



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 25th November,
2024

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), Councillor Craig Warhurst (Vice-Chair) and Councillors William Boyd, Andrew Fry, Joanna Kane, Sachin Mathur, David Munro, Rita Rogers and Paul Wren

Also Present:

Councillor Jen Snape – Portfolio Holder for Climate Change

Officers:

Sue Hanley, Judith Willis and Matthew Eccles

Democratic Services Officers:

M Sliwinski

47. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

There were no apologies for absence.

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of party whip.

49. MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 14th October 2024 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 14th October 2024 be approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

50. PUBLIC SPEAKING

Chair

There were no public speakers registered to speak at this meeting.

51. **CARBON REDUCTION STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN ANNUAL REVIEW - PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Climate Change Manager presented the Carbon Reduction Strategy and Implementation Plan Annual Review for the consideration of Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members were reminded that the Carbon Reduction Strategy had been introduced two years' previously. At the time that the strategy was introduced, Members had agreed that progress should be monitored on an annual basis and that a new strategy should be presented every three years. The next new strategy was due to be created for 2025-26.

During the presentation, the recent actions and updates from the review of the Carbon Reduction Implementation Plan were covered in detail with information highlighted including:

- Use of low carbon fleet fuel options – It was noted that Environmental Services use of fuel meant that currently one fourth of fuel used by the Council's fleet was hydrogenated vegetable oil (HVO), Using HVO could save up to 90 per cent of the lifetime carbon emissions as compared to traditional diesel. Environmental Services were preparing to increase the frequency of HVO only tanker deliveries to 1 in every 2. It was asked what the financial implication of increasing HVO frequency given fluctuations in HVO costs. It was undertaken that relevant officers would be contacted to obtain the cost-benefit analysis for this.
- Improve energy efficiency of current housing stock – It was reported that these improvements were being made through use of Government funding, including most recently through Sustainable Warmth Competition Local Authority Delivery Phase 3 (LAD3) funding which the Council had been successful in obtaining.
- Crematorium works – Plans are in place to further improve the BEMS at the Crematorium and Abbey Stadium to improve the efficiency of the heat recovery system in place between the Crematorium and Abbey Stadium. Additionally, there are further plans to upgrade the lighting system to an LED system in the building.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 25th November, 2024

- EV charging - EV charging across Council-owned car parks would be supported by the £2.1 million partnership with Zest to deliver EV charging infrastructure across the borough over the next 15 – 20 years. First charging points were due to be installed in Redditch in January 2025.
- Reducing impact of staff travel on the environment through use of video conferencing – It was noted that the Council had seen an increase in staff mileage claims over the last three financial years and further investigation was needed to understand why this was the case. It was noted that staff mileage claims did not cover home to office journeys.
- Recruitment for a Graduate Climate Change Officer – The recruitment for this role was ongoing. This role would support the development of the next iteration of RBC's carbon reduction strategy and continuation of work with services across the Council to reduce their own carbon emissions.
- New strategy, to be developed in 2025, would be produced to monitor progress through to 2030, which was the target year for the Council to reach 50 per cent carbon emissions reduction.

Following the presentation, questions were raised regarding aspects of the report. It was asked what the Council could do to help businesses use solar panels technology. There were comments that it was preferable for solar panels to be utilised on roofs rather than on the ground as there were concerns around safety and unproductive use of otherwise arable land where solar battery farms were in place.

Officers explained that the Council was undertaking a small project with businesses at the Moons Moat North Industrial Estate to help prepare decarbonisation plans for some of the organisations on that site. As part of this, the project was looking at clean power, including solar, and the Council was assisting businesses at the site with showing clean energy options available and to consider what each of the businesses involved could adapt in their organisation.

Some Members highlighted that recycling rates were very poor in some parts of the Borough and asked what more the Council could do to raise awareness of recycling, particularly in communal bins. It was responded that recycling was not set as a specific target in the current Carbon Reduction Strategy but would be included in the

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 25th November, 2024

next iteration. Work was being done by Environmental Services, particularly by refuse fleet teams to encourage recycling.

In terms of advising the community about recycling, a lot of work had been done in Batchley, around Lock Close and Cardy Close to remodel the way refuse collections were done in those areas. Officers undertook to contact the Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services with regard to lessons from work undertaken in those areas and whether these were having positive effect on recycling rates and could be rolled out to other parts of the Borough. It was noted that a number of years ago, Councillors had undertaken a task group review of waste collection including recycling. Members asked that the final report of that task group be circulated.

A question was asked as to whether the Council considered putting solar panels on the roofs of council car parks, to drive energy generation from those sites. It was noted that this question would be forwarded to the officers who were managing the contract with Zest to see whether this had been considered as an option.

Members asked about timescales and list of locations for the installation of electric charging points. It was responded that the start date for installation of the first charging points was January 2025 with locations chosen to be subject to viability studies before it was determined whether a given car park would be used. Members requested that they be provided with a list of car parks where EV charging points would be installed in the first tranche of the scheme starting in January 2025.

It was noted that staff mileage claims had been increasing despite the move to agile working. A point was raised about the potential negative effect of agile working in that council office buildings were underutilised while utilities still had to be supplied across all buildings. In response, it was stated that the Council's Property Services team was working to ensure that council buildings were used to maximum effectiveness with reduced staff on sites. It was highlighted that efforts had been made to rent out space to other organisations in council buildings, particularly the Town Hall, which would result in more productive use of the buildings. It was also noted with regard to the Agile Working that the customer and service needs remained the overriding consideration behind that strategy.

RECOMMENDED that

The Council endorse the findings of this annual review of the Carbon Reduction Strategy (Appendix 2)

52. HEALTH INEQUALITIES - REVIEW OF PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS BY REDDITCH COUNCILLORS

A report on the previous decisions of Overview and Scrutiny with respect to Health Inequalities Task Group was presented to Members. It was noted that in September 2022, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish a Task Group titled 'Health Inequalities within the BME Community in Redditch'. This Task Group was never launched, however, as other items around fly tipping and bulky waste were prioritised at the time.

The options that were open to Members with regard to this Health Inequalities review were outlined. It was highlighted that the responsibility over health and social care were the remit of Worcestershire County Council (WCC), therefore, the role of any task group established over this matter by the Borough Council would be advisory in nature, and although the Task Group had the power, via the Executive Committee (following prior endorsement by Overview and Scrutiny Committee), to make recommendations to external bodies, those bodies were not legally obliged to consider those recommendations.

Following the presentation, Members debated the subject and raised the following points:

- There was consensus that this topic should be widened regardless of whether the Committee would be minded to set up a task group review. It was noted that it was more fruitful to focus any investigation on the geography, identifying areas of deprivation across the whole Borough and to focus on identifying demographics suffering from health inequalities rather than ethnicity as stated in the original topic proposal submitted in September 2022. It was noted that data was available to identify which areas of Redditch had high levels of health inequality through County Council's Public Health and Office of National Statistics (ONS) statistics.
- Some Members highlighted that although health inequalities constituted a serious issue across Redditch, the Council's powers in this area were limited as health was a function over which the County Council exercised control.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 25th November, 2024

- The Council's Representative on the Worcestershire County Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) addressed Members and commented that at the meeting of HOSC on 12th November 2024 issues in relation to public health were discussed. The matters presented at that meeting were county-wide but there was data specific to Redditch which underscored the concern over health inequality in Redditch.
- The Representative commented that female life expectancy in Redditch was one of the lowest in Worcestershire and significantly lower than the national average, whilst female life expectancy in Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, and Wychavon was significantly higher than the national average. Male life expectancy in Redditch was close to the national average, highlighting a discrepancy between male and female health in Redditch.
- Analysis of Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs), which were geographical areas comprising between 400 to 1,200 households (1,000 to 3,000 persons) and grouped together for statistical reasons, showed that two-thirds of LSOAs with highest number of recorded emergency hospital admissions in Worcestershire were located within Redditch Borough, with LSOA areas in parts of Batchley Brook, Smallwood and Church Hill, Winyates (around Ipsley Middle School) being the areas with highest numbers of emergency admissions. Moreover, these LSOAs had proportions of people in bad or very bad health that far exceeded Worcestershire and England averages.
- The Council's Representative on the Worcestershire County Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) noted that County Council's Public Health had begun investigating the possibilities of delivering intensive small area community development in areas (LSOAs) suffering from high health inequality, including those in Redditch. This would begin with exploration of key causes of poor health outcomes in those areas and would involve work with a number of agencies. The Representative reported that a successful small area community development scheme had recently been delivered in the Westlands area of Droitwich. It was highlighted that WCC's Public Health was looking for assistance of elected members for these schemes.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 25th November, 2024

- Some Members highlighted that the County Council was responsible for public health budget, and Borough Councillors ultimately had no decision-making role in how that budget was spent. The role of Borough Councillors was therefore to raise and highlight specific concerns that required funding intervention to the County Council.
- It was noted that there was a role of Borough Councillors in terms of advising the WCC's Public Health team about local groups in each of those areas and how any funding that might become available for health interventions might be best spent in those areas. A concern was raised in this regard by some Members about potential inequalities in funding provided by the County Council to Redditch as compared to other areas within the county.
- The Chief Executive Officer addressed the Committee and stated that a meeting with the Director of Public Health at Worcestershire County Council had been arranged to discuss health inequality issues and poor health outcomes in parts of Redditch. It was noted that Members' observations and concerns raised at tonight's meeting with respect to health inequalities, and Members' concerns around potential inequalities of funding for health within Worcestershire would be raised by the Chief Executive Officer at that meeting. It was also highlighted that the subject of health inequalities would be discussed at the next meeting of Redditch District Collaborative.
- It was noted in relation to the Redditch District Collaborative (RDC) that recently the sub-group of lead partners had been meeting as part of this forum rather than the group as a whole. A Member expressed concern about this and queried if there was Member representation on the RDC. It was explained that normal practice for district collaboratives was for there to be no direct elected member representation. At Redditch, it was the Redditch Partnership Manager who represented the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive Officer at meetings of RDC. It was clarified further that through RDC, issues in relation to health matters in Redditch were fed back directly to the County Council. A Member queried whether there should be more regular feedback to the Borough Councillors and it was agreed for Officers to provide a response to this to the Member outside the meeting.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 25th November, 2024

- It was requested that details and notes from the next meeting of Redditch District Collaborative be shared with Members.
- It was agreed as an action, in light of the meeting to take place between the Chief Executive Officer and the Director of Public Health at County Council, that the Director of Public Health be asked to provide a briefing note on health inequalities in Redditch.
- The Committee agreed that any further discussion on the item of health inequalities in Redditch would take place after Members had received the briefing note.

RESOLVED that

That a briefing note on health inequalities in Redditch be provided, following consultation with Worcestershire County Council's Public Health team

53. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES AND SCRUTINY OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME - SELECTING ITEMS FOR SCRUTINY

It was requested that the following items from the Executive Committee Work Programme be added as items for pre-scrutiny at meetings of Overview and Scrutiny:

- Food Waste Business Case and Associated Waste Related Issues
- Shareholders' Committee Annual Report.

RESOLVED that

the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme be updated with items from the Executive Committee Work Programme as per the pre-amble above.

54. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme was submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be updated to include the items, as from the latest Executive Work

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 25th November, 2024

Programme for pre-scrutiny, as agreed by Members (and detailed at Minute No. 53).

55. TASK GROUPS, SHORT SHARP REVIEWS AND WORKING GROUPS - UPDATE REPORTS

Updates on Task Groups and Working Groups were provided as follows:

a) Budget Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Warhurst

It was reported that due to apologies submitted by the Chair, the last meeting of Budget Scrutiny, on 21st November, was chaired by Councillor Dormer. Items discussed the budget including fees and charges (tranche 1 prior to consultation) and the revenue and performance monitoring report for quarter two 2024-25.

b) Performance Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Warhurst

Councillor Warhurst reported that two meetings took place to date, on 16th July and 16th October. It was reported that following discussion at those meetings, Officers were due to provide answers to queries raised by the Working Group, regarding the PowerBI performance dashboard and the upkeep of verges, at the next Working Group meeting.

c) Fly Tipping and Bulky Waste Task Group – Chair, Councillor Dormer

Councillor Dormer reported that a Group held a meeting on 6th November. Officers were tasked with researching information relating to the provision of covert cameras to monitor fly tipping and data on costs of fly tipping and income of the bulky waste service in Redditch and across the other district authorities in Worcestershire.

The data requested had now been provided and the Task Group were analysing the data and seeking clarification on a number of points. The date of the next meeting would be agreed in due course.

d) Post-16 Education Task Group – Chair, Councillor Warhurst

Councillor Warhurst reported that at the first meeting of the Group, on 23rd October, the approach to this review was agreed, including the stakeholders which the Group wished to interview as part of the

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 25th November, 2024

investigation. The next meeting was scheduled for 2nd December 2024.

RESOLVED that

the Task Groups, Short Sharp Reviews and Working Groups Update Reports be noted.

56. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

Updates on the meetings of External Scrutiny Bodies were provided as follows:

- a) West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Council Representative, Councillor Kane

Councillor Kane reported that two meetings of this body took place since she last provided an update. Councillor Kane provided a written report on the meeting that took place on 21st October 2024, which was included in the agenda papers for this meeting.

A further meeting of WMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee took place earlier today (25th November) and it was reported that the only item on the agenda was homelessness / rough sleeping. It was reported that WMCA had a working culture to ensure that homelessness and rough sleeping were considered and 'designed out' in every policy that WMCA produced. It was further reported that WMCA anticipated an increase in rough sleeping across West Midlands next year due to a combination of factors that included an anticipated rise in evictions. Councillor Kane also highlighted that WMCA as a combined authority was represented at central government level and was an important regional partner for Redditch Council.

- b) West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Transport Delivery Overview and Scrutiny – Council Representative, Councillor Munro

Councillor Munro stated that there was nothing to report on this body that was of relevance to Redditch Borough Council.

- c) Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) – Council Representative, Councillor Munro.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 25th November, 2024

An update regarding recent meeting of this body had been provided during discussion under agenda item 6. (Minute No. 52) – Health Inequalities – Review of Previous Discussions by Redditch Councillors.

RESOLVED that

the External Scrutiny Bodies updates be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 7.53 pm