

## MINUTES

### Present:

Councillor Sharon Harvey (Chair), and Councillors Juliet Barker Smith, Juma Begum, Jen Snape, Monica Stringfellow and Ian Woodall

### Observers:

Councillors William Boyd, Brandon Clayton, Claire Davies, Matthew Dormer, Joanna Kane, Gemma Monaco and Rita Rogers

### Officers:

Hannah Corredor, Amanda Delahunty, Matthew Eccles, Claire Felton, Rebecca Green, Debra Goodall, John Leach, Guy Revans, David Riley, Darren Whitney and Judith Willis

### Democratic Services Officers:

Jess Bayley-Hill and Eve Davies

## 67. APOLOGIES

Apologies of absence were received on behalf of Councillors Jane Spilsbury and Bill Hartnett.

## 68. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

## 69. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader advised that at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 12th January 2025, Members had pre-scrutinised the following items:

- Minute Item No. 71 - Biodiversity First Consideration Report
- Minute Item No. 72 - Homelessness Prevention Grant Funding 2026/27 to 2028/29 (including Rough Sleeper Grant) and Domestic Abuse Grant

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

Chair

In addition, a further recommendation to the Homelessness Prevention Grant Funding 2026/27 to 2028/29 (including Rough Sleeper Grant) and Domestic Abuse Grant had been proposed which was contained within the 'Additional Papers 2' pack.

In advance of the Executive Committee meeting, the Budget Scrutiny Working Group had also pre-scrutinised the following items during a meeting held on 7th January 2026:

- Minute Item No. 75 - Business Rates - Discretionary Rates Relief Policy 2026/27
- Minute Item No. 76 - Council Tax Base Report 2026/27
- Minute Item No. 77 - Council Tax - Empty Homes Discounts and Premiums 2026/27
- Minute Item No. 78 - Council Tax Support Scheme 2026/27
- Minute Item No. 79 - Discretionary Council Tax Reduction Policy 2026/27
- Minute Item No. 80 - Housing Revenue Account Rent Setting 2026/27
- Minute Item No. 81 - Medium Term Financial Plan 2026-27 to 2028-29 Fees and Charges and consultation outcome including Worcestershire Regulatory Services Budget Recommendations

The group endorsed the recommendations outlined within the reports but did not propose any further recommendations.

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

## **70. MINUTES**

### **RESOLVED that**

**the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 25th November 2025 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.**

## **71. BIODIVERSITY FIRST CONSIDERATION REPORT**

The Climate Change Manager presented the Biodiversity First Consideration Report.

It was explained to Members that Redditch Borough Council had a legal duty under The Environment Act 2021 to publish a Biodiversity

Duty Report covering the period up to 1<sup>st</sup> January 2026. The deadline for publication of the report was 26<sup>th</sup> March 2026.

The 'Top Achievements' outlined in the report were highlighted to Members, which included:

- Green Flag Awards for Morton Stanley Park and Overdale Park (2025)
- Citizen Science biodiversity monitoring via iNaturalist
- Grass verge biodiversity initiative (70% verges managed for pollinators)
- Tree planting and species diversification
- Pesticide reduction and alternative weed control methods

Members were advised that the Council had led a number of community engagement initiatives across the Borough.

Moving forward, it was explained that the aim was to expand wildflower meadows alongside developing park management plans to create habitats for species.

The Council was continuing to work closely with Worcestershire County Council; Redditch Borough Council had actively engaged with the Worcestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

It was noted that the Council would continue to monitor biodiversity net gain with colleagues from the Planning department as well as working with the Parks and Open Spaces team to identify additional Green Flag Award applications as part of the Local Plan.

In concluding his presentation, the Climate Change Manager highlighted the risks, which related to insufficient monitoring of biodiversity outcomes. It was explained that risks would be mitigated through the actions outlined in the report in addition to the Climate Change Strategy which was due to be considered at a future Executive Committee meeting.

