) Performance Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Jennifer Wheeler**

The Chair updated the Committee and reported that a meeting of the group had taken place on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021 and had included a discussion of the development of the New Measures Dashboard. In addition to this, a presentation of the new system was provided to Members. It was hoped that the new Dashboard would be easier for Members to navigate and provide a useful tool in Performance Scrutiny in the future.

**RESOLVED that**

**The Task Groups, Short Sharp Reviews and Working Groups Update Reports be noted.**

**48. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS**

The External Scrutiny Bodies Update reports were presented by Councillor Chalk to the Committee for their consideration. He

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explained that there were no additional updates, however it was expected that there would be updates from all of the External Scrutiny Bodies, at the Committee's next meeting due to be held on 6th January 2022.

**RESOLVED that**

**The External Scrutiny Bodies Update reports be noted.**

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm  
and closed at 8.02 pm

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