Redditch Borough Council
Working together for our communities

Executive Committee

Tuesday, 25th November, 2025

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Sharon Harvey (Chair), Councillor Jane Spilsbury (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Juliet Barker Smith, Juma Begum, Bill Hartnett, Jen Snape, Monica Stringfellow and Ian Woodall

Officers:

Peter Bailey, Debra Goodall, Rebecca Green, Doug Henderson, John Leach, Simon Parry, Becky Talbot and Judith Willis

Democratic Services Officers:

Jess Bayley-Hill and Eve Davies.

54. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

55. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

56. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised that at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 24th November 2025, Members had pre-scrutinised the following items:

- Minute Item No. 60 – Bereavement Services – Burial Strategy
- Minute Item No. 61 – Quarter 2 Housing Improvement Plan Update
- Minute Item No. 62 – Quarter 2 Housing Performance

At the end of their discussions, the Committee had endorsed the recommendations contained within the reports.

In advance of the Executive Committee meeting, the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee had pre-scrutinised the Cyber Security Update (including WhatsApp and AI Policy) during a meeting held on 23rd October 2025.

The Committee had endorsed the recommendations outlined in the report.

Furthermore, the Leader advised that the Budget Scrutiny Working Group had pre-scrutinised the following items during a meeting held on 3rd November 2025:

- Minute Item No. 63 - Quarter 2 2025/26 Performance Monitoring Report
- Minute Item No. 64 - Quarter 2 Finance Monitoring Report (including Financial Saving and Half Yearly Treasury Management Report)

Members were advised that the Budget Scrutiny Working Group had not made any recommendations on either item.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, the Leader thanked the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Audit, Governance and Standards Committee, and Budget Scrutiny Working Group for their hard work in pre-scrutinising these reports prior to the Executive Committee's consideration.

57. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 6th November 2025 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

58. STREET RENAMING REQUEST

The ICT Transformation Manager presented the Street Renaming Request report.

Members were advised that eleven properties on Treefell Close, located within Redditch Borough Council's area, had been sold, which was a few more than originally anticipated. Addresses for these properties had been provided to enable consultation with residents on the proposed street re-naming.

It was confirmed that the developer, Morris Homes Limited, had agreed to cover any costs associated with the street name change that might otherwise fall to residents.

Members were informed that, subject to delegated authority being granted, officers from Redditch Borough Council (RBC) and Stratford–on–Avon District Council would publicise the proposals and display site notices on the street.

If no negative responses were received from the consultation and the test for sufficient local support was met, the next stage would be for the councils to issue a re-naming order. The final stage would involve notifying Royal Mail and affected residents, as well as updating signage.

The Chair thanked officers for their work and acknowledged the challenges encountered in reaching this stage.

The resolutions were proposed by Councillor Jane Spilsbury and seconded by Councillor Juliet Barker Smith.

RESOLVED that

1) **the legal position relating to renaming streets that fall outside the adopted "Street Naming and Numbering Policy" and outside existing officer delegations be noted;**

2) **Members note that a request had been received for the re-naming of Treefell Close as Copston Close; and**

3) **Members grant delegated authority to the Assistant Director of Transformation and Corporate Services to carry out the procedural steps in order to implement the change of name process for Treefell Close in accordance with Section 81 of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 and subject to consultation with interested parties indicating that there would be "sufficient local support".**

59. CYBER SECURITY UPDATE (INCLUDING WHATSAPP AND AI POLICY)

The ICT Transformation Manager presented the Cyber Security Update (including WhatsApp and AI Policy) report.

Members were advised that the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Acceptable Use Policy had been developed to ensure the ethical, transparent, and responsible use of AI technologies across Redditch Borough Council. The report set out the scope for using AI, confidentiality and data protection, ethical use, equality, bias and fairness and training for staff.

The WhatsApp Policy aimed to provide guidance to staff on the appropriate use of the application. It set out circumstances in which WhatsApp use was acceptable, measures to mitigate associated risks, and obligations regarding the sharing of images. It was noted that staff would be permitted to use WhatsApp for non-sensitive information only and with due care.

During discussion, Members raised the following points:

- Thanks were given to officers for producing comprehensive policies that addressed a wide range of scenarios.
- It was clarified that the policies only applied to Council officers rather than Members at this point. However, Members were advised that the policies would be extended to Councillors in due course, with training provided.
- A query was raised regarding the use of third-party AI services, such as ReadAI, in meetings. Members noted that other Councils within Worcestershire were using such technologies and asked how consistency could be maintained. Officers advised they would raise this with the One Worcestershire ICT group but advised that Redditch Borough Council did not recommend their use due to concerns about data security and the uncertainty of where collected data was stored and processed.
- The importance of cyber security training was emphasised, particularly in relation to emerging AI-related threats. As this was a new and evolving risk, it was queried whether this should be incorporated into the Council's risk assessment process.

The Chair thanked the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee for their work in pre-scrutinising this item.

The resolutions were proposed by Councillor Jane Spilsbury and seconded by Councillor Ian Woodall.

RESOLVED that

1) **the Executive Committee adopt the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Acceptable Use Policy as a formal policy document; and**

2) **the Executive Committee adopt the WhatsApp Policy as a formal policy document.**

60. BEREAVEMENT SERVICES - BURIAL STRATEGY

The Chair advised Members that the Bereavement Services - Burial Strategy report had been pre-scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 24th November 2025. No concerns had been raised by the Committee, and the recommendations were endorsed. The Chair thanked the members of the Committee for their hard work.

The Environmental Services Manager presented the report for Members' consideration. In doing so, it was highlighted that the Council faced a critical need to plan for future burial provision, and a clear and co-ordinated strategy would be required.

Members were informed that Plymouth Road Cemetery had reached full capacity for new burials. Edgioake Lane Cemetery currently had approximately five years' burial provision available; however, a review was being undertaken to reassess spacing, which could extend capacity by a further five years. Abbey Cemetery was reported to have provision for an additional ten years' burial space.

The strategy aimed to ensure that all residents continued to have access to dignified burial arrangements, in compliance with relevant legislation, including the Burial Act 1857 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The report addressed key areas such as capacity management, fees and charges, management rules and regulations and cultural inclusivity. The overarching aim was to provide a long-term vision for respectful and inclusive burial options for the area.

The Chair thanked the Burial Services Team for their efforts in maximising existing capacity and preparing the strategy, which would enable the Council to make informed decisions and safeguard future provision.

The resolutions were proposed by Councillor Sharon Harvey and seconded by Councillor Juma Begum.

RESOLVED that

1) **the Redditch Borough Council Burial Strategy be approved**

and NOTED that

2) a further report would be prepared for the Committee's consideration in due course in respect of burial provision in Redditch.

61. QUARTER 2 HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

The Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services presented a report on the Quarter Two Housing Improvement Plan (HIP).

Members were reminded that the inspection of Redditch Borough Council's landlord services had been published in July 2025 and that the HIP was endorsed by the Executive Committee on 2nd September 2025.

It was reported that good progress had been made against the Plan, as outlined in the report. Where actions had fallen outside target timescales, revised targets had been set. To ensure effective management and monitoring of the HIP, governance arrangements had been established. All parties within the governance structure had met, and future meeting dates had been scheduled. Regular monthly meetings with representatives from the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) were continuing.

Members were advised that the Quarter Three update would be presented in a revised format. While the main body of the report would remain similar, additional detail would be provided on certain items. This change followed consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders and with the regulator.

In discussing the item, Members made the following points:

- Thanks were given to officers for their work and for the progress made, while noting that further improvements were still required. Members commented that the new data and management structures provided a clear roadmap for future progress.
- A query was raised regarding the appointment of a Tenant Engagement Officer which had been outlined in the plan and the associated timescales. Officers confirmed that a Senior Complaints Officer had been appointed the previous week and that recruitment for a Complaints Officer role would commence in the new year.

The resolution was proposed by Councillor Bill Hartnett and seconded by Councillor Jane Spilsbury.

RESOLVED that

the Housing Improvement Plan Quarter 2 2025/26 Update, which included actions to address areas for improvement, confirmed as part of the Regulator of Social Housing inspection process, be noted.

62. QUARTER 2 HOUSING PERFORMANCE

The Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services presented a report on Quarter Two Housing Performance.

Members were advised that the RSH had introduced the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), which required all social housing landlords in England to report performance data. These measures enabled assessment of how effectively providers delivered quality homes and services.

The purpose of this quarterly report was to provide an update against the TSMs and to highlight areas where performance targets had not been met, together with the reasons for this. Examples included fire safety and lift safety checks, where timescales had not been achieved. Assurance was given that the Council was working closely with its contractors to ensure sufficient resources were available to complete the necessary work.

It was noted that Redditch Borough Council was not alone in facing these challenges, as other local authorities were also being measured against the TSMs, creating high demand for these services. The Council's consultant had confirmed that resources were now in place and that fire risk assessments would soon return to schedule. In relation to lift safety checks, previous delays had been caused by insurers being unable to access lifts; this issue had been resolved through the installation of key safes.

In discussing the item, Members commented on the following:

- Appreciation was expressed to officers for the progress made, particularly in reducing outstanding repairs. Members noted clear evidence of improvement, which would be presented to the regulator when requested. The introduction of new management tools, graphs, and staff training was hoped to drive further performance improvements.
- Recruitment challenges within the Housing department were highlighted. It was noted that difficulties in filling posts reflected a wider trend across the Midlands rather than being specific to Redditch Borough Council.
- A query was raised regarding the number of complaints about Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) actions being taken to address this. Members noted the Police had ceased youth provision, so Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) would no longer be going into schools. Members stressed the need for proactive collaboration with the Police and partner agencies to tackle ASB. Officers advised that they expected the ASB target to increase as the national average was higher than the figures Redditch was reporting. Recent press releases had publicised enforcement action, and a new caretaker system was in place. Preventative work was also being undertaken with younger people through the Community Safety Youth Service in partnership with schools.

- Concerns were raised regarding the number of complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales. The target was 85%, but Quarter Two performance stood at 72%. Officers explained that there was typically a dip in terms of capacity during Quarter Two.
- Members noted that ASB cases involving Hate Crimes were above target. Officers reassured Members that the actual number of cases was very low, but a spike was anticipated due to historic under-reporting. It was agreed that Hate Crime should be closely monitored, and any increase investigated to understand underlying causes.

The resolution was proposed by Councillor Bill Hartnett and seconded by Councillor Jane Spilsbury.

RESOLVED that

the Council's Quarter 2 Housing Performance for 2025/26 in respect of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (Landlord) be noted.

63. QUARTER 2 2025/26 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Policy Manager presented the Quarter Two Performance Report 2025/26 for Members' consideration.

It was explained that there was a total of 30 corporate measures for Redditch Borough Council. These were organised by the priorities set out in the Redditch Council Plan 2025.

Assurance was provided that amendments requested at previous meetings had been incorporated into the report.

Members were advised on the Quarter Two RAG ratings and the next steps for reporting using Power BI. It was explained that the current summary chart format would be retained, as it was considered clear and easy to understand. In addition, a PDF report generated via Power BI would be produced for officers, accompanied by a covering report with further detail. These changes were scheduled for implementation in Quarter Three.

Members thanked the Policy Manager and her team for their hard work and noted they were pleased with the positive indicators presented.

Overall, Members felt the revised format was clearer and more transparent. However, feedback was provided on behalf of Members who were part of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group and the following amendments were requested for future iterations of the report:

- The Performance pie chart should include labels for red, amber, and green.
- Greater clarity should be provided in the ‘Trend’ section of the Economy, Regeneration and Prosperity table, as the data points referenced were unclear.

The resolution was proposed by Councillor Jane Spilsbury and seconded by Councillor Ian Woodall.

RESOLVED that

the Quarter 2 Performance Report for the period July to September 2025 be noted.

64. QUARTER 2 2025/26 FINANCE MONITORING REPORT (INCLUDING FINANCIAL SAVING AND HALF YEARLY TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT)

The Assistant Director for Finance and Customer Services presented the Quarter Two Finance Monitoring 2025/26 report.

Members were advised that a revenue overspend of £381,000 was forecast for the financial year. For comparison, at the same point in the previous year, the Council had reported a £299,000 variance, which was successfully mitigated.

It was reported that £1.806 million had been spent on the capital programme against an annual budget of £8.082 million. Capital expenditure figures related to significant projects, including the Innovation Centre and Public Realm improvements funded through the Town Deal and UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The construction of the Innovation Centre was scheduled to be completed in March 2026.

The revenue position had moved adversely by £361,000 since Quarter One. This was largely due prudent adjustment to bereavement income levels, additional expenditure on Community Transport, costs relating to the installation of a new fire alarm system and additional insurance costs for Rubicon buildings. This had partly been offset by additional income in Development Control and additional Housing Subsidy income.

Of the £2.342 million annual savings target, £1.197 million had been achieved, mainly through vacancy management (£844,000) and efficiency measures (£138,000). It was noted that the Council was performing well in terms of savings and it was hoped that a good position would be reached by the end of the financial year.

Members were informed that there had been no new short-term borrowing. The Council had long-term borrowing commitments of £103.9 million in respect of the housing stock in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and £5.8 million in short-term investments.

Council tax collection stood at 55.36% and business rates collection at 51.53% against a target of 53.92% for this quarter. Benefits processing was performing well, averaging 15 days for new claims and 7 days for changes.

It was noted that 25 contracts exceeding a value of £200,000 were scheduled for procurement within the next 12 months, ensuring strategic resource planning. Overall, while financial pressures remained, the Council was managing its budget effectively and progressing on key capital projects.

Members thanked the Assistant Director for Finance and Customer Services and her team for the comprehensive report and their proactive financial management. It was acknowledged that Quarter Two typically performed less strongly, however the Council was well positioned to reduce the overspend and would continue to monitor trends closely.

The resolutions were proposed by Councillor Ian Woodall and seconded by Councillor Sharon Harvey.

RESOLVED to note

1) **that there was a forecast revenue overspend position of £381,000 at Quarter 2;**

2) **the current Capital spending of £1.806 million against a budget of £8.082 million;**

3) **the current savings delivery was £1.197 million against an annual target of £2.342 million for 2025/26;**

4) **Earmarked Reserves were £27.117 million;**

5) **the Ward Budget allocation position to date was 20 approved allocations at £25,700, leaving a balance of £28,300 to be allocated before year end;**

6) **there was an updated procurements position with any new items over £200,000 to be included on the Executive Committee's Work Programme;**

7) **the position on Council Tax and Business Rates;**

8) **the position on benefits processing; and**

RECOMMENDED that

9) **the Balance Sheet Monitoring Position for Quarter 2 be noted which was the Treasury Monitoring Report and required to be reported to Council;**

10) **the Council's Treasury performance for Quarter 2 of the financial year 2025/26 be noted; and**

11) **the position in relation to the Council's Prudential indicators be noted.**

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

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

66. TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT BUSINESS, DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, DEMOCRATIC AND PROCUREMENT 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 for discussion at the meeting.

The Meeting commenced at 6.00 pm
and closed at 6.42 pm