During discussion on the item, Members raised the following points:

- Members thanked the Climate Change Manager and the officers involved in producing the comprehensive report.
- The efforts invested in achieving Green Flag Awards for parks across the borough were commended, and the ongoing work to submit further applications for additional locations was warmly welcomed. A query was raised

regarding which parks were being considered next for an award, it was confirmed that Arrow Valley Park had been identified and work was ongoing with other parks across the borough.

- Members welcomed that the Council's commitment to biodiversity was being embedded in new strategies and policies being developed.
- The challenges moving forward, such as resource constraints for monitoring, were noted.

The Chair commented that she was proud of the work that had been carried out and welcomed the measures that were being implemented which would make the environment better for future generations.

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) the findings of the Biodiversity First Consideration Report be noted;**
- 2) Members agree to publish the full Biodiversity First Consideration Report to the Council's website.**

**72. HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION GRANT FUNDING 2026/27 TO 2028/29 (INCLUDING ROUGH SLEEPER GRANT) AND DOMESTIC ABUSE GRANT**

The Housing Development and Enabling Manager presented the Homelessness Prevention Grant Funding 2026/27 to 2028/29 (including Rough Sleeper Grant) and Domestic Abuse Grant report.

Members were advised that Government had typically awarded funding on an annual basis, however a ring-fenced grant for a three-year period had been awarded from 2026.

It was recommended that this funding be awarded to partners that worked closely with Redditch Borough Council to provide valuable homelessness prevention services. The grant would be allocated to the services outlined within the report, with the addition of a new service that would be delivered by the Citizens Advice Bureau. This service aimed to prevent homelessness for homeowners who were facing repossession and would also extend to tenants in private rented accommodation.

The Committee was informed that this grant would not cover the cost for services related to temporary accommodation, which were

currently being met through the Homelessness Prevention Grant for Temporary Accommodation. Instead, the Council would be receiving funding from Government through the Revenue Support Grant which would be used for temporary accommodation services from April 2026.

The Chair informed Members that a recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been proposed at a meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2026. Details of the recommendation were tabled at this meeting.

Members were of the opinion that the additional recommendation was sensible given that funding had been granted for a three-year period. This would enable monitoring to be carried out each year and would ensure that all grant funding was spent, with any leftover funding being allocated appropriately.

In concluding discussions on the report, Members thanked the Portfolio Holder and the officers involved in formulating the strategy. It was remarked that this long-term plan would ensure stability of the Council and ensure that its role would be fulfilled in relation to preventing homelessness.

#### **RECOMMENDED that**

**1) Temporary Accommodation Services currently met by Homelessness Prevention Grant are now met from the Temporary Accommodation element of the Revenue Support Grant 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29.**

**2) Subject to approval of recommendation 1 above by Council, the initiatives detailed in the table below be approved to receive the Council's Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Grant and Domestic Abuse Grant allocations of funding for 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29, subject to satisfactory performance; and should additional funding be announced at a later date by the Government for subsequent years then this would need to be the subject of a further report.**

#### **RESOLVED that**

**3) Subject to the agreement of recommendations 1 and 2 above, delegated authority be granted to the Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to use any unallocated Grants, or Homelessness Prevention**

**Grant mid-year top up, during each year or make further adjustments and uplifts as necessary to ensure full utilisation of the Grants for 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29 in support of existing or new schemes.**

