



# Executive Committee

Tuesday, 6th February,  
2024

## MINUTES

### Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), Councillor Gemma Monaco (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Joe Baker, Brandon Clayton, Luke Court, Lucy Harrison and Bill Hartnett

### Also Present:

Councillor Jane Spilsbury

### Officers:

Ruth Bamford, Matthew Bough, Peter Carpenter, Jonathan Cochrane, Nicola Cummings, Matthew Eccles, Sue Hanley, Simon Parry and Guy Revans

### Democratic Services Officers:

Jess Bayley-Hill

### 80. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Craig Warhurst.

### 81. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 82. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader highlighted that there were three agenda packs for Members' consideration at the meeting: a main agenda and two supplementary packs. Due to the length of the Playing Pitch and Built Facilities Strategies report, only the covering report and Executive Summaries were included in the main agenda. The full report was published in the first Additional Papers pack, with a small number of paper copies made available. This pack had also been available to view electronically for five clear working days in advance of the meeting, with the exception of the executive summary for the Playing Pitch Strategy, which was reissued in the second Additional Papers pack when typographical errors were

Chair

identified in the original summary paper. The typographical errors related to the recommendation numbering.

The Executive Committee was advised that at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024, Members had pre-scrutinised a number of reports on the Executive Committee's agenda. However, only a single recommendation from the Committee had been made for consideration at the Executive Committee meeting, in respect of the Carbon Reduction Strategy report. The recommendation had been published in the second Additional Papers pack. Members were urged to consider this recommendation when debating that item on the agenda.

Members were asked to note that there were some items on the agenda which contained exempt information. The Leader advised that he wanted to consider these items in public session, if possible, to avoid disruption for the public.

### **83. PLAYING PITCH AND BUILT FACILITIES STRATEGIES**

The Development Services Manager presented the Playing Pitch and Built Facilities Strategies for Members' consideration.

The Executive Committee was advised that, following approval of the Council's Leisure Strategy in autumn 2022, there were two outstanding strategies that needed to be considered by Members; the Built Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategies. The Playing Pitch Strategy reviewed access to playing pitches in the Borough. A lot of information had been gathered from both local and national sources which had informed the content of the strategies. In addition, Sport England had signed off the strategies prior to consideration by the Executive Committee.

Members subsequently discussed the strategies and in doing so noted that the Football Federation had contacted the Leader with regard to this matter and had expressed their eagerness for the strategies to be implemented. Reference was also made to the positive contribution that participation in sports on playing pitches could have on the health of people living in the Borough.

During consideration of this item, reference was made to the potential for the strategies to have included information about play parks and concerns were raised about the future position of some parks in the Borough. However, it was noted that this did not form part of the focus of these particular strategies.

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) **The Built Facility Strategy and the Playing Pitch Strategy are endorsed; and**
- 2) **Delegated authority be granted to the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure following consultation with the lead Portfolio Holder for Leisure to implement the following recommendations:**

**Built Facility Strategy: 1, 3, 5, 8, 9,11,12,13,14,  
Playing Pitch Strategy: 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 5.1, 6.1, 6.3, 7.1,  
7.2, 8.1, 8.3, 8.5**

**84. CARBON REDUCTION STRATEGY - ANNUAL REVIEW**

The Climate Change Manager presented the annual review of the Carbon Reduction Strategy.

Members were advised that when the Carbon Reduction Strategy was approved by Members in autumn 2022, it had been agreed that there should be an annual review of the strategy and the Council's progress with achieving carbon reduction targets. Following the Council's declaration of a climate emergency, the authority was aiming to achieve net zero by 2040. The aims and objectives detailed in the strategy would enable the Council to address this objective.

In terms of the targets detailed in the report, seven had already commenced or been completed whilst four remained to be started. In particular, there had been a significant amount of work undertaken in respect of Local Authority Delivery Phase 3 (LAD 3), to retrofit properties in the private sector for low income households. The Town Hall improvement works that had already been undertaken as well as a reduction of 41 per cent in car mileage for staff employed by Redditch Borough Council had also had a significant impact on the progress that had been achieved to date.

