

Redditch Borough Council
Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Annual Report 2021 – 2022



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CHAIR'S FOREWORD

As Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny committee I would like to extend my thanks to the members of the Committee for their time, effort, and involvement over the last year. None of this would have been possible without the dedication and hard work of the Scrutiny Officers who have supported me and the Committees throughout this time.

I would also like to extend my special thanks to Cllr Michael Chalk for reporting back from Worcestershire County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and West Midlands Combined Authority. I would also like to thank him and the members of Dementia Task Group.

In addition to this I would like to thank Councillor Jennifer Wheeler and members of the Budget Scrutiny and Performance Scrutiny Working Groups. Councillor Jennifer Wheeler has also been very supportive whilst serving as Vice-Chair to the main Committee and substituting for me on two occasions.

It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as Chair of this Committee over the last year as democracy and accountability need to be cornerstone of the work of this Council through the scrutiny process.



Councillor Debbie Chance
Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Redditch Borough Council during 2021 – 2022.

THE ROLE OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The role of overview and scrutiny is an important one in the Council's governance structure, in providing challenge and driving improvement. It is often referred to as the "critical friend" of the Council and can review any issues of concern or real interest to local residents.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a number of roles within the Council. These include:

- Holding the Executive Committee to account by thoroughly scrutinising their decisions to ensure that the Council continues to provide the best services possible for Redditch residents. As part of this role, the Committee has the power to 'call-in' decisions made by the Executive Committee and to request that the Executive Committee review the original decisions, taking into account the issues raised by the Committee.
- Acting as a 'critical friend' to the Executive Committee by reviewing Council policies and strategies, making recommendations where appropriate.
- Performance and financial monitoring, to ensure the Council's services are sustainable and to the highest possible standard.
- Commissioning reviews of services/topics that impact on the Council or on the lives of Redditch residents.
- Pre-scrutiny of items prior to a decision being made by the Executive Committee.
- Setting up Task Groups to focus on specific subjects and recommend ways to improve existing practices within the Council and community as a whole. A flow chart on how to consider potential scrutiny reviews can be found at Appendix A and the Council's scoping form at Appendix B.

MEMBERSHIP

The Committee appoints individual Members to oversee the work of Overview and Scrutiny. Membership of the Committee for 2020/21 is as follows:



Cllr Debbie Chance (Chair)



Cllr Jennifer Wheeler (Vice-Chair)
May 2021 – March 2022



Cllr Salman Akbar



Cllr Karen Ashley



Cllr Joanne Beecham
May 2021 – December
2021



Cllr Michael Chalk



Cllr Brandon Clayton
December 2021-May
2022



Cllr Alex Fogg



Cllr Lucy Harrison



Cllr Julian Grubb

ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES DURING 2021-22

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee held a scrutiny training and work programme planning session at the start of the municipal year. This session was held online and provided an opportunity for both existing and new Members of the Committee to understand the importance of the scrutiny process at the Council and the function of the Committee. During the training session, areas of interest were identified by Members for potential Overview items that could be considered during municipal year 2021/2022. These Overview items are subjects for discussion at a single meeting of the Committee and are of particular interest to residents within the Borough. In addition to this the following were identified by Members:

- Items for pre-scrutiny, identified from the Executive Committee's Work Programme.
- Subjects considered suitable for further scrutiny through a Task Group investigation.

Covid-19 And Remote Meetings

During the municipal year 2021-2022 the Covid-19 pandemic continued to have a significant impact on Council operations. In May 2021 the Government removed the temporary legislation that allowed local authorities to hold public meetings virtually. This meant that Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings were once again held in person after May 7th, 2021. Meetings are live streamed if there is significant local interest in the items being considered at Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings. Meetings of scrutiny Task Groups and Working Groups continue to be held remotely, since these meetings are private and are not live streamed.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitors the impact of all of its recommendations that have been endorsed by the Executive Committee. A tracking report is presented to the Committee during the year stating progress made to date.