## Proposed Allocation of Homelessness Prevention Grant

| <b>Initiatives</b>                                                                                                                                                              | <b>2026/27<br/>(up to<br/>£700,638)</b> | <b>2027/28<br/>(up to<br/>£744,361)</b> | <b>2027/29<br/>(up to<br/>£772,087)</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| St Basils Young Persons Supported Housing                                                                                                                                       | 67,005                                  | 67,005                                  | 67,005                                  |
| Worcestershire Strategic Housing Partnership Co-ordinator – contribution towards county-wide development and delivery of housing initiatives in partnership with other agencies | 10,500                                  | 10,500                                  | 10,500                                  |
| Severe Weather Emergency Provision                                                                                                                                              | 33,460                                  | 33,460                                  | 33,460                                  |
| Redditch Nightstop – Accommodation and Support                                                                                                                                  | 44,518                                  | 44,518                                  | 44,518                                  |
| Redditch Nightstop Core Funding                                                                                                                                                 | 13,000                                  | 13,000                                  | 13,000                                  |
| Maggs Rough Sleeper Outreach Service                                                                                                                                            | 106,822                                 | 106,822                                 | 106,822                                 |
| GreenSquare Accord – 6 units of supported accommodation for Ex Offenders or those likely to offend                                                                              | 15,586                                  | 15,586                                  | 15,586                                  |
| Newstarts - Furniture Project to provide furniture for homeless households.                                                                                                     | 10,000                                  | 10,000                                  | 10,000                                  |
| Homelessness Prevention - Spend to Save budget for use by Housing Options Officers                                                                                              | 17,060                                  | 17,060                                  | 17,060                                  |
| St Basils Young Persons Pathway                                                                                                                                                 | 31,116                                  | 31,116                                  | 31,116                                  |

|                                                                |                 |                 |                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Worker                                                         |                 |                 |                 |
| Onside Advocacy<br>Mental Health Support<br>Worker             | 39,100          | 39,100          | 39,100          |
| Homelessness<br>Prevention Officers                            | 150,000         | 150,000         | 150,000         |
| Part Time Empty<br>Homes Officer                               | 7,681           | 7,681           | 7,681           |
| Batchley Support<br>Group                                      | 15,000          | 15,000          | 15,000          |
| CAB financial advice<br>for home owners and<br>private renters | 27,611          | 27,611          | 27,611          |
| No First Night Out/No<br>Second Night Out                      | 18,394          | 18,394          | 18,394          |
| St Pauls Housing<br>Led/Housing First<br>Support Service       | 60,642          | 60,642          | 60,642          |
| County Rough Sleeper<br>Co-ordinator                           | 5,000           | 5,000           | 5,000           |
| <b>Total</b>                                                   | <b>£672,495</b> | <b>£672,495</b> | <b>£672,495</b> |
| <b>Underspend</b>                                              | <b>£28,143</b>  | <b>£71,866</b>  | <b>£99,592</b>  |

## Proposed allocation of Domestic Abuse Grant

| <b>Initiatives</b>                                  | <b>2026/27<br/>(up to<br/>£35,697)</b> | <b>2027/28<br/>(up to<br/>£35,697)</b> | <b>2028/29<br/>(up to<br/>£35,697)</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator                         | 4,813                                  | 4,813                                  | 4,813                                  |
| Domestic Abuse Research and<br>Intelligence Officer | 4,884                                  | 4,884                                  | 4,884                                  |
| Domestic Abuse Housing Solutions<br>Officer Top Up  | 6,000                                  | 6,000                                  | 6,000                                  |
| New Starts                                          | 5,000                                  | 5,000                                  | 5,000                                  |
| Batchley Support Group                              | 5,000                                  | 5,000                                  | 5,000                                  |
| St Basils Young Persons Pathway<br>Worker (YPPW)    | 10,000                                 | 10,000                                 | 10,000                                 |
| <b>Total</b>                                        | <b>£35,697</b>                         | <b>£35,697</b>                         | <b>£35,697</b>                         |
| <b>Underspend</b>                                   | <b>£0</b>                              | <b>£0</b>                              | <b>£0</b>                              |

**4) Officers provide an annual update in respect of the Homelessness Prevention Grant initiatives that received Council funding.**

**73. PAY POLICY 2026-2027**

The Assistant Director of Transformation and Corporate Services presented the Pay Policy Statement 2026-27 report for the Executive Committee's consideration.

Members were reminded that the Council was required to produce a Pay Policy Statement each year under the Localism Act 2011. The policy set out the Council's pay structure in line with the Act, details of which were contained within the report.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance expressed that he felt this policy reflected a fair settlement for staff and protected their wages against Cost-of-Living pressures.

**RECOMMENDED that**

**the Pay Policy 2026/27 be approved.**

**74. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS 2026-2027**

The Electoral Services Manager presented the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) Recommendations 2026-2027 report.