During consideration of this item, reference was made to a recommendation on this subject that had been proposed at a meeting of the Performance Scrutiny Working Group held in January 2024 and endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at a meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024. The recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny proposed the following:

*“That tree and hedgerow planting be added to the list of performance measures in the Carbon Reduction Strategy.”*

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Bill Hartnett and seconded by Councillor Joe Baker.

Members subsequently debated the recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny in detail and in doing so commented on the following:

- The rationale underpinning the recommendation.
- The extent to which it would be feasible to include a measure focusing on the number of trees and hedgerows planted in the Borough.
- The focus of the Carbon Reduction Strategy and action plan on action that could be taken by the Council and the fact that the Council could not control or accurately measure tree planting in the private sector.
- The potential for tree and hedgerow planting to be applied as a condition when the Council granted planning consent to developers.
- The fact that the Council had no control over the location in which trees would be planted by developers.
- The need for the Council to rely on developers to volunteer information about the trees and hedgerows planted in the Borough. Members noted that not all developers would share this information.
- The problem of Ash Die Back and the number and range of tree species that were being planted in Redditch to replace trees in the Borough that had that disease.
- The potential for the Council to demonstrate that it was leading by example, should measures in respect of tree and hedgerow planting be included in the Carbon Reduction Strategy's action plan.
- The positive impact that tree and hedgerow planting could have on biodiversity in the Borough.
- The significant number of trees that were already in situ within the Borough.

At the end of these discussions, Members noted that the Council could aim to roll into the process information about the numbers of trees and hedgerows planted on Council land as well as information on this subject supplied voluntarily by developers. However, as this would not be a mandatory requirement of developers, Members commented that this could not be made into a formal measure in the Carbon Reduction Strategy and action plan. On this basis, the recommendation was withdrawn.

Consideration was also given to the measure in the strategy focusing on cutting the Council's paper waste by offering papers electronically. Concerns were raised about this measure, with some Members commenting that many Councillors preferred to be

able to refer to Committee agenda packs in paper form only and concerns were raised that restrictions on access to paper copies of agenda packs could be discriminatory. However, it was noted that the choice remained available to Members to continue to receive paper copies of agenda packs and Members were asked to note that this measure applied generally to all Council services, not just to Council and Committee meetings.

### **RECOMMENDED that**

- 1) Council endorse the findings of this annual review of the Carbon Reduction Strategy; and**
- 2) Council accept the proposal to align Carbon Reduction Strategy measures to the Climate Action Scorecard into an accessible performance dashboard.**

### **85. NON-DOMESTIC RATES - DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF POLICY**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling presented the Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Relief Policy report for the Executive Committee's consideration.

Members were advised that Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 provided the Council with powers to award discretionary business rates relief. In 2023/24 the Council had awarded:

- £283,000 of discretionary relief (of which £240,000 was provided to Rubicon Leisure Limited); and
- £2,475.000 of Section 32 Funded Relief (Retail, Hospitality and Leisure support granted by the Government).

This policy had not changed apart from when relief could be awarded, which would change as at the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 and was now the responsibility of the Council to set.

The backdating of relief before the current year would now only be considered where:

- The application for relief was made or determined within six months of the end of that financial year; and
- Where a hereditament was entered into the rating list for the first time and an application for relief was made within three months of the hereditament entering the rating list.

This protected the Council from being asked to back-fund changes for multiple previous years.

Members were asked to note that the £283,000 of discretionary relief was shared within the wider County rates retention scheme.

Following the presentation of the report, Members questioned whether the proportion of relief costs covered by different organisations was discretionary, and therefore determined locally, or set in accordance with legal requirements. Officers confirmed that the Council tended to follow Government guidelines in respect of this matter.

### **RECOMMENDED that**

**the amended Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Relief policy is approved and adopted from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024.**

#### **86. PAY POLICY 2024/25**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling presented the Pay Policy Statement 2024/25 for the Executive Committee's consideration.

Members were informed that the Localism Act required the Council to produce a Pay Policy Statement on a yearly basis for approval by full Council. The policy needed to set out:

- The remuneration of Chief Officers.
- The remuneration of the lowest paid employees which was £22,366 a year at the Council. Members were asked to note that the Chief Executive's pay should be no more than 20 times this and in Redditch the Chief Executive was paid 6.3 times the level of the lowest paid.
- The relationship between the remuneration of Chief Officers and employees who were not Chief Officers.

The Council was responsible for setting the policy relating to recruitment, pay, terms and conditions and severance. In relation to these points, Members were asked to note the following:

- The governance around the recruitment of Chief Officers was set out in the policy.
- The Council did not provide bonuses or Performance Related Pay.
- However, progression through the Scale Points was subject to satisfactory performance.
- Termination rules were detailed in the policy.

Following the presentation of the report, Members referred to the staff grades that were Hay Evaluated and questions were raised

about whether there was full compliance with the policy, including through statutory officer appointments made at Council meetings. Officers confirmed that the Council was compliant with rules and that there was a legitimate role for Council to debate and agree senior officer pay grades.

Reference was also made to the existing interim arrangements that were in place in terms of some of the Council's statutory officer posts and questions were raised about the timescales for the recruitment of permanent staff into these positions. The Executive Committee was informed that a decision would need to be taken on the exact timing of the recruitment processes in 2024 for permanent members of senior officer staff. In the meantime, there were postholders in place, including on an interim basis, in the authority's statutory positions.

**RECOMMENDED that**

**the Pay Policy 2024/25 be approved.**

**87. FINANCE RECOVERY PLAN - UPDATE**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling presented an update on the Council's Finance Recovery Plan for Members' attention.

Members were advised that the purpose of the report was to set out the processes the Council had been following to rectify a deterioration in its financial position and processes due to the impact of the implementation of a new financial system in February 2021 during the Covid-19 pandemic. This followed on from a report presented to Members on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2022 and also the discussions over the external auditor's Section 24 Statutory Recommendations for the Council that took place at meetings of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee, Executive Committee and Council in November and December 2022 and 2023.

A similar report had recently been presented to the Audit Governance and Standards Committee. That Committee had been meeting six times a year since the Section 24 Recommendations were issued and would continue to do so until the issues were resolved.

It was noted that the external auditor's Value for Money Reports for 2021/22 and 2022/23 had been presented to both the Audit Governance and Standards Committee and Council before Christmas in 2023. The Council had also received a follow up Corporate Peer Challenge report, taking into account progress made by the Council in respect of financial recovery, the contents of

which had been presented to Council at a meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

The Executive Committee was informed that the most significant change in relation to closure was the advice from Government that all sets of accounts, up to the 2022/23 accounts, would need to be audited by a cut-off date of the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024. The Council had undertaken the data take on balance reconciliations (a task that had been due to be delivered by the external auditors originally) and had presented this information. By the date of the Executive Committee meeting, the Council was waiting for feedback from the external auditors in respect of this matter.

Other significant changes since the previous financial recovery update report included the following:

- Updated 2022/23 Revenue Outturn Estimates had been presented to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).
- Updated 2022/23 Capital Outturn Estimates had been presented to DLUHC.
- A Quarter 2 Finance and Performance Monitoring Report 2023/24 had been presented to the Executive Committee. This also included an update on Assets in respect of the issue of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC).
- The existing eFin system had been upgraded to ensure full reporting was available going forward.
- The 2021/22 Housing Benefits Audit had been signed off.
- The Quarter 2 financial monitoring was undertaken on TechOne, not on spreadsheets, which Members were advised was a huge move forward in terms of systems use and increasing the financial awareness of budget managers and their administration staff.
- Monthly Accounts Payable Training continued to be provided to staff.
- Interviews had been held for the position of Head of Finance and Customer Services. Ms Debbie Goodall had been appointed and she was due to commence employment at the Council on the 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024.
- Further interviews had been held for eight vacant posts in the Financial Services team on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> January 2024. There had been 29 applicants for those positions and six had accepted offers to start with the Authority.