During consideration of the Executive Committee's Work Programme, Members agreed to pre-scrutinise the following items:

- Redditch Town Deal Investment
- Church Green Conservation Area
- New Cemetery Provision
- Homes England Asset Transfer
- Redditch Town Centre Redevelopment – Town Investment Plan

In addition to pre-scrutiny of Executive Committee Work Programme items the following items were included in the Committee's Work Programme and were considered at meetings throughout the municipal year:

- Landscaping
- West Mercia Road Safety Team Presentation
- Redditch Community Lottery
- Redditch Partnership Annual Report
- Parking Enforcement Task Group Updates

Further information about the issues discussed by the Committee during the year and Members' findings are detailed below.

8th July 2021

Overview and Scrutiny Training and Work Programme Planning Event Report

At the start of each municipal year training is provided to Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and substitutes. This year's training took place on 7th June 2021 and a further session took place on 1st July 2021 for those who could not attend on the previous date.

At the session Members were provided with an **overview** of the importance of scrutiny and its link to the Council's Strategic Purposes. In addition, there was a presentation highlighting the various elements of scrutiny. This presentation provided an opportunity for Members to consider what areas they would like to see included in the Committee's work programme over the next municipal year and how best way to scrutinise these areas.

As a result of the training session the following items were identified as potential overview items for the coming municipal year:

- Landscaping
- Parking
- Speeding
- Litter and cleanliness
- Recreational activities for teenagers in the Borough
- Anti-social behaviour
- Housing Quality/ Houses of Multiple Occupancy and Void properties
- Drug/ Alcohol abuse and addiction issues
- Allocation of resources across the Borough

The first of these overview items was considered at the first meeting of the Committee (see below).

Landscaping

This was the first item from the Overview and Scrutiny training event to be considered by Members. The Head of Service for Environmental and Housing Property Services and the Environmental Services Manager were in attendance for the Landscaping overview item and informed Members that there were three Place Teams who were responsible for grass-cutting and litter-picking across the Borough. It was a useful overview item for Members as there was particular interest in the schedule of works, the Place Team Coordinators, the areas they covered and the

best way to for Members and residents to report an Environmental Services query or issue.

Community Lottery Update

The Community Lottery update is a regular 6-monthly update presented by the former Redditch Partnership Manager. During these regular updates Members are provided with an overview of the Community Lottery, how it is facilitated and by whom, the regularity of lottery draws, and the prizes awarded.

In addition to this, up-to-date data is provided to the Committee in order for them to understand how many tickets are purchased and the funding received by local organisations.

During the update provided on 8th July 2021 it was noted that the Covid-19 pandemic had impacted on the number of tickets sold and the funding generated for local organisations, but it was hoped that once restrictions were lifted this would increase once again.

2nd September 2021

Dementia Task Group Report

The Dementia Task Group Final Report was presented to the Committee. The Task Group had met online regularly over the previous year and had met with various organisations and officers that had provided information on Dementia and the services available to residents within the Borough. It was felt that this was a timely and important report given the predicted number of individuals likely to be diagnosed with Dementia over the coming years in the Borough.

Included in the final report were three recommendations which dealt with the future promotion of Dementia Services and training of Members. During the consideration of the report, it was agreed by Members that a further recommendation be made. This was as follows:

'As part of the work in respect of Integrated Care System, the Chief Executive of Redditch Borough Council to work alongside partner agencies to provide Members with further information on Dementia services in the Borough and potential services for the future.'

All of the recommendations were agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and were considered by the Executive Committee at their meeting held on 7th September 2021. All of the recommendations were agreed.

These recommendations continue to be monitored by the Committee as part of the regular Recommendation Tracker updates that take place at Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings.

Parking and Enforcement Update

Members requested an update on Parking Enforcement in Redditch at this meeting as they were interested in understanding the status of the recommendations that had been agreed as a result of the Parking Enforcement Task Group.

Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) were discussed in detail as the Parking Enforcement Task Group had made a recommendation, which had been agreed by the Executive Committee to implement TROs where enforcement could take place on zigzag lines outside of schools. This recommendation has not been actioned, in part due to the Covid-19 pandemic and in part due to the protracted process in relation to the implementation of TROs.

It was suggested that Redditch could potentially be offered as a trial area for TROs on zigzag lines due to its tight urban setting, which may result in the process being carried out more quickly. Members agreed that this would be a sensible approach and could provide good outcomes for the Borough in the future.

Further discussions were had at this meeting regarding the establishment of Walking Buses in the Borough. This idea links to the third recommendation from the Parking Enforcement Task Group Members that Officers from Redditch Borough Council work with Worcestershire County Council, local schools, and West Mercia Police to develop a strategy to tackle problem parking near schools.

The Chief Executive recommended that some monitoring be undertaken within the next 6 months by Officers around schools in addition to the possibility of looking into School Streets, an initiative where a temporary restriction on motorised traffic at school drop-off and pick-up times was implemented on the road outside a school.

It was agreed that the Parking Enforcement Task Group be re-established to reconsider the outstanding recommendations and the possibility of the implementation of School Streets in the Borough and Councillor Beecham volunteered as Chair of the Parking Enforcement Task Group should it be re-established*. The Democratic Services Officer agreed to investigate the process for revisiting the Parking Enforcement Task Group and to contact relevant Members.

An item on Parking Enforcement appears on the Committee on the Work Programme in sixth months' time. (noting that there may be little progress in respect of TROs) Further details of this update appears in this report.

**Councillor Beecham was appointed to the Executive Committee in December therefore is no longer part of Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Task Group investigations. The Parking Enforcement Task Group has not been re-established at the time of writing however a topic proposal in respect of Speeding and Road Safety was considered at the Committee meeting in February 2022 (details of the consideration of the item can be found within this report).*

Homes England Asset Transfer - Pre-Scrutiny

Members had requested that this item be presented for pre-scrutiny prior to its consideration by the Executive Committee. The report provided clarification on the circumstances of Homes England Asset transfers and historical context of previous transfers to the Council.

21st October 2021

Church Green Conservation Area

The Principal Conservation Officer presented Members with the Church Green Conservation area report at the meeting held on 21st October 2021. During the presentation detailed information was provided regarding the Conservation Area Appraisal that had been prepared in order to provide a strategy to protect and enhance its character and support the wider regeneration of the town centre. Alongside the Conservation Area Appraisal, a Conservation Management Plan was produced that identified strategies to protect and enhance the Conservation Area.

Some of the issues that had been identified as areas within the Town Centre that required improvement were as follows:

- Poor state of the public realm
- Poor state of shop fronts
- Parking around the church
- Parking on the corner of Evesham Walk/ Unicorn Hill
- Vacant Units

Officers reported that a consultation was carried out in February and March 2021. The responses received to the consultation detailed concerns that had already been raised and identified and officers had dealt with them.

Members were in agreement that this was an important project and would greatly improve the look of the area.

At this meeting the Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorsed the recommendations that were due to be considered by the Executive Committee at their meeting held on 26th October 2021 and at the full Council meeting due to be held on 15th November 2021. At both of these meetings the recommendations were agreed and therefore adopted.

2nd December 2021

Presentation from the West Mercia Road Safety Team

As part of the Overview and Scrutiny training event held earlier in the municipal year it was agreed that an item regarding Road Safety and Speeding would be presented to the Committee for consideration.

On 2nd December 2022 the Chair welcomed members of the West Mercia Police Road Safety Team who provided information on the work they carried out including data, education campaigns and enforcement.

This was a detailed presentation and Members were pleased that the numbers of road collisions had decreased over the past year and that there was a number of initiatives in place regarding road safety in the Borough.

