

Portfolio Holder Annual Report

Portfolio: Housing, Local Environment and Health Portfolio

Portfolio Holder: Brandon Clayton

Year: to October 2010

1. Executive Summary

1.1. Please provide a summary of progress over the last year

Local Environment

- Retained Green Flag awards for Arrow Valley Park and Morton Stanley Park.
- Achieved Green Flag status for the new Overdale Park at Astwood Bank.
- Heart of England in Bloom - achieved Silver Gilt Award status.
- Improved Parking Project – sites have been completed and the list of potential sites for inclusion in the project has been expanded.
- Morton Stanley Festival held over two days with increased visitor numbers.
- Town Centre Improvements – extensive consultation undertaken regarding the draft proposals, further consultation to be done and options for funding currently being investigated.
- Progress is being made on the transfer of section 106 land from the Brockhill developer to RBC. It is anticipated that Areas 1 and 2 will be adopted in the near future which will allow the transfer of funds to RBC.
- Environmental Enhancement Programme – Woodrow – minor snagging works to be completed, Winyates – still ongoing, Lodge Park – completed.
- Pesticide Review – ongoing to establish the potential gains in available resources.
- Signing up of West Midlands Bio-diversity Pledge.
- Carried out a consultation event with suppliers, staff, and members to agree how to facilitate a traffic island sponsorship scheme. Considered this as an option for shared services.
- Continuation of Capital Landscape Project to address various needs across the Borough.
- District lead on redraft of Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy document following public consultation. Finalised and adopted the Joint Municipal Waste Strategy in October 2009.
- Increased range of items that public can recycle through kerbside collection. Worked with WCC and districts to promote the additional products that can go into the household recycling green bins following opening of EnviroSort plant at Norton in late 2009, including new livery on all waste collection vehicles, through a joint WRAP bid.

- Produced a business case for a pilot scheme for a paid for garden waste collection to a 4,800 properties from March 2010 and launched new service to pilot areas. Report to Executive on 20th October 2010.
- Increased promotion and support of 're-use' by working in partnership with local re-use charities, county council and Severn Waste Services; residents sign-posted to re-use organisations and items diverted from bulky collection service.
- Commenced dog fouling awareness campaign in September 2010.
- Gone out to tender for new cremator and mercury abatement equipment.

Climate Change

- A joint climate change strategy has been developed and consulted on, providing the strategic direction for future climate change activity.
- Signed up to the national 10:10 campaign.
- £189'000 Salix funding spent, with energy savings already apparent. This has resulted in carbon emissions from our buildings reducing by 7.5% from our baseline year 2008/9.
- Have pushed to increase the eco-credentials of the new Abbey Stadium development.
- Undertaken a trial of different electric vehicles.
- Internal staff 'switch it off' campaign – the green 5!
- Identified the major services at risk from severe weather and identify potential issues.

Housing

- There have been 2 main areas of concern in housing over the past year. The review of the Housing Revenue Account which we are currently awaiting the outcome of to see how this will financially impact on the council and the introduction of a new Regulator for Housing.
- The new regulator called, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) has asked each local authority to produce a Tenants Annual Report by the 1st October each year. Redditch has produced its report and it was submitted to the TSA within the time scale. The TSA introduced six standards that they want all local authorities to work to, these are: Tenant

Involvement and Empowerment, Home, Tenancy, Neighbourhood and Community, Value for Money, Governance and Financial viability, (as we are a local authority and audited externally on these areas we are not required to report to the TSA on Governance and Financial viability. During the year Housing Services have held several events to promote the standards and work with tenants in setting standards against each of our services, this work will be continued throughout the year by the Tenant Involvement officers working with groups of tenants to agree local offers for their areas. Our performance will be monitored through a Performance Development Review panel run by our tenants.