Members were advised of the recommendations that had been produced by the IRP. It was highlighted that the IRP had since made a slight amendment to the first recommendation, which meant the proposed increase to the Basic Allowance was 4.62% rather than 4.5%.

The report outlined the recommendations in relation to Special Responsibilities Allowances (SRA). It was noted that Redditch Borough Council had previously agreed more than one SRA per Member. In addition, although not part of the IRP's report, Members were informed that the covering report noted the remuneration of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

Members were advised that the Committee was obliged to regard but not necessarily to agree to the IRP's recommendations.

The Chair explained that being a Councillor was a difficult role which involved a high level of commitment, including attendance at meetings in addition to considerable work behind the scenes. Her

personal view was that Members worked hard and deserved to be remunerated fairly. However, she felt that this decision needed to be opened to wider debate involving those Councillors not in attendance at the meeting this evening.

## **RECOMMENDED that**

- 1. Council consider the Independent Remuneration Panel's report and determine based on the information provided what increase, if any, to agree to the Basic Allowance for 2026/27.**
- 2. Special Responsibility Allowances remained at the same level as those listed in the Member's Scheme of Allowances 2025/26.**
- 3. Travel allowances for 2026/27 continued to be paid in accordance with the HMRC mileage allowance;**
- 4. Subsistence allowances for 2026/27 remain unchanged;**
- 5. The Dependent Carer's Allowance remains unchanged.**

## **75. BUSINESS RATES - DISCRETIONARY RATES RELIEF POLICY 2026/27**

The Revenue Services Manager presented the Business Rates - Discretionary Rates Relief Policy 2026 – 2027 report.

It was explained to Members that under Section 47 of The Local Government Finance Act 1988, Redditch Borough Council had power as a billing authority to award discretionary rate relief to ratepayers.

Members were informed that charities which were in receipt of 80 per cent mandatory charitable relief could receive a further 20 per cent discretionary relief, and not-for-profit organisations could receive relief of up to 100 per cent relief.

The report included a rural settlement list. It was explained that certain types of property situated within a rural settlement and with a rateable value below specific thresholds were entitled to rural rate relief. The properties eligible for rural rate relief were the sole post office, general store, public house and petrol station within a rural settlement. These properties could receive discretionary relief of up to 100 per cent if the rateable value of the property occupied was less than £16,500, the use of the property was of benefit to the local community, and it was in the interest of taxpayers for relief to be provided.

It was reported that the main amendment to the existing policy involved a shift from the current strict criteria for discretionary relief to a more principles-based approach. This would remove hard limits and would allow the Council to look at the financial needs of an organisation. The intended result was to encourage relief for organisations where there was a financial need.

In summary, the Committee was being asked to re-adopt the existing policy with criteria being redefined by principles to allow increased flexibility for officers to make decisions on relief.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance thanked the Revenue Services Manager for the report. He emphasised that the purpose of rate relief was to ensure a viable charitable section within the borough of Redditch to support those in need. The rural element would also allow such areas to be support and ensure communities were well served.

#### **RECOMMENDED that**

- 1) A non-domestic rates discretionary relief policy is approved and adopted from 1st April 2026;**
- 2) The rural settlement list as set out in Appendix A of the policy is approved and adopted for use from 1st April 2026.**

#### **76. COUNCIL TAX BASE REPORT 2026/27**

The Revenue Services Manager presented the Council Tax Base Report for 2026/27.

Firstly, Members were informed that there was a typographical error and the recommendations should have stated 'recommend that' rather than 'resolve that'.

Members were advised that the report set out the calculation of the council tax base for 2026/27. The tax base calculation was required as part of determining council tax for the forthcoming financial year.

The council tax base was calculated using data held by the authority as of 30th November 2025. This data reflected the number of dwellings in each valuation band and accounted for exemptions, discounts and reductions. The figure was then adjusted to account for anticipated changes as well as losses on collection.

It was reported that this information would subsequently be shared with the precepting authorities and council tax Band D would be set.