Redditch Town Deal Investment Plan - 6 Monthly Update

A pre-scrutiny item had been considered by the Committee in January 2021 when it was agreed by Members that a regular update in respect of the Redditch Town Deal Investment Plan would be included in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Plan in the future, in order for Members to be provided with an update on the projects and progress. This was the first of such updates.

During the Redditch Town Deal Investment Plan update, Members were further informed that the following projects had been reprioritised as part of a piece of work that had been undertaken earlier in the municipal year. These projects had been approved and allocated Towns Deal funding:

- Redevelopment of Redditch Library Project
- Town Centre Public Realm Project
- Innovation Centre

During the detailed update Officers informed the Committee that there would be an improved Communications plan for the next stages of the projects. In addition to this the costing and contingencies were discussed along with the establishment of an ambassador for each project going forward which would increase the visibility of the projects.

13th December 2021

New Cemetery Provision

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 13th December 2021 was an extra meeting in order to pre-scrutinise the New Cemetery Provision report prior to its consideration by the Executive Committee at their meeting on 15th December 2021. Several members of the public had registered to speak at this meeting to express their views on the future of New Cemetery Provision within the Borough. It is important to note that the planning application, previously considered by the

Planning Committee, was not under scrutiny at this meeting as planning was a separate process to Overview and Scrutiny.

The Bereavement Services Manager delivered a presentation in respect of the New Cemetery Provision and included information of the current burial provision within the Borough. Alongside this, previous investigations on potential new cemetery locations around Redditch were presented in detail.

The layout and design of the new cemeteries in comparison to more formal cemeteries were also presented for Members' attention and the potential for innovation in these areas was discussed.

Although it is the case that the Council does not have a statutory duty to provide burial provision in the Borough. Members were all in agreement that, if this provision was not provided in the future, it would adversely impact on the residents within Redditch.

There were three options for future burial provision within the Borough were included in the report. These were as follows:

- Reuse of Plymouth Road Cemetery
- Land off Ipsley Church Lane
- Bordesley Abbey Extension

During a particularly detailed debate Members raised a number of questions regarding the officer's report including the phases of development at the land off Ipsley Church Lane, the investigations and costs already incurred at each of the three options presented and any conflicts with the Council Plan.

At the end of the robust debate a vote was taken on the recommendations included within the report. The recommendations were endorsed by the Committee and agreed by the Executive Committee at their meeting held on 15th December 2021.

6th January 2022

Redditch Partnership Update

The Chief Executive delivered the annual update in respect of the Redditch Partnership at the meeting held on 6th January 2022. The update included consideration of the Redditch Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) which was produced by the Redditch Partnership and updated every three years. A mini refresh of the strategy was undertaken in 2015 and the four priorities of the SCS were reviewed each year by the Partnership. The current Priorities of the SCS were noted as follows:

- Health Inequalities

- Education attainment, school readiness and raising aspirations of young people.
- The economy of Redditch with a focus on providing a larger and more diverse job offer.
- Lead on transformational change of services for citizens in Redditch.

It was noted that the work of the Redditch Partnership had been particularly important, and its benefits well received during the pandemic as it facilitated the coordination of communities in Redditch.

During detailed discussion Members were interested in the following:

- The skills available in the local area and whether the delivery of skills met the needs of local businesses.
- The inclusion of young people in the plans that specifically affected them and their future.
- Engagement with schools across the Borough
- How to make Redditch a more attractive place to teach.

Recommendation Tracker

The Recommendation Tracker was presented for Members' consideration. It was explained that this was a regular update that allowed members to see where the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Task Groups and Working Groups could be tracked and followed up if necessary.

3rd February 2022

Sustainable Warmth Funding - pre-scrutiny

The Strategic Housing Manager presented the Sustainable Warmth Funding report to the Committee and explained that this was a new allocation of funding that would be utilised to improve those properties Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of E, F or G. The criteria for recipients of the funding were outlined within the report this included the annual income of each eligible household and the rental status. The period of the grant was until March 2023 and Members were keen to understand how the scheme would be publicised, how the funding would be allocated correctly and that the projects would be managed efficiently. Members were informed that there was reporting milestones to manage the projects and that Trustmark accredited suppliers would be used to deliver the works.