- The Housing Options Trailblazer funding of £180,000 has been used to enhance the service and share best practise with other organisations around the country. Our Housing Options Manager has been asked to talk at several conferences and seminars about the Housing Options service we provide in Redditch. Customers have benefited from the introduction of a Trailblazing Education and Employment Link worker who offers advice and help to those seeking accommodation who are also looking to develop their skills or find work. We have attended a number of road show events around the Borough to support tenants facing redundancy or looking for work to access they help they need to keep their accommodation and find suitable employment. To try and address overcrowding through the funding we have been able to assist overcrowded families with an installation of a POD which is a purpose built extension which enables families to remain in their homes providing much needed extra space. Our trailblazer money has also enabled us to develop the use of one of our bedsits for a training flat for young people who have come out of the care of social services. Evidence has shown that these are the age group that are more likely to be at risk of losing their accommodation within the first 12 months. Working with social Services in developing the support required, 6 young people have been housed through the training flat and most have moved on into council accommodation and are sustaining their tenancies.
- In January 2010 Housing services introduced Introductory Tenancies, these are tenancies given to new tenants of RBC and will last for 12 months if at the end of the 12 month period the tenant has abided by there tenancy conditions i.e. by paying their rent and not causing a nuisance then they are given a secure tenancy. If however, tenancy conditions are broken Officers can choose to extend the introductory tenancy for a further 6 months or take action in the court to evict them.

- Over the past 12 months we have successfully reviewed the council's sheltered housing, holding conferences at the town hall and consultation events throughout our sheltered housing. This is the first major review of the Council's older persons housing in 30 years and through this review we will hopefully have put in place older persons housing in Redditch for the next 20 years.

Strategic Housing

- The Housing Strategy section has had a successful year exceeding the National Indicator targets for the supply of affordable housing and percentage of vulnerable residents in properties with a SAP rating less than 35 and greater than 65.
- The team have introduced a new Private Sector Housing Strategy incorporating a robust evidence base to ensure the Council's limited resources are directed in a more efficient and strategic manner. We have also integrated a new team following the transfer of staff from Environmental Health to create a dedicated team working on improving private sector housing conditions, licensing of houses in multiple occupation (HMO) and dealing with Gypsy & Traveller incursions.
- In partnership with the Worcestershire local authorities we have commissioned a Worcestershire Care & Repair agency and joined the West Midlands Kickstart Partnership. This service will ensure an improved service to customers and the Kickstart scheme will give owners improved access to resources to make improvements to their properties to achieve the decent homes standard.

Health

- Health remains an area of concern. The recent Council Plan Part 1 report highlighted smoking, obesity and alcohol as issues in certain super output areas i.e. sub ward level of about 1,000 people. Participation rates in exercise are also the lowest in the County. The LSP is now addressing healthy outcomes (see Year Ahead section).

2. Performance

2.1. Please detail areas of good performance over the past year.

Local Environment

- Achievement of Green Flag and Heart of England in Bloom awards.
- Provision of additional parking in residential areas to address parking, ASB and garage maintenance/revenue issues.
- Significant progress on transfer of Brockhill S106 areas and positive working relationship between services and the developer.
- Achieved level 1 against indicator NI 196 – improved street and environmental cleanliness – fly-tipping. Measures fly-tipping incidents that are dealt with along with the enforcement actions and outcomes taken.

Climate Change

- The Council's total carbon footprint (buildings, transport and staff mileage) reduced by 6% (increase in staff mileage counters the buildings savings).
- The total carbon footprint of our area is also reducing at a good rate, 6.4% less than our baseline year – the average Redditch resident's carbon footprint is 7.3 tonnes per year.

Housing

- Voids performance has improved, we are now averaging 19 days from when a property is empty to when it is re let the top quartile performance across districts in 2009 was 24 days; therefore we are well within the top quartile performance.

- We are continually working to reduce our rent arrears, at year end in 2009/10 the Council's rents arrears had been decreased by £43,202 which exceed the target of £31,372 . The introduction of the rent/welfare officer has contributed to the performance by helping tenants claim the correct benefits and helping make people more financially aware of the debt they owe and signposting people to agencies who can help
- Repairs and maintenance targets have been achieved and with the introduction of the repairs by appointment the service has a good satisfaction rating

Strategic Housing

- NI 155 Number of affordable houses target 94 achieved 111
- NI 187 Tackling fuel poverty
 - 187a Proportion of households in receipt of income benefits with **low (below 35)** energy efficiency target 4.3% achieved **3.79%**
 - 187b Proportion of households in receipt of income benefits with **high (65 or over)** energy efficiency target 51.8 achieved **53.7%**

2.2. Please detail key performance indicators that are of concern

Local Environment

| Key Performance Indicators – Areas of Concern | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| PI Ref | PI Description | Explanation and/or corrective action. | Impact on budget |
| NI 192 | % household waste re-used, recycled and composted Outturn figure 29% compared to previous year outturn of 31%, performance | Number of factors have negatively impacted upon this indicator including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big reduction in bring bank usage | Already have a promotional budget set aside to further promote recycling and materials that can go in |

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| | so far in 2010 remains low | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in street sweeping • Recycling in green bins remained constant rather than increased with new materials • Residual waste (grey bins) remained constant and not reduced • Improvement plan to be revised, working with WCC to understand what we need to do to improve. | green bins. No impact on budgets. |
| NI 195b | <p>Improved street and environmental cleanliness (levels of detritus)</p> <p>Outturn figure 26% compared to previous year outturn of 11%</p> | Following training undertaken in February 2009 on surveying methods, higher detritus levels (includes dust, mud, soil, grit, gravel, stones, rotted leaf and vegetable residues, fragments of twigs, glass, plastic and other finely divided materials and uncollected grass cuttings) have been reported due to the assessment and grading criteria that have to be used. An improvement plan has been developed and implemented to improve sweeping and associated operations. | Budget made available from within existing budgets to enable contingency arrangements to be put in place for when sweepers are off the road or drivers are absent. |

Climate Change

| Key Performance Indicators – Areas of Concern | | | |
|---|----------------------------|---|------------------|
| PI Ref | PI Description | Explanation and/or corrective action. | Impact on budget |
| NI188 | Adapting to Climate Change | This is resource intensive and while we will meet our LAA target of reaching level 2, reaching higher levels is likely to be problematic. | n/a |

Housing

| Key Performance Indicators – Areas of Concern | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| PI Ref | PI Description | Explanation and/or corrective action. | Impact on budget |
| | <p>Numbers approaching as Homeless</p> <p>Numbers of Household in temporary accommodation</p> <p>Numbers of Homelessness</p> | Housing Options have seen an increase in the number of people approaching RBC claiming homelessness. This is resulting in an increase the number of people we have to provide temporary | If the CLG decide to cut the homelessness grant funding we will loose the funding for one Homelessness Prevention Officer and one part time Housing Education & employment link worker, in Housing Options. With |

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| | preventions | accommodation for. Officers are awaiting the outcome of the comprehensive spending review to see what funding will still be available. | the increase in the numbers of people approaching the council for assistance our homelessness acceptances may increase and therefore the use of temporary accommodation will increase. |
|--|-------------|--|--|

3. Revenue Budget

3.1. Explain problem areas – what has been done, what is planned to be done – impact on priorities, key deliverables

Local Environment

| Revenue Budget – Areas of Concern | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|---|---|
| Ref. | Description | Explanation and/or corrective action. | Impact on performance and priorities |
| | Heart of England in Bloom | Continued involvement or aspirations to achieve a higher standard do not currently have any revenue funding allocated and this years award was achieved using existing resources. | Diversion of funds may be to the detriment of other works that would otherwise be carried out |

Strategic Housing

Revenue Budget – Areas of Concern

| Ref. | Description | Explanation and/or corrective action. | Impact on performance and priorities |
|-------------|--------------------------------|--|--|
| | Private Sector Housing Officer | This post currently covers the Council statutory function of licensing HMO's. The current funding for the post is through the Regional Housing Pot allocation received from the Government. There is sufficient funding to maintain this post until 2013. A revenue funding bid will be required to maintain this post after 2013. | Without this post the Council will be unable to provide its statutory function of licensing HMO's. |

4. Capital Budget

4.1. Explain problem areas – what has been done, what is planned to be done – impact on priorities, key deliverables

Local Environment

| Revenue Budget – Areas of Concern | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Ref. | Description | Explanation and/or corrective action. | Impact on performance and priorities |
| | TPO review | Potential need to purchase software to enable to review to take place and no funding has been allocated | A badly designed system for capturing and recording data may significantly slow down the process and will take more officer time |
| | Software management | To fully utilise staff and their time there are systems available to reduce the administration element of the jobs. This may be of significant importance when the transformation and review of how the service is provided takes place. No funding has been set aside for such systems. | The optimum use of resources may not be realised. |
| | Review of Service Standards | Part completed but needs to be reviewed and ratified. | Any enhanced standards do not currently have funding. |

5. The Year Ahead

5.1 Please detail the portfolio holder's main areas of focus in the year ahead:-

Local Environment

- Transfer of Section 106 land from developer to RBC together with commuted sums
- Environmental Enhancement Programme – completion of outstanding works
- Continuation of Improved Parking Project
- Commencement of work and/or obtain funding for the Town Centre Improvements
- Retain Heart of England in Bloom award
- Produce programme for commencement of TPO review
- Address issues with IT system and review software options to enhance service delivery
- Trialling of a Woodland Day which will be extended next year if successful
- Review of Service Standards for landscape maintenance and street cleaning
- Review of areas that were originally included in the County Council safer Routes to School project
- Consideration of options for disposal of timber on a more commercial basis
- Publication of Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy and implementation of action plan
- WETT programme looking at waste and street scene services
- Continue to tackle fly-tipping and incorrectly disposed of waste
- Subject to Member decision, continue/expand garden waste collection service

Climate Change

- The strategic direction of climate change in this organisation is dependent on the plans of the Coalition Government, who have said “this will be the greenest Government ever”.

- The law has changed so that Local Authorities can now sell electricity. We intend to develop a business case for investing in solar PV panels to generate electricity which we would use during the day for free, but be paid 41.3p/kWh to generate it (feed in tariff).
- A further £13'840 Salix funding has been achieved to undertake more energy efficiency projects including improving the lighting in stairwells at Winyates Centre and timer switches for smaller appliances such as water coolers.
- Continue to strive towards our 10:10 target.
- Crematorium capturing of waste heat feeding into Abbey Stadium Development. This will significantly reduce carbon emissions and our gas fuel bill.
- Purchase of an electric vehicle for town centre cleansing!
- Applied for Government scheme to install 3 electric-car charging points in the Town.
- Aiming to reduce staff mileage emissions through harmonising terms and conditions. Other staff initiatives include scheme to help staff buy a bicycle and consideration of policies to encourage use of public transport.
- Fully risk assess our services against future climate change, especially severe weather events.
- Potential new Transition Redditch group being set up.
- All HoS have included climate change actions in their business plans.
- Project to try and get the Palace Theatre rated 'A' on the Display Energy Certificate Scheme.
- Work to reduce the impact of a potential expansion of the garden waste trial.
- Start to consider in more detail water efficiency issues.
- There is some uncertainty about the future of energy management with Property Services moving to WETT.

Housing

- Our main concern over the next 6 months will be the outcome of the review of the Housing Revenue Account and how this will impact on the council both financially and in the amount of work we will be able to carry out in the first 5 years of our 30 year capital programme. We will be producing a 30 year business Plan based on the outcome of the review, which we will need to communicate to all of our tenants

- With the Older Persons Housing & Support Strategy in place the action plan is now being delivered, it is important that the completion of the review of the sheltered housing is carried out sensitively with our tenants.
- Through our Housing Options team we are in negotiations with Worcestershire County council to provide skills training in a 'Computabus' which is able to deliver IT training anywhere in the community, we are hoping to be able to offer training to Redditch residents. We are also looking to see if there is any grant funding which we could use to train our tenants to gain skills such as painting and decorating.
- A key deliverable for Housing over the next year will be to increase the opportunity for tenants to get involved in the decision making on the service, housing services will be doing this through the new Tenant Involvement Strategy action plan. We will also be working with our tenants to produce our next Tenants Annual Report.
- We will continue with the Capital programme of works to ensure our properties retain the decent homes standard and also continue to assess the energy efficiency of our stock to ensure we stay within the average SAP ratings of 73. We are also committed to improving our performance on the climate change agenda by undertaking loft insulation and replacing central heating boilers with 'A' rated condensing boilers.

Strategic Housing

- Implementation of the single conversation and local investment plan with the Homes & Communities Agency to ensure investment is brought into Redditch for the development of new affordable housing to meet the growing needs of the Borough.
- Ensure housing related support funded through Supporting People is maintained following expected budget cuts to the SP budget.
- The implementation of the Worcestershire Housing Strategy and the development of a Redditch specific action plan.

- Raising housing standards in the private sector with particular focus on vulnerable occupants living in non decent housing.

Health

- Progress has been slow over the year as we have struggled to engage our partners in the health agenda; however, the LSP Board recently held an away morning to develop a healthy outcomes action plan that will form part of the Sustainable Community Strategy. The draft plan will be considered by the Board in November and will then be subject to scrutiny.