Following the presentation of the report, Members discussed the progress that the Council had achieved since 2022. Questions were raised about the estimated date by which all of the actions proposed in the Section 24 Recommendations would be completed. Officers confirmed that the Government were requiring all local



authorities to submit final accounts up to 2022/23 by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024. However, Councils were in the process of meeting with representatives of the Government to discuss the feasibility of this deadline. Nationally, there was a backlog of circa 700 sets of local government accounts that still needed to be audited by external auditors and resource limitations within external audit suggested that it was unlikely these audits would be completed by that deadline. In addition, the external auditors focused on auditing NHS accounts between April and June each year, further limiting the amount of time available to external auditors to complete these audits.

Reference was made to the potential causes of delays to the Council's work on completing and submitting the authority's accounts. Officers clarified that information had been provided to the external auditors in respect of the reconciliation of data from the old to the new financial system. Once the external auditors had confirmed that this data had been signed off, Officers could commence work on the following financial year's set of accounts.

Consideration was given to the recent appointment of a new permanent Head of Finance and Customer Services. Members welcomed this appointment but expressed disappointment that they had learned about this in the local press, rather than through direct communications with Officers at the Council. Officers agreed to note this in relation to future senior officer appointments.

Members noted that the report referred to the Council running sessions in respect of the authority's "risk appetite" and questions were raised about when these sessions would be held and who would attend. Confirmation was provided that these sessions would be offered to members of the Executive Committee and would take place after the local Borough Council elections in May 2024.

It was noted that the report referred to errors in the Tech1 finance system and Members requested updates on the progress that had been achieved with addressing these. Officers explained that as soon as the first set of accounts could be provided, it would also be possible to generate error reports.

In concluding the discussions in respect of this item, Members referred to the volume of items listed in the Council's suspense accounts as treasury transactions and requested clarity on these figures. Officers advised that the value of the treasury transactions needed to be close to £100,000 per annum. The Council was close to achieving this for most of the financial years from 2020/21 onwards, although some additional work was required to review the 2021/22 financial year in respect of this matter. Members were

advised that this work on treasury transactions would be undertaken on a manual basis.

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) **progress made on the financial recovery be noted including:**
  - a) **delivery of the Statutory Accounts**
  - b) **delivery of Statutory Financial Returns**
  - c) **improvements in the Control Environment**
- 2) **the work still under way to move back to a best practice operation and the associated timetable for completion of this work be noted.**

**88. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN (INCLUDING TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY, CAPITAL STRATEGY, MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY) (TRANCHE 2)**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling presented the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP – including the Treasury Management Strategy, Capital Strategy, Minimum Revenue Position and Investment Strategy) Tranche 2 for the Executive Committee's consideration.

Members were asked to note that the Council had set its budget in two tranches, similar to the 2023/24 MTFP process. The initial tranche was published in autumn 2023 and approved at the Council meeting held in January 2024. The second tranche took into account the final Local Government Settlement figures and the authority's final budget would be approved in February 2024. Members were advised that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budgets would be included in this tranche.

In terms of the Council's revenue position, the Executive Committee was reminded that at the Council meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2024 this had been approved with a deficit of £518,000 over the three-year period 2024/25 to 2026/27.

The financial settlement, which had been confirmed on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023 by the Government, had allowed the following opportunities for additional funding to be considered which included:

- Increasing Council Tax from 1.99 per cent to 2.99 per cent resulting in additional funding of £67,000.
- Increasing planning fees for small applications by 25 per cent and other applications by 35 per cent would recoup £60,000 at present activity levels.

- There would be additional grant funding of £244,000 due to the overall Local Government Settlement.

By February 2024, the Council was in a position to fully understand the implications of the 2022/23 and 2023/24 pay awards to staff, given that the 2023/24 pay award was implemented in December 2023. Consequently, Members were advised that the following savings could be made:

- £100,000 could be released from the 2022/23 Pay Award contingency.
- £150,000 could be released from the 2023/24 Pay Award budget approved in Tranche 1 of the MTFP process.

However, there were additional pressures amounting to £261,000 that need to be accounted for. This included:

- An increase in staffing numbers in Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) due to higher levels of Food Safety compliance testing requirements by the Food Standards Agency, at a cost of £40,000.
- Planning and Environmental Enforcement costs of £45,000. This increase was linked to a report presented to the Executive Committee in January 2024.
- Investment in Play Audits starting at £10,000 and rising to £50,000. These costs had arisen as discussed in respect of the Play Audit report that had been approved at the Executive Committee meeting held in January 2024.
- Housing Strategy Review costs of £71,000. This was to account for the increased statutory duties that were being placed on Private Sector Housing teams to address the damp and mould issues that had been raised nationally. In addition, the Renters Reform Bill would bring new duties and responsibilities to District Councils particularly in relation to improving renting standards.
- Following an approach from Wyre Forest District Council to disband the North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWeDR) shared service, Officers had been working on the exit agreement and ensuring that Redditch Borough Council was protected from any claims brought as a result of the break-up of the service and any decisions made by NWeDR prior to the split. The proposed increased costs for Redditch Borough Council would be £72,000.

These departmental changes had resulted in an overall £29,000 surplus in the 2024/25 financial year rising to a surplus of £165,000 and then £166,000 in the following two years. Given the financial position, there was a proposal to “provisionally” freeze Council Tax in 2025/26. This would reduce the surplus by an ongoing £144,000 from 2025/26. By provisionally proposing this change, if financial requirements meant that this was no longer possible, then it would

not need to be enacted. This would change the Tranche 2 financial position to a £21,000 and £22,000 surplus in 2025/26 and 2026/27.

The Executive Committee was asked to note that on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024 the Government had announced additional measures for Local Authorities worth £600 million. As part of these measures, the Government were asking local authorities to produce productivity plans which would set out how they would improve service performance and ensure every area was making best use of taxpayers' money. The Government would monitor these plans, and funding settlements in future years would be informed by performance against these plans. The magnitude of these additional sums would not be confirmed by the Government until later in February, however initial estimates indicated that Redditch Borough Council would benefit by £103,000. This figure had not yet been included in the MTFP report as the authority needed first to receive official confirmation from the Government of the final amount.

Any increases to costs in relation to the Parking Service Level Agreement (SLA), subject to approval by the Executive Committee, would be valued at a maximum of £27,000. As this had not yet been determined by Members by the time that the MTFP report was being debated at the Executive Committee meeting, this figure had not yet been incorporated into the MTFP Tranche 2 report. However, Members were advised that the net effect of these two changes would be that ongoing revenue budgets would be in surplus by approximately £100,000 a year.

The Council's General Fund was due to increase to a value of £3,786 million (taking account of the Tranche 2 position and provisional Council Tax Freeze in 2025/26) as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2027. This sum was approximately 9 per cent of the Council's gross expenditure and above the 5 per cent benchmark quoted by the Government as being a minimum requirement. If housing benefit payments, which were passported through the Council, were ignored then this percentage would increase to 15 per cent of expenditure.

The Capital Programme for the following five years had been included in the report. Overall, this amounted to spending of £37.1 million of which £20.1 million was funded by grants.

Significant Council spending continued to be planned in respect of the Fleet Replacement Programme, although this was slipping into the future as the authority awaited the Government's final Environment Bill and confirmation of the type of vehicles required after 2030. There would be the need to extend the Town's Fund Projects, but that application process had not started by the date of the meeting. It was expected that this would take the same route as the Levelling Up schemes that were due for completion a year

before Towns' Fund Schemes, where authorities had been asked whether extensions were required.

Members were reminded that a number of capital bids were approved in Tranche 1 of the budget. Given that the Council had a five-year ongoing Capital Programme, Members were asked to note the following key additions and changes:

- Car Park maintenance being allocated at £150,000 a year for the full five years.
- Footpath maintenance being allocated at £75,000 a year for the full five years.
- An assumption that Disabled Facility Grants would continue at a level of £700,000 per annum.
- Public Building maintenance budgets allocated at £250,000 a year, with an additional £150,000 for the initial three years due to the implications of ensuring that the Council met energy efficiency requirements by 2026.
- Fleet replacement was backed up by a full listing of all assets. HRA fleet assets were dealt with separately.
- Wheely bin purchases were set at £100,000 a year. This would be reviewed over the following financial year.
- The acceleration of approved Arrow Valley Park works was planned to maximise income.
- Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Grants and Home Repairs Assistance continued at their current levels of £25,000 and £40,000 respectively.
- Significant investment was required in ICT to ensure that this core enabling service was kept up to date. This included updating networks, and hardware and ensuring that cyber security was continually improved.
- The implications of the Play Audits, which had recently been the subject of a report to the Executive Committee, were also reflected.

The HRA budget for 2024/25 and beyond was set out in detail, with the following overall assumptions:

- A "revenue" budget had been set of £28.8 million for 2024/25 rising to £31.3 million in 2027/28.
- A Capital Programme had been set of £11.7 million for 2024/25 reducing to £10.8 million in 2027/28.
- Reserve balances would reduce slightly from £29.4 million in 2024/25 to £26.5 million in 2027/28.

Based on current assumptions, the HRA MTFP ensured:

- Adequate levels of balance reserves were maintained to help manage risks and mitigate the impact of unforeseen circumstances.
- There was a robust capital programme that was fully funded from available resources within the HRA.
- Surpluses were generated and transferred to a capital reserve and used to match fund the costs of replacement homes.
- The Council complied with legal requirements and did not set a deficit budget for the HRA.

The Section 151 Officer's robustness statement in respect of the budget reported that this was considered to be sustainable over the medium-term but more work would need to be done to ensure financial sustainability was embedded across the organisation. A provisional freeze of Council Tax was proposed for the 2025/26 financial year based on the present position which still left a surplus budget. However, if financial conditions changed, this would not be enacted. Members were asked to note that the S151 Officer's view was that, although the Council would have a small surplus budget, it would not be prudent to freeze Council Tax for the longer-term financial sustainability of the Council, even though General Fund Reserves were almost double the minimum recommended Government level.

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

- The extent to which the Council was at risk of being issued with a Section 114 Notice. Officers advised that in a recent audit of the Council's balances, it had been reported that the Council was performing well and was probably in the top half of Councils, in terms of being less likely to be issued with such a notice.
- The number of local authorities that had received Section 114 Notices in recent years and the circumstances leading to this. Members were informed that there was a need for due diligence in local government activities and many of the local authorities in this position had taken greater risks than Redditch Borough Council over the preceding 20-year period. It was also noted that the Government had asked Councils to enter into discussions with DLUHC and Government Ministers if they were experiencing problems before there was a need to issue a Section 114 Notice.
- The significant proportion of funding for local government, at 70 per cent of that total funding, that was allocated to adult and children's social services, which served 3 per cent of the population.
- The risks that an unforeseen situation could impact on the Council's financial sustainability. The Committee was

informed that there was always a risk that a disaster could befall any authority that would require funding from balances to achieve a resolution. Should the required expenditure be significant, then this could impact on long-term sustainability. An example was given of a car park issue at another authority and if an issue of this magnitude hit the Council it would halve the General Fund Reserves.

- The financial implications in the medium to long-term for the authority of a Council Tax freeze in 2025/26 and the extent to which this would create a gap in the Council's finances. The Section 151 Officer explained that, from a financial prudence perspective, a S151 Officer's view would always be that not increasing Council Tax in one year would create a financial gap in later years and impact long term financial sustainability. However, in the current financial circumstances for the Council, the Section 151 Officer could not advise that this action could not be taken.
- The extent to which it was morally acceptable to increase Council Tax during a cost of living crisis.
- The £777,747 per annum expenditure on Rubicon Leisure Limited listed in the MTFP and the extent to which the authority could aspire to reduce this cost in future. Members were informed that this was the management fee for the company. The Council was planning investment in Rubicon Leisure Limited's facilities and there was the possibility that this would result in an increase in income and a subsequent reduction in the management fee at a later date.
- The £2.45 million funding that the Council was eligible to receive as a previous member of the former Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) and whether this figure was secure. Officers explained that the eight Councils that had previously been members of this LEP had all agreed that each authority should receive that amount of funding, which was currently held by Birmingham City Council on behalf of the other authorities. Partnership members were moving to ensure these funds, including those due to Redditch Borough Council, were delivered by the end of the 2023/24 financial year.
- The figure that had been included in the MTFP tranche 2 report in respect of the proposed increase to Council Tax each year, and the reasons why this had been recorded as 2 per cent rather than 3 per cent in parts of the report. Officers clarified that when this subject was initially considered, the legislation limited Council increases to 1.99 per cent. The Government had subsequently confirmed that increases could be made at up to 2.99 per cent by lower-tier authorities. The report reflected in chronological order the different advice that had been provided by the Government on this subject over

time and the Council's proposed response, including the potential Council Tax freeze in 2025/26.

- The inclusion of a new column in some of the tables in the report relating to sources of capital funding including borrowing, which Members praised for enhancing the transparency of the figures and source of funding. The Committee was informed that the Council was still in a position to fund most capital projects but in the medium-term, it was likely that the Council would need to address the costs of the vehicle fleet replacement using funding from borrowing.
- The positive impact that income from the Council's Garden Waste Collection Service would have on the financial sustainability of the authority moving forward.

#### **RECOMMENDED that**

- 1) **the additional funding to the Council as per the Local Government Settlement on the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023, including the estimated levels for 2024/25 and 2025/26, be agreed;**
- 2) **the Tranche 2 growth and savings proposals, including an increase of Council Tax of 2.99% for 2024/25, be agreed;**
- 3) **a proposed Council Tax Freeze in 2025/26, subject to financial requirements allowing this to be possible, be noted;**
- 4) **the updated five-year Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2028/29 along with its ongoing revenue costs be agreed;**
- 5) **the levels of Earmarked Reserves being carried forward into future years be agreed;**
- 6) **the level of General Fund balances following additions from the 2024/25 MTFP be agreed;**
- 7) **the HRA budget be approved;**
- 8) **Members take account of any feedback from the Tranche 2 consultation process undertaken; and**

#### **RESOLVED that**

**the implications set out in the Section 151 Officer's Robustness (Section 25) Statement of this 2024/25 to 2026/27 Medium Term Financial Plan, in moving the Council to financial sustainability, be noted.**



**89. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**RESOLVED that**

**the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2024 be noted.**

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

There were no referrals from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Executive Advisory Panels on this occasion.

**91. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024 were considered.

During consideration of this item, Members referred to the record of the debate in respect of recommendations that had been made by the Budget Scrutiny Working Group, and endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2023, on the subject of the Finance and Performance Quarter 2 Report 2023/24. Members suggested that these recommendations should have been recorded as resolved items in the minutes. Officers explained that the Executive Committee had actually voted on and already determined these recommendations at the previous meeting of the Executive Committee, held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023. Whilst Members had debated the matter again on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024, with Members voting in exactly the same way, the minutes had been recorded so as to reflect this situation.

**RESOLVED that**

**the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.**

**92. PARKING ENFORCEMENT SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT**

The Acting Head of Environmental and Housing Services presented a report on the subject of the Council's Parking Enforcement SLA.

Members were advised that the Council had an agreement with Worcestershire County Council to undertake parking enforcement work in the Borough. Redditch Borough Council had previously had an SLA in place with Wychavon District Council to deliver parking enforcement work in the Borough. This SLA had ended in 2022/23

and, since then, there had continued to be an agreement with Wychavon District Council to undertake enforcement work on behalf of the Council on a rolling monthly basis. The proposed new SLA with Wychavon District Council would help to ensure that there was service continuity moving forward.

Consideration was given to the recommendations detailed in the report and Members welcomed the review and additional business case focusing on the potential to expand the service that was proposed in the report. Members commented that they frequently received complaints from local residents about parking infringements, particularly around schools, and therefore an expansion of the service would potentially help to address these concerns.