At the end of the debate the Committee endorsed the recommendations that were due to be considered at the Executive Committee meeting on 8th February 2022 and at the Full Council meeting on 21st February 2022.

Topic Proposal – Road Safety and Speeding

As outlined earlier in this report Members had raised their concerns regarding Road Safety and Speeding within the Borough at the Overview and Scrutiny training session held at the beginning of the municipal year. Members reported that a large proportion of the queries and requests from residents was concerned with speeding on roads within the Borough. The Topic Proposal presented by Councillor Salman Akbar reflected these issues.

Members were in agreement that this was a very important area to investigate, and it was hoped that the task group could make some recommendations to implement important changes in Redditch in respect of speeding and road safety. It was therefore agreed that the Road Safety and Speeding Task Group be established.

17th March 2022

Declaration of Land Surplus to Requirement at Lodge Road/Union Street, Smallwood and Available for Disposal

During the presentation of this item Members were informed that it was recommended that this parcel of land be declared surplus to requirement. It was noted that currently the land was vacant and had experienced some difficulties over the years in respect of fly tipping. Members agreed that this was a site that had received a steady number of complaints over the years and to dispose of it in this manner would be the most appropriate way forward.

At the end of the debate a vote was taken on the recommendations included within the report. The recommendations were endorsed by the Committee and agreed by the Executive Committee at their meeting held on 22nd March 2022.

Parking Enforcement - Verbal Update

The Environmental Services Manager provide the update in respect of Parking Enforcement. In doing so, it was highlighted that 35 visits to schools had been undertaken between mid-September 2021 and January 2022. Members were informed that it was unlikely that Worcestershire County Council (WCC) would progress any steps in the near future to change the enforcement rules on zig zag lines outside schools in the Borough nor was it currently looking to implement a School Streets area.

There was some discussion regarding a communications plan in order to raise awareness for residents regarding parking on zig zag lines and other road safety concerns in respect of schools. Members were informed that this could be picked up

as part of the Road Safety Task Group which had been approved at the last meeting of the Committee.

Draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22

As part of this item the Chair thanked all of the Members over the municipal year. She particularly wished to thank those members who had sat on Scrutiny Working Groups and Task Groups. Councillor Chalk was also thanked for this work on the external scrutiny bodies, and it was noted that it was always useful to receive the written reports.

Members thanked the Chair for all of her hard work over the previous municipal year and also extended their thanks to Councillor Jenny Wheeler who had worked incredibly hard during her time as a councillor.

Crime And Disorder Scrutiny Panel – 22nd September 2021

Local authorities are required to have a Committee designated with responsibility to review the work of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and this Committee must meet at least once a year to discuss the work of the partnership. In Redditch this role is undertaken by the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel, which is a permanent sub-committee of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Panel holds the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership to account for its work in Redditch.

At the meeting of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel that took place on 22nd September 2021 Members received an update on the work of the Partnership in the Borough in the preceding 12 months, this included an update on the action that was being taken to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour including Introductory Tenancies, Community Protection Warnings, Community Triggers and Restorative Justice.

There was also a discussion regarding local initiatives, particularly with young people including the Empowering Young People Project, Young Citizens Challenge, The Respect Programme, and the Virtual Decisions Knife Crime Project.

The Community Safety Partnership Manager presents the update, and the information is always well received by Members. Particularly this year when Members of the main Committee requested that they be provided with a written, less formal update outside of the panel meetings to keep them informed of what was going on in the Borough from a partnership perspective.

TASK GROUPS AND SHORT SHARP REVIEWS

Task Groups are established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to conduct an in-depth review of any service, policy or issue that affects the Borough. The work carried out by Task Groups in 2021-2022 is summarised below.
Recommendation Tracker.

