

Executive Committee

**Tuesday, 3rd September,
2024**

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Joe Baker (Chair), Councillor Sharon Harvey (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Wanda King, Jen Snape, Jane Spilsbury, Monica Stringfellow and Ian Woodall

Officers:

Peter Carpenter, Nicola Cummings, Anne-Marie Harley, Sue Hanley and Judith Willis

Democratic Services Officers:

Jo Gresham

21. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Barker Smith and B. Hartnett.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

23. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader welcomed all those present to the meeting. Members were advised that a number of Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings had taken place since the previous meeting of the Executive Committee.

At the Extraordinary Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Thursday 29th August 2024, Members had pre-scrutinised the Award of a Contract to Upgrade the Town Hall and Update on Towns Fund report, which was due to be considered at the

Chair

Executive Committee meeting that evening. No recommendations had been made as a result of this pre-scrutiny.

In addition to this report, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had also pre-scrutinised the Shopmobility report, also considered at the Executive Committee meeting that evening. Members were advised that there had been no recommendations made during pre-scrutiny of this report. However, there had been some conditions noted during their discussions. The conditions would need to be considered when this report was discussed later in the meeting.

Furthermore, at a meeting of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group meeting held on 30th August 2024, Members had pre-scrutinised the following reports:

- Quarter 1 Finance and Performance Monitoring report
- Finance Recovery report
- Initial Budget Setting report.

It was noted that no recommendations had been made by Members following pre-scrutiny of these reports

The Leader thanked all Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Budget Scrutiny Working Group for their hard work in pre-scrutinising these reports prior to their consideration at this meeting. It was stated that the scrutiny work undertaken by Members was valued and an important part of the decision-making process.

24. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 29th July 2024 be approved as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chair.

25. REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL REBRAND

The Communications & Marketing Manager presented the Redditch Borough Council Rebrand report for Members' consideration. In doing so it was reported that the current logo had been in use since 2009 and it had been thought that it was an appropriate time to

implement a refresh of the branding to demonstrate the direction of travel for the Council going forward and to create a fresh modern look.

In consultation with the Leader and the Deputy Leader, several ideas had been presented by Officers and were considered carefully before the final version was identified, as presented to Members at this meeting.

The Executive Committee was informed that the colour palette of the new logo was inspired by the Redditch Palette which had been shaped through a number of community workshops where the colours had been chosen. It was also noted that the colours were also reminiscent of the colours seen in the Kingfisher a notable symbol of the Town. In addition, the new logo contained an image of a needle and spring. This also reflected the heritage of Redditch.

The rebranding had been designed in-house by Officers, and it was planned that there would be a staggered roll out of the logo in order to save on the costs of a large-scale immediate roll out. This would result in letterheads, systems, and digital versions of the logo being updated very quickly. However, it was noted that the Council logo could also be found in a very large number places across the Town, such as on waste bins, work wear and livery on vehicles. These would be replaced when needed, therefore money would not need to be spent on a large scale, immediate roll out. However, this would result in an ongoing project that could take some time to implement fully.

The Communications & Marketing Manager explained that communications were planned in the local press and on social media to inform residents of the changes in order for them to be able to identify that a rebrand was being undertaken. Customer Services officers were also available in order to advise residents who contacted the Council with any concerns.

Following the presentation of the report Members expressed their sincere thanks to Officers for all of their hard work in preparing the modern and fresh rebranding so quickly and Members were excited to see the logo in the community. Members were particularly pleased with the wording also included in the new logo; 'Working Together for our Communities'. This highlighted the importance of

listening to communities and reflected inclusion and collaborative working for the future.

It was also noted that the costs had been very low by utilising the in-house design team skills and that this had also been a positive outcome of this work.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The new logo for Redditch Borough Council be formally adopted; and**
- 2) The staggered roll-out and implementation of the branding programme be launched immediately.**

26. QUARTER 1 REVENUE AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2024/25

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the Quarter One Revenue and Performance Monitoring 2024/25 report for the consideration of the Executive Committee.

In considering the report, Members were asked to note the current Revenue overspend of £164,000. This overspend was mainly due to the current issues being experienced with the Council's fleet, which Members were aware of. Another area that had impacted on the overspend was the pay award which was yet to be ratified. It was noted that there were mitigations being put in place in order to address the overspend and that the Government had indicated the potential of any pay award amount being covered through Central Government funding.

There was also a projected overspend of £2.79m across service areas. This overspend would be offset by additional income of £2.46m in Corporate Financing from additional grant income of £1.18m together with increased investment interest receivable of £260,000 and lower interest payable of £386,000.

Members were advised that the current expenditure in the Capital Programme was £1.28m and that the Council was in a strong position in terms of the Earmarked Reserves which were currently at £5.242m.

Members were informed that, as part of the Capital Programme a project was underway in order to improve the Arrow Valley Country Park Visitors' Centre. The capital funding for this project would be £350,000 in the first year with a further £100,000 in the next financial year. However, it was proposed that the £100,000 be brought forward to allow the works to be carried out earlier and in the 'quieter' period for the park in order to maximise income on the improved facilities in the Spring / Summer of 2025 and increase engagement with communities at the Arrow Valley Country Park Visitors' Centre.

It was further noted that the Housing Revenue Account was in a strong position, however there may need to be some variances to a number of budget lines as a result of some areas that would need to be addressed such as structural repairs and electrical upgrades.

Also included in the report was the Council's debt and borrowing position for Quarter One. This outlined how the Council was using its working Capital as well as the Council's Prudential Indicators. It was noted that only one of the prudential indicators had been non compliant. This was a short-term loan between Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council. Members were informed that this loan had been repaid at the start of Quarter Two.

Members attention was drawn to the information included in terms of the Procurement Pipeline and the contracts expected to be reprocured and new procurement projects. There were currently fourteen contracts between the threshold of £50,000 and the new key-decision threshold of £200,000 and a further fourteen contracts over the new key-decision threshold of £200,000. With a further thirteen contracts procured by Bromsgrove District Council on behalf of Redditch Borough Council all of which related to ICT contracts.

The Performance Measures information included within the report on the whole presented a positive picture for the Council. Areas of particular note were the increase in take up of startup business grants, the increase in residents accessing energy advice and the staff retention rates which continued to be higher than the national average.

Following the presentation of the report, Members reiterated that mitigations were in place to address the current £164,000

overspend. It was also stated that it seemed sensible to agree the proposal that the funds be released for the upgrade at the Arrow Valley Country Park Visitors' Centre which would be beneficial for the next busy season in 2025.

It was also noted that the engagement with young people was positive, and this was an area where Members hoped would continue to improve into the future.

RESOLVED to note:

- 1) **The current Revenue overspend position of £164k and actions the Council was taking to mitigate this position.**
- 2) **The current Capital spending of £1.28m against a budget of £20.5m.**
- 3) **The HRA Position.**
- 4) **That the balance sheet monitoring position, including the Treasury position.**
- 5) **There was an updated procurement position set out, with any new items over £200k to be included on the forward plan.**
- 6) **The Q1 Performance data for the Period April to March 2024 and that this might change over the year to link into the new Administrations priorities.**

RECOMMENDED that

- 7) **There be an advancement of £100k of Capital projects for Rubicon.**

27. FINANCIAL RECOVERY PROGRAMME REPORT

The Deputy Chief Executive present the Financial Recovery Programme for Members' consideration.

Included in the report was information regarding the process the Council had been following since the implementation of the new financial system in 2021; and discussions undertaken following the issuing of the Section 24 Notice Statutory Recommendations that had taken place at the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee meeting on 14th September 2022 and at Executive and Council in November and December 2022 and 2023.

Of the six Statutory Recommendations only one serious weakness remained, which was in relation to the opening balances linked to the budget which should be resolved with the delivery of the Accounts. All other Recommendations had been mitigated. Members were informed that there was one new Key Recommendation linked to the Organisational Capability and Capacity which, it was reported, would be mitigated by the Council's Workforce Strategy currently being implemented.

Since the previous Finance Recovery report there had been several areas to note. These were as follows:

1. Financial monitoring had been undertaken on TechOne (the Council's finance system).
2. The 2020/2021 Accounts had been passed through public inspection. However, it was still unclear as to when these Accounts would be audited.
3. The continuation of the monthly Accounts Payable training.
4. The recruitment of the Assistant Director of Finance and Customer Services in April 2024.
5. The appointment of four new members of the Finance team and interviews for five more officers to join the team. This would reduce the reliance on agency staff in the future.

The Executive Committee were informed that some actions had been agreed by the Councils' external auditors which included the presentation of the draft Accounts of 2021/22 and 2022/23 at the next meeting of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee in late September 2024. However, there was the caveat that these would be presented without the 2020 or 2021/22 Audit adjustments.

It was highlighted that the new Minister of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government had written to Local Councils in July 2024 and noted the unacceptable number of unaudited accounts, the number of which was likely to continue to rise to one thousand later in 2024. In order to rectify this, the Minister would implement secondary legislation to introduce a backstop date for financial years up to and including 2022/23 of 13th December 2024.

Any updates in this area would be reported to the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee and then on to the Executive Committee.

Following the presentation of the reports Members were pleased with the further clarity provided in respect of the Accounts for previous years. They also noted that the TechOne implementation, although difficult in the first instance, it was now working well and this was a sophisticated system that provided effective planning for the finance status of the Council.

RESOLVED to note:

1) The progress made on the financial recovery including:

- **Delivery of the Statutory Accounts.**
- **Delivery of Statutory Financial Returns.**
- **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, as contained in this report.

28. INITIAL BUDGET SETTING REPORT

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the Initial Budget Setting report for Members' consideration.

In doing so, it was noted that the report set out the process which Officers planned to undertake in two-phases for 2025/26 to 2027/28. This had been the process in the previous two financial years and had resulted in quicker implementation of the budget proposals.

Members were informed that the new Chancellor of the Exchequer had issued a statement on 29th July 2024 that had set the date of the next Budget for 30th October 2024 and had commissioned a forecast from the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) for this date. This would involve a significant amount of work. It was thought that the next Local Government settlement would be for one year, however it was hoped that in future years this would be a three-year settlement providing more stability for Local Authorities.

As part of the Budget statement, it was expected that there would be further information provided regarding increases in public sector pay awards and several other areas such as winter fuel payments,

adult social care caps and council tax reforms. It was expected that there would be significant changes in these areas.

The risks included in the report that were associated with the Budget setting process for 2024/25 to 2026/27 were highlighted for Members information and noted accordingly. However, Officers reported that any risks would be mitigated as much as possible.

Members noted that this was a difficult time for Local Authorities. However, this report provided a positive response for the future.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The two Phase Budget Process be followed again for the 2025/26 to 2027/28 Medium Term Financial Plan.**

29. TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN REPORT

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the Treasury Management Outturn Report.

It was explained that the Council had adopted the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice (the CIPFA Code) which required the Authority to approve, as a minimum, treasury management semi-annual and annual outturn reports. It was noted that this monitoring appeared as part of the regular financial monitoring reports presented to Council on a quarterly basis.

It was important to note that Councils were not permitted to invest for profit and any returns received were used only for operation and regeneration purposes.

The Treasury Management Strategy had been approved by Members in February 2023 and only one indicator had been breached, which as discussed earlier during the course of the meeting was a loan between Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council and this loan had been repaid.

RECOMMENDED that COUNCIL approve

- 1) the Council's Treasury performance for the financial year 23/24.**
- 2) the position in relation to the Council's Prudential indicators.**

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

The Leader explained that there were no outstanding recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members were informed that as a result of the change in Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Councillor Jen Snape would be appointed Chair of the Climate Change Advisory Panel for the remainder of the municipal year.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Councillor Jen Snape be appointed as the Chair of the Climate Change Advisory Panel for the remainder of the municipal year.**

31. TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT BUSINESS, DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO THE HEAD OF LEGAL, DEMOCRATIC AND PROPERTY SERVICES PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE MEETING AND WHICH THE CHAIR, BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, CONSIDERS TO BE OF SO URGENT A NATURE THAT IT CANNOT WAIT UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING

There was no Urgent Business on this occasion.

32. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 25th July 2024 be noted.

33. SHOPMOBILITY FUTURE OPTIONS

The Assistant Director for Housing and Community Services presented the Shopmobility report for Members' consideration.

It was reported that the service had been operating for thirty-five years in collaboration with the Kingfisher Shopping Centre. Due to the reduction in footfall within the Centre during the Covid-19 pandemic and a recent change of ownership there had been a reduction in the amount funding provided to the Council to support the Shopmobility service.

Members were presented with six potential options for the future running of the service as follows:

That the Shopmobility service:

1. Remained in Car Park 3
2. Be provided from The Canopies
3. Be moved to Kingfisher Retail Unit – 9 George Walk
4. Be transitioned to Kingfisher Shopping Centre
5. Be managed by a third party
6. Ceased to operate

Members were informed that this was an important social function that fed into the Council's priorities and enabled users to get out and about in order for them to live independent and healthy lives.

It was noted that Option Three was the preferred option for the future of the service. This option would enable a broadening of the service, as there would no longer need to be lone working arrangements in place. This option would also result in one officer being in the Shopmobility location and another potentially carrying out assisted shopping duties for residents.

Following the presentation of the report, Members expressed that this was a vital service for residents and highly thought of across the Borough by its users and staff.

Members agreed that Option Three was the most suitable option going forward and that this option would result in an accessible and welcoming location for users. In light of the new logo and rebranding for the Council and its commitment to working with

communities, it was agreed that it was vitally important to protect this service.

The importance of promoting Shopmobility was highlighted by Members, and it was suggested that a campaign of promotion by the Councils' Communications Team be undertaken in the press and on social media in order to inform residents of the changes to the service.

During consideration of this item the Executive Committee reported that there had been a robust debate at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 2nd September 2024 regarding this matter. Whereby Members had suggested that as part of the consideration of the report that there should be a review of the service in the future. The Leader suggested that this was part of good governance of any Council service and that a review would be carried out at an appropriate time.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Redditch Borough Council provide the Shopmobility service from a rented retail unit within the Kingfisher Centre as set out as Option 3 in the report.**

RECOMMENDED that

- 2) The additional costs of £46,835 the Shopmobility Service in 2024/25 be met from balances; and**
- 3) The ongoing position be integrated with the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2025/26 process to reflect the additional ongoing costs of £28,835 thereafter.**

34. AWARD OF A CONTRACT TO UPGRADE THE TOWN HALL AND UPDATE ON TOWNS FUND

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the Award of a Contract to Upgrade the Town Hall and Update on Towns Fund report.

Members were reminded that a detailed report had been presented to the Executive Committee on 29th July 2024 in respect of the updated direction for the Town Hall. At this meeting the decision had been made that the move of Redditch Town Centre Library was

no longer taking place. It was noted that Worcestershire County Council had been informed of this decision. Also included in that report were the implications of the changes to the Town Hall Hub and the potential response from the external auditors and the implications on the Towns Fund projects and funding.

During the presentation of the report was noted that Seddons, who had been contracted previously to carry out the works in the Town Hall, would carry out the design and build for the revised plans. This, it was hoped, would expedite the works.

This report provided an update on the timescales of the revised enabling works and that the costs, which were estimated to be £500,000, subject to confirmation by Seddons. These were significant works and would entail more remediation works prior to the refurbishment and refit. It was noted that there would be some savings made from the original designs, as the major works, such as the staircases would no longer be needed in the new design. These costs would be presented to the Executive Committee in November 2024.

Members were advised that there would be tenants on the lower ground floor, an enhanced facility on the ground and first floor. The second floor would be occupied by a further tenant and Council staff would be located on the third floor.

In terms of the Towns Board projects, there were number of potential options to consider. However the options were limited by cost or deadline to spend the funding, which was 31st March 2025. It was noted that a request for an extension to Central Government for these projects was currently being made by the Redditch local MP.

Members were informed that all Council buildings were expected to achieve Level 3 energy rating by 2026. It was noted that this was unlikely to be an issue for the Council as it had previously received funding to replace windows and install heat pumps and that these works had been carried out successfully.

Once again, the risks of the changes to the projects were outlined for Members' attention and that some areas of change could be challenged by the external auditors in the future.

Members were pleased to see the changes that had been presented in this report. It was outlined that there had been a significant step change since the new administration had been elected in May 2024 and that this project was exciting and a satisfactory outcome for the residents of Redditch.

Although there was still some uncertainty in terms of funding, Members were comfortable that new tenants would be found to help provide funding in a new, vibrant and exciting new space. The outcome of the chamber remaining on the lower floor of the Town Hall was welcomed by Members and it was hoped that this would become a state-of-the-art facility along with face-to-face customer service with Officers working in the Town Hall again.

In terms of the Towns Fund, alternative options were being considered which would be reported in due course and would result in a positive outcome for the Town.

Following the detailed discussion, it was noted that Claire Felton, Julie Heyes, John Homer and Mark Hanwell had been key Officers in working through the changes to the plans and it was requested that this be noted and placed on record.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The progress towards the new Town Hall Hub design be noted.**
- 2) Revised works to RIBA stage 4 as per this report be agreed as the best route forward.**
- 3) Work continues to determine the most effective alternative use of the Towns Funding as set out in this report.**
- 4) Members continue to note and approve the consequential risks associated with the revised proposals detailed within this report.**
- 5) Authority be delegated to the Interim Director of Finance and Resources and the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services to enter the consequential contractual arrangements following consultation with the Leader.**

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 3rd September, 2024

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 7.55 pm

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