Reference was made to the types of parking infringements that occurred where enforcement action could be taken. Members commented that the installation of double yellow lines at junctions could actually create challenges, particularly in terms of police enforcement. As such, it was suggested that Borough and County Councillors needed to work closely together to ensure that appropriate action was taken to address parking infringements in ways that would support enforcement activities undertaken by both Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) and the police.

#### **RESOLVED that**

- 1) the Council enter into a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Wychavon District Council for the continuation of the management of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE), commencing 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, for a period of 5 years, with an annual review of outputs and outcomes;**
- 2) authority be delegated to the Head of Environment and Housing Property Services and the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Service to finalise the SLA arrangements;**
- 3) the interim Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services produce a report and business case for the expansion of the service to provide additional enforcement officers for consideration by the Executive Committee at a future meeting; and**

## RECOMMENDED that

- 4) **an additional budget of £27,000 for Civil Parking Enforcement be included in the Medium-Term Financial Plan for future years, which is to include an annual inflationary uplift, determined by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), if applicable, agreed by the level published by the Office for National Statistics, or any relevant successor body, for the preceding year.**

## 93. LAND AT UPPER NORGROVE

The Leader advised that the report in respect of land at Upper Norgrove had been referred back to the Executive Committee as a decision on this matter was an Executive function. Following a detailed debate in respect of the report at the previous meeting of the Executive Committee, a formal presentation from Officers had also not been requested for this meeting. The resolutions detailed in the report were subsequently proposed by Councillor Matthew Dormer and seconded by Councillor Gemma Monaco.

During consideration of this item, Councillor Joe Baker proposed the following amendment to the resolutions detailed in the report, which was seconded by Councillor Bill Hartnett.

*“The Council should not sell the land at Upper Norgrove and instead should build social housing at the site.”*

However, Officers advised that an amendment to a resolution could not be completely different to the original proposal. As that was the case in this instance, Officers advised that this was not a valid amendment and could not be debated as such. Whilst this advice was accepted at the meeting, it was subsequently noted that there had been a desire amongst some Members to highlight that there was an alternative option available to the Council for the use of this land.

Consideration was given to the potential for social housing to be developed on other parcels of land currently owned by Redditch Borough Council. It was suggested that there might be more appropriate opportunities to explore the development of social housing on some of this land located elsewhere in the Borough, subject to the outcomes of the planning process.

## RESOLVED that

- 1) **the Council dispose of the land at Upper Norgrove site to Bloor Homes Ltd on the basis of the offer received; and**

- 2) authority be delegated to the Head of Legal Democratic and Property Services and the Section 151 Officer to implement the disposal.

**94. TERMINATION OF SHARED SERVICE ARRANGEMENT: NORTH WORCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION**

The Interim Executive Director presented a report which detailed proposals for the termination of the shared service for North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWeDR).

Members were informed that in the summer of 2023, the Leader of Wyre Forest District Council had approached the Leader of the Council as well as the Leader of Bromsgrove District Council, which also formed part of the shared service, to advise them of Wyre Forest District Council's intention to ask to end the shared service agreement. This shared service had been in place for over 10 years and had provided economic development and regeneration services in the north of the county during this time. Officers had subsequently been attending meetings with representatives of Wyre Forest District Council to discuss this matter further and, subject to an exit agreement between all parties, the shared service would cease to operate on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024. End of terms were still being negotiated and would need to address issues such as indemnity clauses.

**RESOLVED**

- 1) to agree that the Collaboration Agreement relating to the Provision of Economic Development and Regeneration Services should be terminated mutually under clause 15.1 (Determination of this Agreement), with effect from 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024 and that a new Exit Agreement be entered into;
- 2) to delegate to the Executive Director (interim) and the Executive Director for Resources, following consultation with the Executive Member for Planning, Economic Development, Commercialism and Partnerships, authority to negotiate, finalise and approve the Exit Agreement and to take any other steps that arose from the termination process; and

**RECOMMENDED that**

- 3) an additional budget of £72,836 be approved for the new structure.

# Executive Committee

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Tuesday, 6th February, 2024

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm  
and closed at 8.19 pm