Dementia Task Group

The final report for the Dementia Task Group was considered at the Overview and Scrutiny meeting details of which can be found earlier in this report.

Parking On Unicorn Hill – Short, Sharp Review

Although the Parking on Unicorn Hill Short, Sharp Review meetings took place at the start of the municipal year 2021-22, the review was put on hold due to the licensing work that was currently underway in respect of the location of Taxi Ranks in the Borough. It was decided that since the Licensing Committee were undertaking work in this area, that the Short, Sharp Review would be paused until such time as this work had been completed.

WORKING GROUPS

The Council has two permanent scrutiny working groups, the Budget Scrutiny Working Group, and the Performance Scrutiny Working Group.

Budget Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Jennifer Wheeler

The Budget Scrutiny Working Group held a number of remote meetings in 2021-2022 recognising the importance of regular scrutiny of the Council's Budget.

During the year the Budget Scrutiny Working Group considered the following matters:

- Towns Fund
- Medium Term Financial Plan
- Fees and Charges
- Budget Framework
- Budget Outturn
- Covid-19 Grants Update
- Brexit and the impact on the Borough

Performance Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Jennifer Wheeler

The Performance Scrutiny Working Group met several times throughout the municipal year 2021-2022 and with more regularity than the during the previous year.

- Carbon Reduction
- The new Corporate Dashboard
- Energy Advice Services
- Skills in the Redditch
- Housing

It is hoped that the regularity of meetings would continue into the next municipal year providing Members with a more in-depth knowledge of performance across the Council.

EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES

West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Council representative, Councillor Michael Chalk

The Committee received regular updates from Councillor Chalk, the Council's representative on the West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

During the year Councillor Chalk frequently provided written updates about the work of the Committee and highlighted the following points:

- The Draft Corporate Plan
- Governance Arrangements for WMCA
- Air Quality
- Question and Answer session with the Mayor – Andy Street

Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) – Council Representative, Councillor Michael Chalk.

The Committee received regular updates from Councillor Chalk about the work of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC). Some of the issues highlighted during the year included:

- Cancer Care within Worcestershire
- Ambulance Service provision within the County

The written updates from Councillor Chalk provide useful information of scrutiny work being undertaken by other authorities across the local area and the Committee are grateful of the time taken by Councillor Chalk in providing these updates.

CONCLUSION

The return to in-person meetings at the beginning of this municipal year has meant that once again Members can consider reports in the Council Chamber. A significant amount of pre-scrutiny work has been carried out by the Committee throughout the year. However, despite the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have carried out some constructive scrutiny throughout and in particular have considered Overview items that really matter to the residents of Redditch.

All of the recommendations made by the Committee during the municipal year have been accepted by the Executive Committee, either in totality or in an amended form.

The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee express his thanks to all Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, recognising in particular the valuable contribution made by Members through Task Group investigations and on the Budget and Performance Scrutiny Working Groups.

For any background information on the work of Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Redditch, please visit <https://www.redditchbc.gov.uk/council/the-council.aspx>

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Tel: 01527 64252 Ext 3031 email: joanne.gresham@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Scrutiny Proposal Form

(This form should be completed by sponsoring Member(s), Officers and / or members of the public when proposing an item for Scrutiny).

Note: The matters detailed below have not yet received any detailed consideration. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee reserves the right to reject suggestions for scrutiny that fall outside the Borough Council's remit.

Proposer's name and designation		Date of referral	
Proposed topic title			
Link to local priorities including the strategic purposes			
Background to the issue			
<p style="text-align: center;">Key Objectives</p> <p>Please keep to SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely)</p>			
<p>How long do you think is needed to complete this exercise? (Where possible please estimate the number of weeks, months and meetings required)</p>			

Please return this form to: Jo Gresham, Democratic Services Officer, Redditch Borough Council, Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square, Redditch, B98 8AH

Email: joanne.gresham@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk