

Redditch Borough Council
Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Annual Report 2023 – 2024



REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL



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CHAIR'S FOREWORD

As Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to all members for their unwavering dedication, diligence, and meticulous scrutiny throughout the past year. None of our achievements would have been possible without the steadfast commitment and professionalism exhibited by the entire Democratic Services Team, with a special acknowledgement to Mateusz Sliwinski for his consistent support and guidance during my tenure as a newly elected chair. Their invaluable assistance has been instrumental in ensuring the smooth functioning of our Committee.

The year 2023-2024 has been a dynamic period for the O&S Committee, marked by nine productive meetings held at the town hall from May 2023 to March 2024. These sessions fostered open, transparent, and at times, robust discussions aimed at serving the best interests of our residents. Members actively engaged with senior officers, portfolio holders, and subject matter experts, posing insightful questions and facilitating constructive debates that have enriched our decision-making process.

Our Committee has diligently scrutinised various matters of significance, including but not limited to the Corporate Peer Challenge, Worcestershire Housing Strategy 2040, Establishment of a Programme Office, Town Hall Refurbishment, Domestic Abuse, Garden Waste Service, Proposal for a Public Space Protection Order, Housing Tenancy Agreement, Redditch Play Audit and Investment Strategy, Playing Pitch And Built Facilities Strategies, and the Carbon Reduction Strategy. These deliberations have enhanced our understanding and enabled us to provide valuable recommendations to the Executive Committee for due consideration.

I am pleased to highlight that members of the public actively participated in our proceedings, offering their insights and perspectives on agenda items, a testament to our commitment to transparency and inclusivity.

I am grateful for the collaboration and support extended by our sister committees, including the Audit Governance and Standards, Budget Scrutiny Working Group, and Performance Scrutiny Working Group. Similarly, I acknowledge and appreciate the informative updates provided by the Committee's representative on the West Midlands Combined Authority and the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Furthermore, the O&S Committee has identified additional areas for review through task and finish group initiatives, with plans already in place for their commencement. Particularly noteworthy is the ongoing Fly Tipping and Bulky Waste Task Group, spearheaded by myself and excellently supported by Councillor Monica Stringfellow and Councillor Karen Ashley; their dedication and professionalism are commendable.

Serving as Chair of this esteemed committee has been a privilege and an enriching experience. Upholding accountability in democracy and embodying the role of a critical friend are fundamental principles that underpin the scrutiny process for the Redditch Borough Council. I look forward to continuing our collective efforts to advance the welfare and prosperity of our community in the coming years.

Thank you.

Sid Khan

Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Councillor (Labour)
Abbey Ward
Redditch Borough Council



INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the work undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Redditch Borough Council during 2023 – 2024.

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 of 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 after they have been 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.
- Pre-scrutiny of items prior to a decision being made by the Executive 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 delivered to the highest possible standard.
- Commissioning reviews of services/topics that impact on the Council or on the lives of Redditch residents.
- 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 on the Council's information management system. The Council's scrutiny scoping form, which is submitted for agreement by Overview and Scrutiny, prior to the Task Group being set up, can be found at Appendix A.

MEMBERSHIP

The Committee appoints individual Members to oversee the work of Overview and Scrutiny. Membership of the Committee for 2023/24 is as follows:



Cllr Sid Khan (Chair)



Cllr Sharon Harvey (Vice-Chair)



Cllr Imran Altaf



Cllr Karen Ashley



Cllr Chris Holz



Cllr Joanna Kane



Cllr Emma Marshall



Cllr Jane Spilsbury



Cllr Monica Stringfellow

ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES DURING 2023-24

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee held a scrutiny training and work programme planning session at the start of the municipal year in June 2023. This session was held in person at the Town Hall Council Chamber 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 the municipal year 2023/2024. 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, items for pre-scrutiny from the Executive Committee's Work Programme were identified in addition to subjects considered suitable for further scrutiny through a Task Group investigation.

Live Streaming / Remote Meetings

Although all meetings of Overview and Scrutiny are held in person, there continues to be an option for officers to attend meetings remotely (on Microsoft Teams) to present reports to the Committee – this is upon agreement of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members of the public can also request a link to attend meetings remotely. They can do this by contacting democratic (committee) services, contact details of which are provided on each agenda and on the Council's website.

Meetings of Overview and Scrutiny continue to be live streamed where there is a significant local interest identified in the items on the meeting's agenda. Meetings of scrutiny Task Groups and Working Groups continue to be held remotely; these meetings being private and not live streamed.

Recommendations submitted to the Executive Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitors the impact of all recommendations it makes to the Executive Committee. A summary of the Executive Committee reports considered to date by Overview and Scrutiny and its sub-groups is given below, in addition to a dashboard summary of the number of recommendations made to date and whether they were accepted by the Executive Committee. Details on the recommendations are provided under summaries of each meeting provided in the next section of this report.

To date in 2023-24, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee pre-scrutinised the following Executive Committee items:

- Corporate Peer Challenge – Action Plan (8th June 2023)
- Worcestershire Housing Strategy 2040 (20th July)
- Establishment of a Programme Office (20th July)
- The Town Hall Refurbishment – Final Decision (7th September)
- Creation of a dedicated Garden Waste Service (26th October)
- Proposal for a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) in Redditch Town Centre (30th November)
- Redditch Play Audit and Investment Strategy (4th January 2024)

The Budget Scrutiny Working Group (a permanent sub-group of Overview and Scrutiny) has pre-scrutinised the following finance and budget-related Executive reports:

- Approval to Spend (24th July 2023)
- Provisional Financial Outturn Report 2022-23 (6th September)
- Quarter 1 Finance and Performance Report (6th September)
- Finance Recovery Plan – Update (30th October)
- Draft Council Tax Support Scheme 2024-25 (30th October)
- Medium Term Financial Plan – Tranche 1 Budget including Fees and Charges (prior to consultation) (30th October)
- Quarter 2 Finance and Performance Report (29th November)
- Council Tax Base and Business Rates Yield 2024-25 (2nd January 2024)
- Council Tax – Discretionary Council Tax Reduction Policy (2nd January)
- Council Tax – Empty Homes Discounts and Premiums (2nd January)
- Final Council Tax Support Scheme 2024-25 (2nd January)
- Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Setting 2024-25 (2nd January)
- Medium Term Financial Plan 2024-25 to 2026-27 – Tranche 1 (following consultation) (2nd January)

The Performance Scrutiny Working Group (a sub-group of Overview and Scrutiny looking at performance across council service areas) has so far looked at the Council's Carbon Reduction Strategy progress. This will be considered as a report by the Executive Committee in February/March 2024. The Group made a recommendation on the topic which will be detailed in later section of the report:

- Carbon Reduction Strategy Update (8th January 2024)

The table below summarises all recommendations that have been submitted to Executive Committee to date in 2023-24. Recommendations originating from Budget Scrutiny and Performance Scrutiny are submitted to parent Overview and Scrutiny for ratification, where meeting dates allow, before being presented to Executive Committee. The table below summarises the number of recommendations made by Overview and Scrutiny and its Working Groups to date in this municipal year, and how many of these recommendations were accepted and rejected by the Executive Committee:

	Number of recommendations made to Executive Committee (up to and including 8 th January 2024)	Recommendations accepted or accepted with amendments	Recommendations rejected
By Overview and Scrutiny (parent committee)	9	6	3
By Budget Scrutiny *	5	5	0
By Performance Scrutiny *^	1	-	-
Total	15	11	3

* Recommendations of the scrutiny sub-groups (Budget Scrutiny and Performance Scrutiny) are normally examined by the parent Overview and Scrutiny Committee before submission to Executive Committee. In few instances, where meetings of sub-groups fall after the Overview and Scrutiny meeting but before the relevant Executive Committee meeting, recommendations are submitted directly from the Working Group to Executive Committee.

^ The Performance Scrutiny recommendation made on 8th January 2024 is due to be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 1st February 2024.

The recommendations made at each meeting of Overview and Scrutiny are included in the detailed summaries of each meeting in the section below.

During the municipal year 2023-24 to date, the majority of recommendations made by Overview and Scrutiny were accepted by Executive Committee. There were three instances when Overview and Scrutiny recommendations were rejected by the Executive Committee.

Overview items considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee

In addition to pre-scrutiny of Executive Committee items, the following general items of consideration had been considered by Overview and Scrutiny in 2023-24 so far or are due to be considered at meetings in February/March 2024:

- Domestic Abuse – Council Support Provided to Third Sector Organisations (26th October 2023)
- County Lines Drug Activity – An update on Prevention Strategies (considered by Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel on 1st November 2023)
- Housing Tenancy Agreement – Consultation Results (4th January 2024)
- Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) – Overview (to be considered in February/March 2024)
- Social Housing Repairs – Update (to be considered in February/March 2024)

Portfolio Holders for the relevant reports are invited to each meeting of the Committee in order to answer questions and to provide further information to the Executive Committee on the areas that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee raise at their meetings.

SUMMARY OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MEETINGS

The section below provides a summary of the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the 2023-2024 municipal year by each meeting. The details of the recommendations submitted to Executive from each meeting can be found at Appendix B. Further information on the agendas and minutes from these meetings can be found using the link below:

[Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meetings - 2023-2024](#)

8th June 2023

Corporate Peer Challenge – Action Plan – Pre-Decision Scrutiny

Members held a detailed discussion on the Corporate Peer Challenge – Action Plan, which followed a Peer Review Challenge of Redditch Borough Council undertaken by the Local Government Association (LGA) between 7th and 10th March 2023. The six key recommendations arising from the Peer Review Challenge were presented in addition to the Council’s response and action plan against each of the six key recommendations.

The Council’s response and action plan against each key recommendation of the Peer Review Challenge was thoroughly scrutinised and the Committee recommended to the Executive Committee that additional actions be added to the Action Plan for Peer Challenge Review key recommendations 1 and 4. The wording of the resultant recommendation was as follows:

That the following additions be inserted to the Council’s Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan (response to Peer Challenge recommendations) included at Appendix B to the report:

- Recommendation 1: *“to produce a new engagement plan so that residents have the opportunity to shape new Council policies at the development stage. The plan should be co-produced with residents ensuring a broad selection of people with no political bias are involved in producing the plan.”*
- Recommendation 4: *“that the Implementation Plan for Agile working (included at Appendix F) includes the assessment of the needs of residents in accordance with the Council’s Agile Working Policy. This should include undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).”*

20th July 2023

Worcestershire Housing Strategy 2040 - Pre-Scrutiny

Members pre-scrutinised the County-wide Worcestershire Housing Strategy which set out the strategy for housing provision in the County up to 2040. It was noted that the strategy was a result of many months of work undertaken by the Worcestershire Housing Strategy Board which was chaired by the Chief Executive of Redditch and Bromsgrove Councils. As a result, the strategy was deemed to be suited to the Redditch area and provided the foundation for the Borough Level Housing Action Plan, which would be focused specifically on Redditch.

During detailed scrutiny of the Housing Strategy, Members recommended that the Worcestershire Housing Strategy 2021-2040 be adopted and that officers be asked to develop a Borough Level Action Plan which would give consideration to the following proposal:

- *The Action Plan to include what support will be available for homeowners to retrofit their own property taking into account the Cost of Living crisis.*

Fly Tipping and Bulky Waste Task Group – Scoping Document

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish this Task Group. The Committee also agreed the final topic proposal document for the investigation. Councillor Khan was appointed as the Chair of the Task Group.

Establishment of a Programme Office – Pre-Scrutiny

Members pre-scrutinised the Executive report on the establishment of a programme office. It was explained that this report had been prepared as a result of the recommendations from the Audit Task Group investigation that had taken place at Bromsgrove District Council earlier in the year. The recommendations from the Task Group had been agreed at the Executive Committee meeting held on 13th June 2023. One of the agreed recommendations included the establishment of the Programme Office and this report provided more information on the proposals going forward.

It was noted that the number of organisational projects that were either underway or planned had recently been reviewed by the Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT) and 59 projects had been identified. However, of these 29 had been moved to Business as Usual. These projects were placed into four main categories of: Economic Development and Regeneration; Housing; ICT Related; Organisational Change Related.

During the detailed discussion, it was felt by Members that this was a welcome report and a constructive measure given the recommendations made by the Audit Task Group. It was felt that the establishment of a Programme Office could make a difference to efficiencies and what the Council could achieve in the future. The Overview and Scrutiny agreed to endorse the recommendations that were contained in the report.

Overview and Scrutiny Training Event – Consideration of Items Suitable for Scrutiny

The Committee reviewed the items that had been identified for inclusion on the work programme at the Overview and Scrutiny Training event that had taken place in June 2023.

It was decided that the main overview issues for scrutiny in 2023-24 would be the following:

- Third Sector Support particularly looking at Domestic Violence – considered by Overview and Scrutiny on 26th October 2023 (see below)
- County Lines and Drug Use – reviewed by Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel on 1st November 2023.
- Social Housing Repairs – due to be an agenda item at an Overview and Scrutiny meeting in February / March 2024.

7th September 2023

Membership of the Fly Tipping and Bulky Waste Task Group

It was agreed that membership of the Task Group would comprise Councillors Sid Khan (Chair), Karen Ashley, Kerrie Miles, Anthony Lovell, and Monica Stringfellow.

Task Groups, Short Sharp Reviews and Working Groups – Update Reports

The Chair of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group, Councillor Joanna Kane, presented the recommendations of the Group made at its meeting on 6th September 2023. The recommendations to the Executive Committee were in relation to the following reports:

- Provisional Financial Outturn Report 2022-23

Recommendation: *“That the Executive Committee ask Officers to prepare a public statement on the Council's position regarding the submission of the Statements of*

Accounts to external auditors in order to provide assurance to the public about the Council's financial situation."

- Finance and Performance Monitoring Report – Quarter 1 2023/24

Recommendation 1: *"That the Executive Committee be asked to consider a review of how the Council secures external grants and trust funding, to be undertaken at the end of this financial year."*

Recommendation 2: *"That the Executive Committee be asked to review all grant spending commitments as a matter of urgency and consider risk relating to inflation and the Local Authorities overspend this year."*

On being put to the vote, the three recommendations above were ratified by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Town Hall Refurbishment – Final Decision – Pre-Scrutiny

An update was provided on the progress with the move of the Community Hub to the Town Hall at Redditch. During closed session, the Committee discussed the updated financial implications of the Town Hall Refurbishment and the design plans for the NHS part of the Town Hall.

The Committee agreed to put forward the following recommendation: *"that the Executive Committee undertakes a root and branch review to ensure that this project is still achievable within the original budget, that is £5.2 million, and that contractual arrangements are brought back to the Executive Committee."*

26th October 2023

Pre-Decision Scrutiny – Garden Waste Service

The Committee considered the proposal of the Executive Committee, and the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services, to introduce a dedicated Garden Waste Collection Service in Redditch. During a detailed discussion, the proposals were discussed in detail, including the financial implications and projections of how the service could be developed in the future. It was noted that garden waste collection service was a discretionary council service. Residents were, however, encouraged to take part in public consultation on garden waste once it is launched as it would enable the Council to understand the demand for a subsidised service in the future.

Members were in support of the introduction of a garden waste collection service and the Overview and Scrutiny agreed to endorse the recommendations that were contained in the report.

Domestic Abuse – Council Support Provided to Third Sector Organisations

Members received a briefing paper on support provided through the Council to third sector organisations that provided domestic abuse prevention services. The support covered grant funding distributed by the Council but originating from regional and national bodies including the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), and the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (NWCSP). The paper set out the list of grants provided by the agencies to the third sector organisations, the project details, the grant amount associated with each service, and the geographical area covered by the service.

During detailed discussion on this item, the Committee covered issues that included:

- Identifying domestic abuse and scale of the crime in Redditch
- Trends in reporting of domestic abuse by victims
- Work undertaken by community safety support partner agencies in respect of domestic abuse
- Monitoring delivery of county-wide commissioned services within Redditch
- Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment Survey.

30th November 2023

Proposal for a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) in Redditch Town Centre

A proposal for the introduction of a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) covering Redditch Town Centre was scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The report provided detail on the proposed wording of the order, the geographic location in which the PSPO would apply and data gathered on the need for introduction of a PSPO. It was highlighted that partner organisations, including West Mercia Police, had been consulted and an equality impact assessment had been undertaken. The proposed PSPO had the support of the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and was designed to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) in Redditch Town Centre.

Members scrutinised the proposal in detail, including in terms of any impact of the order on licensed activities in the Town Centre, the ability of police to enforce the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO), and the risk of dispersal of ASB to locations

outside the Town Centre if PSPO was introduced. During the discussion, it was noted that the boundaries of the PSPO were carefully designed to ensure that main hotspot areas were targeted, however, there was an option to review the PSPO zone, which would require a full review to be undertaken.

The Overview and Scrutiny agreed to endorse the recommendation contained in the report.

Update on the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel 2023-24

The Chair of the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel, Councillor Joanna Kane, provided an update on the annual meeting of the Panel that took place on 1st November 2023. The summary of the issues covered at that meeting was provided, and Members of the Committee discussed points raised at the meeting in respect of county lines and community safety programmes.

Task Groups, Short Sharp Reviews and Working Groups – Update Reports

The Chair of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group, Councillor Joanna Kane, presented the recommendations of the Group made at its meeting on 29th November 2023. The recommendations made by the Working Group were in relation to the following Executive Committee report:

- Finance and Performance Quarter 2 Report 2023-24

Following discussion, the Budget Scrutiny recommendations were approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for presenting to the Executive Committee, subject to slight amendments in wording. The final wording of the recommendations agreed was as follows:

Recommendation 1: *“That the Executive Committee ask for an officer report that provides a model of the financial implications of an unusually high demand for emergency housing and temporary accommodation support.”*

Recommendation 2: *“That, referring to the Strategic and Operational Performance measures in Appendix F of the Report (subsection Work and Financial Independence), it be recommended to the Executive Committee that they examine the Essex / Preston models that link skills and developments to social value within Procurement.”*

Housing Tenancy Agreement – Consultation Results

This report came to the Committee following a request made by Overview and Scrutiny in March 2023 that results of consultation with social housing tenants on the housing policies, including the tenancy agreement, be presented at a future meeting. The Committee discussed the large sample of comments made by tenants, and the proposed changes to the Tenancy Agreement following from the consultation results.

It was highlighted that as part of the consultation, 10 Tenant Roadshows were organised over the summer months, where residents could have face to face discussions about the Tenancy Management Policy and new tenancy terms; feedback could also be provided via a dedicated resident consultation email inbox, and via post.

During the discussion, officers noted that one key theme in tenants' feedback was concerns of many tenants with tenants' security of tenure. It was underlined that this is not affected in any way by the new terms as these rights are set out in law. To alleviate these concerns, as part of the consultation, officers answered all queries regarding this and it was ensured that in final letter that went out with the new terms, it was stated as clearly as possible that secure rights are not affected in any way. In addition, in response to tenants' consultation comments, changes were made to Tenancy Agreement around provisions relating to pets and storage of mobility scooters.

Redditch Play Audit and Investment Strategy – Pre-Scrutiny

Members pre-scrutinised the Executive report on the results of audit of Redditch play areas and the investment strategy for play areas based on this audit. The play audit and investment strategy provided a proposal on the future provision of play areas across the Borough, taking into account the overall accessibility of play provision, cost considerations, providing equality of access to play spaces across all wards and the need to maintain quality and safety of play areas.

During a detailed debate on this item, concerns were raised about the proposals of the Redditch Play Assessment and concerns were expressed about the quality of play areas in some wards. The Overview and Scrutiny agreed to submit the following recommendations to the Executive Committee:

Recommendation 1: *“The criteria of the Redditch Play Assessment (Appendix 1) be reviewed to ensure that play facilities in every ward are fit for purpose and provide for the needs of children of all ages and young people and families.”*

Recommendation 2: *“The Redditch Play Audit and Investment Strategy (Appendix 2) is amended accordingly to ensure that the strategic purpose of ‘living independent, active and healthy lives’ is front and centre.”*

1st February 2024

The Committee is due to consider the following items at this meeting:

- Independent Remuneration Panel Recommendations – pre-scrutiny
- Carbon Reduction Strategy – Annual Review – pre-scrutiny
- Playing Pitch and Built Facilities Strategies – pre-scrutiny
- Termination of shared service arrangement: North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration – pre-scrutiny
- Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2023-24

19th February 2024

The Committee is currently due to consider the following substantive items at this meeting (dates of items may be subject to change):

- Redditch Partnership – Annual Report
- Overview – Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

14th March 2024

The Committee is currently due to consider the following items at this meeting (dates of items may be subject to change):

- Overview – Social Housing Repairs

CRIME AND DISORDER SCRUTINY PANEL

Local authorities are required to have a Committee designated with responsibility to review the work of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership that meets at least once per year. 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 (NWCSP) to account for its work in Redditch.

The Members represented on the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel in 2023-24 were Councillor Joanna Kane (Chair), Councillor Imran Altaf, Councillor Andrew Fry, Councillor Anthony Lovell, and Councillor Timothy Pearman.

This year the Crime and Disorder Scrutiny Panel met on 1st November 2023. At the meeting, Members received an update on the work of the Partnership in the Borough in the preceding 12 months. This included a report outlining the role of the NWCSP and its priorities and an update on community safety programmes and schemes delivered by NWCSP in 2022-23. Information was also provided in respect of tools and powers used to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour and the work undertaken by the Community Safety Team in order to carry out one the priorities of the NWCSP.

At the meeting, Members also considered an item on County Lines Drug Activity prevention strategies – this item having been specifically requested by Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its training and work programming session in June 2023.

TASK GROUPS AND SHORT SHARP REVIEWS

Task Groups are established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in order to conduct an in-depth review of any service, policy or issue that affects the Borough. During the 2023-24 municipal year, one Task Groups review has been launched and is due to be finalised by summer 2024.

Fly Tipping and Bulky Waste Task Group

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to prioritise this Task Group review in the 2023-24 municipal year. This Task Group followed on from a Full Council resolution of 14th November 2022, which asked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to set up a Task and Finish review to consider the costs, consequences, and benefits of a pre-booked, free household bulky waste collection service for those Redditch residents who are low paid, elderly, disabled or in receipt of benefits.

Before the Task Group's final terms of reference and membership had been agreed in July 2023, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a detailed presentation on fly tipping and bulky waste collections on 2nd February 2023. The presentation enabled Members to better understand the Council's current position on these issues.

The first meeting of the Task Group took place on 24th October 2023. Subsequent meetings have been taking place approximately once a month, with meetings having taken place on 12th December 2023 and 10th January 2024. The next meeting is due to take place on 8th February 2024.

The Task Group has made good progress to date including undertaking investigation of the mobile (pop-up) household recycling service in Birmingham.

Speeding and Road Safety Task Group

The Committee agreed to establish this Task Group at its meeting on 3rd February 2022. On 1st December 2022, the Committee agreed to prioritise the undertaking of the Fly Tipping and Bulky Waste Task Group review before any other reviews were launched. Therefore, this Task Group will be launched, if still deemed necessary by Members, following the completion of the Fly Tipping and Bulky Waste Task Group investigation.

Health Inequalities within the BME Communities in Redditch

The Committee agreed to establish this Task Group at its meeting on 5th September 2022.

On 1st December 2022, the Committee agreed to prioritise the undertaking of the Fly Tipping and Bulky Waste Task Group review before any other reviews were launched. Therefore, this Task Group will be launched, if still deemed necessary by Members, following the completion of the Fly Tipping and Bulky Waste Task Group and Speeding and Road Safety Task Group investigations.

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 Joanna Kane

The Budget Scrutiny Working Group held five meetings on Microsoft Teams so far in 2023-2024, with a further two meetings planned. This shows the importance attached by Members to regular scrutiny of the Council's Budget.

Throughout the year the Budget Scrutiny Working Group has pre-scrutinised, or will be considering, reports on matters including:

- Finance and Performance Monitoring
- Medium Term Financial Plan – Tranche 1 and Tranche 2
- Fees and Charges
- Financial Outturn
- Housing Revenue Account
- Council Tax Base
- Council Tax Support Scheme
- Finance Recovery Plan.

Performance Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Christopher Holz

The Performance Scrutiny Working Group has met on one occasion to date in the 2023-24 municipal year with two further meetings planned to take place over February/March 2024. The following matters have been considered or are due to be considered by the Working Group in 2023-24:

- Carbon Reduction Strategy
- Tree Maintenance
- Council Housing (including waiting lists, voids)
- Place Teams.

EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been receiving regular updates on the work of regional scrutiny committees through the Council's representative on these scrutiny forums, Councillor Emma Marshall.

West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Overview and Scrutiny Committee

During the year Councillor Marshall provided written and verbal updates about the meetings of this body, which included information on matters of particular relevance to Redditch such as the Homes England funding and in relation to devolved skills budget and funding for young people.

West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Transport Delivery Overview and Scrutiny

Members were updated through written reporting on the regional transport matters, including impact of combined authority transport delivery on Redditch.

Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)

The Committee had received regular written and verbal updates about the work of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), which included updates on:

- Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust including patient flow and bed shortages
- Worcestershire Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Health Service Winter Planning

The written updates from Councillor Marshall continue to provide useful information of the scrutiny work being undertaken across the region (both Worcestershire County and West Midlands Combined Authority areas). The Committee is grateful of the time taken by Councillor Marshall in providing these updates.

CONCLUSION

A significant amount of pre-scrutiny work has been carried out by the Committee throughout the year with a significant number of recommendations being made to the Executive Committee. There were also a number of Overview items considered by the Committee throughout the year on matters of particular interest to Members and residents. The Committee has carried out constructive scrutiny throughout this municipal year.

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>

Democratic Services, Redditch Borough Council, Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square, Redditch, B98 8AH
Tel: 01527 64252 Ext 3095 email: democratic@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

APPENDIX A – TASK GROUP PROPOSAL SCOPING DOCUMENT

APPENDIX A – Task Group Investigation Proposal Scoping Document

(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			
Key Objectives Please keep to SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely)			
How long do you think is needed to complete this exercise? (Where possible please estimate the number of weeks, months and meetings required)			

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

Email: democratic@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

APPENDIX B – OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION TRACKER

Recommendation Tracker Update

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

January 2024

RECOMMENDATION TRACKER

1. SUMMARY

This Recommendation Tracker lists all recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Working/Task Groups so far in 2023-24 (other than where the recommendations of the Executive report were endorsed by the Committee).

The recommendations are by:

- A. Budget Scrutiny Working Group
- B. Performance Scrutiny Working Group
- C. Overview and Scrutiny Committee

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the recommendation tracker which accompanies the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2023-24.

<u>Minute Item, Subject Matter and Date of Meeting</u>	<u>Recommendation Details</u>	<u>Executive Committee Decision</u>
Performance Scrutiny Working Group recommendation: (To be considered by Overview and Scrutiny on 1st February 2024):	RECOMMENDATION: <i>that tree and hedgerow planting be added to the list of performance measures for the carbon reduction strategy.</i>	To be considered by the Executive Committee in February 2024 when it considers the Carbon Reduction Strategy report (subject to O&S agreement on 1 st February 2024)
Item 59 Redditch Play Audit and Investment Strategy 4th January 2024	RECOMMENDATIONS: 1) <i>The criteria of the Redditch Play Assessment be reviewed to ensure that play facilities in every ward are fit for purpose and provide for the needs of children of all ages and young people and families.</i> 2) <i>The Redditch Play Audit and Investment Strategy (Appendix 2) is amended accordingly to ensure that the strategic purpose of ‘living independent, active and healthy lives’ is front and centre.</i>	<u>REJECTED</u> These recommendations were rejected by the Executive Committee at its meeting on 9 th January 2024 (Minute Item 65)
Item 52 (2023-24 Task Groups, Short Sharp Reviews and Working Groups 30th November 2023	<i>Recommendations from the Budget Scrutiny Working Group meeting of 29th November and subject to a slight amendment in wording were ratified for presentation to Executive Committee as follows:</i> Quarter 2 2023-24 Finance and Performance Monitoring Report <i>RECOMMENDED</i>	<u>ACCEPTED</u> These recommendations were approved, subject to slight amendment in wording, by the Executive Committee on 5 th December 2023 under Minute Item 60 (5 th December) – Finance and

	<p>1) <i>That the Executive Committee ask for an officer report that provides a model of the financial implications of an unusually high demand for emergency housing and temporary accommodation support; and</i></p> <p>2) <i>That, referring to the Strategic and Operational Performance measures in Appendix F of the Report (subsection Work and Financial Independence), it be recommended to the Executive Committee that they examine the Essex / Preston models that link skills and developments to social value within Procurement.</i></p>	<p>Performance Quarter 2 Report 2023-24</p> <p>1) <i>an officer report be requested that provides a model of the financial implications of an unusually high demand for emergency housing and temporary accommodation support;</i></p> <p>2) <i>with reference to the Strategic and Operational Performance measures in the Report (subsection Work and Financial Independence), the Essex / Preston models that link skills and developments to social value within Procurement be examined further.</i></p>
<p>Item 32 (2023-24)</p> <p>The Town Hall Refurbishment – Final Decision</p>	<p>RECOMMENDATIONS:</p> <p><i>That the Executive Committee undertakes a root and branch review to ensure that this project is still achievable within the original</i></p>	<p><u>REJECTED</u></p> <p>This recommendation was rejected by the Executive Committee at its</p>

<p>7th September 2023</p>	<p><i>budget, that is £5.2 million, and that contractual arrangements are brought back to the Executive Committee.</i></p>	<p>meeting on 12th September 2023 (Minute Item 36).</p>
<p>Item 29 (2023-24)</p> <p>Task Groups, Short Sharp Reviews and Working Groups</p> <p>7th September 2023</p>	<p>RECOMMENDATIONS:</p> <p>The following recommendations made by the Budget Scrutiny Working Group at its meeting on 6th September 2023 were ratified by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (for recommending to the Executive Committee):</p> <p>Provisional Financial Outturn Report 2022-23</p> <p><u>Recommendation 1:</u> <i>“That the Executive Committee ask Officers to prepare a public statement on the Council's position regarding the submission of the Statements of Accounts to external auditors in order to provide assurance to the public about the Council's financial situation.”</i></p> <p>Quarter 1 Finance and Performance Report</p> <p><u>Recommendation 2:</u> <i>“That the Executive Committee be asked to consider a review of how the Council secures external grants and trust funding, to be undertaken at the end of this financial year.”</i></p> <p><u>Recommendation 3:</u> <i>“That the Executive Committee be asked to review all grant spending commitments as a matter of urgency and</i></p>	<p><u>ACCEPTED</u></p> <p>These recommendations were approved by the Executive Committee under:</p> <p>Minute Item 30 (12th September) – Financial Outturn Report 2022/23 – Recommendation 1</p> <p>Minute Item 37 (12th September) – Finance and Performance Monitoring Report – Quarter 1 2023-24 – Recs 2 and 3</p>

	<i>consider risk relating to inflation and the Local Authorities overspend this year.”</i>	
<p>Item 14 (2023-24)</p> <p>Worcestershire Housing Strategy 2040 – Pre-Decision Scrutiny</p> <p>20th July 2023</p>	<p>RECOMMENDATION:</p> <p>RECOMMENDED to the Executive Committee that the following addition (in italics) be inserted into recommendation 2 of the Worcestershire Housing Strategy report:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The Worcestershire Housing Strategy 2021 – 2040 be adopted. 2) Officers be asked to develop a Borough Level Action Plan with consideration given to the proposals in this Strategy: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>The Action Plan should include what support will be available for homeowners to retrofit their own property taking into account the Cost of Living Crisis.</i> 	<p><u>ACCEPTED</u></p> <p>This recommendation was approved by the Executive Committee at its meeting on 25th July 2023 (Minute Item 17).</p>
<p>Item 5 (2023-24)</p> <p>Corporate Peer Challenge – Action Plan – Pre-Decision Scrutiny</p> <p>8th June 2023</p>	<p>RECOMMENDATION:</p> <p><i>That the following additions be inserted to the Council’s Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan (response to Peer Challenge recommendations) included at Appendix B to the report:</i></p> <p>Recommendation 1: <i>“to produce a new engagement plan so that residents have the opportunity to shape new Council policies at the development stage. The plan should be co-produced with residents</i></p>	<p><u>ACCEPTED</u></p> <p>This recommendation was approved by the Executive Committee at its meeting on 13th June 2023 (Minute Item. 5)</p>

	<p><i>ensuring a broad selection of people with no political bias are involved in producing the plan.”</i></p> <p><i>Recommendation 4: “that the Implementation Plan for Agile working (included at Appendix F) includes the assessment of the needs of residents in accordance with the Council’s Agile Working Policy. This should include undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).”</i></p>	
<p>Item 110 (2022-23)</p> <p>Housing Policies – Pre-Decision Scrutiny</p> <p>16 March 2023</p>	<p>For a report on the outcomes of the housing policies (including tenancy agreement) consultation process to be brought back before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2023-24.</p>	<p>The report on the housing tenancy agreement consultation results was considered by Overview and Scrutiny on 4th January 2024 (Minute item 58).</p>