Members thanked officers involved in producing this report as a formal piece of administration for the Council.

The Chair noted that council tax was vital to all services in Redditch and other precepting authorities.

## **RECOMMENDED that**

- 1) The calculation of the council tax base for the whole and parts of the areas for 2026/27 be approved; and**
- 2) In accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the figures calculated by Redditch Borough Council as its tax base for the whole area be 26,480.1 and for the parts of the area listed below be:**

|                       |          |
|-----------------------|----------|
| Parish of Feckenham   | 380.8    |
| Rest of Redditch      | 26,099.3 |
| Total for the Borough | 26,480.1 |

## **77. COUNCIL TAX - EMPTY HOMES DISCOUNTS AND PREMIUMS 2026/27**

The Revenue Services Manager presented the Council Tax - Empty Homes Discounts and Premiums 2026/27 report.

It was explained to Members that no changes were being recommended regarding the existing level of premiums on unoccupied homes.

As the billing authority, Redditch Borough Council had discretionary power to decide whether to remove the standard 50 per cent discount and whether to apply a discount of between 1-50 per cent for empty homes and up to 100 per cent for second homes.

Currently, the Council provided a 100% discount for homes that were empty for 14 days or less, after which time any discount was removed. This allowed for a transitional period for those moving home and change over between tenants.

In relation to long-term empty homes, properties that had been unoccupied for one year or more, the maximum level of premium was applied.

Members were advised that the Council had powers to apply premiums for second homes. If this was agreed, the earliest date

for premiums on second homes to take effect would be 1<sup>st</sup> April 2027. Given the context of Local Government Reorganisation, it was thought that it would be more appropriate for the future unitary authority to take a decision on this. Furthermore, such premiums were typically applied in areas where second homes had a detrimental impact on the local area, but this was not seen to be a problem in Redditch. It was noted the report mentioned that additional council tax would be levied, but it was not recommended that this proposal be adopted for the reasons aforementioned.

Members were reassured that guidance from Government had been considered during preparation of the proposals.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance welcomed the enabling legislation which would allow Redditch Borough Council to implement a case by case basis approach and provided flexibility for officers.

**RECOMMENDED that:**

- 1) the determinations set out in Appendix A be adopted with effect from 1st April 2026;**
- 2) The Assistant Director of Finance and Customers Services be authorised to consider, on a case-by-case basis, a reduction to the long-term empty premium under Section 13A(1)(C) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992;**
- 3) the council retains the existing discounts for unoccupied and furnished homes, as set out in Appendix A and does not implement additional council tax premiums for unoccupied and substantially furnished homes.**

**78. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2026/27**

The Revenue Services Manager presented the Council Tax Support Scheme 2026/27 report.

Members were informed that the scheme was a replacement for council tax benefit, which was abolished in 2021.

On 1st April 2021 the Council introduced an income-banded scheme for working-age applicants which categorised them based on their household composition. It was explained that income bands needed to be up rated each year in line with inflation as otherwise those who needed support might not be able to access it.

There was provision in scheme to allow bands to be decided by Members on an annual basis. As the rate of benefits were set to

increase by 3.8 per cent in 2027, it was recommended that the income bands were raised by the same percentage. This would ensure that the scheme remained relevant and safeguarded vulnerable residents.

It was highlighted that this scheme was only available for working-age residents and that pensioners had other means of support available.

Members were pleased that this would allow the most vulnerable residents in the community to continue to be protected.

**RECOMMENDED that:**

- 1) The council tax reduction scheme is retained for 2026-27 tax year, subject to uprating of income bands by 3.8% in-line with increases to national benefits as set out in the table at Appendix A.**

**79. DISCRETIONARY COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION POLICY 2026/27**

The Revenue Services Manager presented the Discretionary Council Tax Reduction Policy 2026/27 report.

Under section 13A(1)(C) of The Local Government Finance Act 1992 the Council had the power to reduce the amount of council tax that a resident is liable to pay. The power could be exercised on a case-by-case basis or by determining a class of case in which the liability would be reduced. It was reported that some councils applied the discretionary reduction for care leavers or special constables for example.

The existing policy set out when the Council would use their discretionary powers to provide case-by-case reductions for Worcestershire County Council care leavers, support under Government's flood recovery framework, wider Government support, and reductions in cases of exceptional hardship.

The Committee was informed that the Marie Curie charity had produced a report which advocated for council tax discounts to be applied for those suffering from a terminal illness with less than one year to live.

The report titled 'Dying in Poverty' asked local authorities to include terminal illness as a criterion in their council tax reduction schemes or provide a discretionary discount. It was explained that it would not be possible to adjust the Council Tax Reduction Scheme due to

time constraints, so it was proposed that an amendment would be made to the Discretionary Council Tax Reduction Policy.

It was noted that medical evidence would be required to confirm a resident's diagnosis, and the financial position of the household would also be taken into consideration when making a decision on awarding a reduction.

Members welcomed the additional support for those suffering from a terminal illness. It was felt that this would give a period of grace to residents in such circumstances and would offer support for them and their families.

**RECOMMENDED that**

**1) The revised section 13A(1)(C) policy be approved and adopted from 1st April 2026.**

**80. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT RENT SETTING 2026/27**

The Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services presented the Housing Revenue Account Rent Setting 2026/27 report. Prior to the meeting a typographical error had been identified in the report published in the main agenda pack for this meeting. An updated version of the report had been published in an Additional Papers pack for this meeting.

Members were asked to note that this was a standard annual report in respect of the Council's statutory requirement to increase rent. The recommendation to raise rent by 4.8 per cent was based on the Consumer Price Index Figure +1 per cent, which was used to establish the limit on annual rent increases for social housing.

The report also set out proposed service charges for tenants and leaseholders for the period 2026-27. It was noted that an inhouse caretaking and cleaning team had been established in 2025, there were no raises recommended for these services.

It was highlighted that there had been a typographical error and recommendation three should have referred to section 3.4 of the report rather than 3.1.

In discussing the report, Members commented on the following points:

- Members welcomed that the Council had invested heavily in their housing service. It was noted that technology had been

improved, a damp and mould team had been established as well as caretaking and cleaning services. Overall, this had led to an improvement in the housing stock.

- The rent rises were in line with the methodology that had always been used so were thought to be fair.
- Given that the caretaking and cleaning services were in their infancy, it was thought to be wise to not make any changes to their charges while the services were being embedded.
- A 4.8 per cent increase was lower than previous years, this was seen to be positive as it ensured that the impact on tenants wasn't too harsh.

**RECOMMENDED to Council that:**

- 1) the actual average rent increase for 2026/27 be set as 4.8%.**
- 2) Garage rent increase by 4.8%.**
- 3) the service charges to Council tenants and leaseholders be set as detailed in the table below.**

| Service Charge                                         | Applies Lease holder | Benefit eligible? | Weekly charge 2025/26 (48 weeks)    | Proposed Weekly charge 2026/27 (48 weeks) |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Cleaning & Caretaking - Communal Areas                 | Y                    | Y                 | £6.40<br>(introduced November 2025) | £6.40*                                    |
| St David's & Queens Cottages Concessionary TV Licences | N                    | N                 | £0.16                               | £0.16                                     |
| St David's & Queens Cottages Extra Care Scheme         | N                    | Y                 | £39.30                              | £40.10                                    |
| Communal Charges at                                    | N/A                  | Y                 | New                                 | £5.93                                     |

|                                |  |  |  |  |
|--------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Baxterley Close (8 properties) |  |  |  |  |
|--------------------------------|--|--|--|--|

**81. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2026-27 TO 2028-29 FEES AND CHARGES AND CONSULTATION OUTCOME INCLUDING WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Assistant Director of Finance and Customer Services presented the Medium Term Financial Plan 2026-27 to 2028-29 Fees and Charges and consultation outcome including Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Budget Recommendations report. Appendices C and D to the report were contained within the Additional Papers pack 1.

The report provided an overview of the Council's current financial position and outlined the next steps that would be taken as part of the budget setting process, WRS recommendations and fees and charges.

Members were informed that the income position was a deficit of £435,000 and £345,000 respectively at the starting points for 2026/27 and 2027/28. In addition, there was a funding gap of over one million pounds for the existing budgets. It was reported that inflation remained high at just over 3 per cent which was impacting on service costs.

The financial pressures on the Council were highlighted to Members. At Quarter Two, the overall revenue financial position was a £381,000 overspend position with savings of £2.342 million of which £1.145 million was yet to be delivered. Plans would need to be put in place to mitigate the in-year overspend.

The provisional Local Government Finance Settlement was announced on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2025. This set out the detail of funding allocations for individual councils including details of the new funding distribution model (Fairer Funding Review 2.0).

Overall, District Councils Core Spending Power (CSP) within the Provisional Settlement was lower than other councils, coming out at an estimated 3.4 per cent increase in CSP over the following three years. Compared to 2025/26, the Council had a net increase in CSP of £0.8 million in 2026/27, £1.3 million in 2027/28 and £1.7 million in 2028/29. However, this included the Recovery Grant of £350,000 which had not been confirmed beyond 2028/29.

In addition to the changes relating to the Fairer Funding Review, the Recovery Grant had been confirmed on an ongoing basis for the following three years. This would result in the Council receiving £326,000 per annum for the subsequent three years.

The key pressures were identified as:

- The additional 0.2 per cent Pay Award increase from 2025/26 which was above the assumed increase in the budget of 3 per cent, amounting to £18,000 going forward.
- A further 1 per cent Cost of Living of £126,000.
- Funding gap from 2025/26 budgets of £1.062 million.
- Additional costs relating to Worcestershire Regulatory Services which were £18,000 for 2027/28 and £50,000 for 2028/29.

These pressures had been offset by changes in the pension rate of £216,000 in 2026/27, reducing slightly to £198,000 in 2028/29. As well as council tax income and fees and charges.

Members were also provided with an update on the Budget Consultation for 2026/27 which ran from 17<sup>th</sup> November 2025 to 29<sup>th</sup> December 2025.

An invite had been sent directly to all members of the Community Panel and links had been sent to partners to share with their contacts. The survey was publicised in local media and numerous times on social media. It was noted that the response rate was significantly lower than the previous year, however at least one response had been received from every area within the Borough.

The notable responses were highlighted to Members as follows:

- How important are the current Redditch Borough Council priorities to you? Green, Clean and Safe received scored 54.2 per cent
- The top three services voted as most important for the Council to invest in were: Community Safety, Parks and Open Spaces and the local economy.
- Nearly 50 per cent of respondents said they supported fees and charges rising by 4 per cent to keep them in line with inflation and rising staffing costs.
- 52 per cent of respondents owned their own homes.
- Over 33 per cent of respondents had a long-standing health condition or disability.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance thanked the Assistant Director of Finance and Customer Services and the team involved in producing the detailed report. It was noted that although the Council had received more funding from Government, that there would still be a tight financial settlement for the following few years. Reassurance was given that savings would be made where possible and the Council would be delivering value for money.

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) The updated position in respect of the 2026/27 annual budget and for the Medium-Term Financial Plan up to 2028/29 be noted;**
- 2) To note that a further report in February would include additional information from the Local Government Settlement to give a final financial position for the Council.**

**RECOMMENDED to Council that**

- 3) the feedback from the Consultation on the Budget 2026/27, attached as Appendix D, be noted.**
- 4) the proposed fees and charges for 2026/27, including proposed fees and charges for Worcestershire Regulatory Services, attached as Appendices C and D, be approved.**
- 5) The increases to the Council's budget for Worcestershire Regulatory Services of £18k for 2027/28 and £50k for 2028/29, as recommended by the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board, be approved.**

**82. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The minutes from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2025 were noted.

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

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

**84. TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT BUSINESS, DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO THE HEAD 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 6.31 pm  
and closed at 7.36 pm