

MINUTES

Present:

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

Officers:

Toni Ainscough, Maria Bailey, Ruth Bamford, Matthew Bough, Mark Cox, Amanda Delahunty, Matthew Eccles, Rachel Egan, Claire Felton, Rebecca Green, Georgina Harris, John Leach, Julie Lorraine, Katie Sharp-Fisher and Judith Willis

Democratic Services Officers:

Eve Davies

104. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Jen Snape.

105. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

106. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record.

107. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader informed Members that the Joint Appointments Committee had recommended to Council that James Walton be appointed as the new Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer. It was explained that, subject to references and the completion of necessary checks, an offer of employment would be made. No objections were raised by any Members of the Committee.

The Leader drew Members' attention to the fact that this meeting was the Policy Manager's final meeting before leaving the Council.

Chair

The Leader expressed thanks to the Policy Manager for her hard work and dedication throughout her long service at the Council.

Members were also asked to note that at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16th March 2026, Members had pre-scrutinised the following items:

- Minute Item no. 110 – Climate Change Strategy 2026 to 2031
- Minute Item no. 113 - Shared Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2026-2029
- Minute Item no. 115 - Introduction of Enforcement of littering from Vehicles
- Minute Item no. 116 - Revision of Environmental Crime Enforcement Policy

Following their discussions, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had endorsed the recommendations contained within the reports.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, the Leader thanked the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their hard work in pre-scrutinising these reports prior to their consideration that evening.

108. INCLUSIVE PLAY POLICY STATEMENT

The Assistant Director for Planning, Leisure and Culture Services presented a report on the Inclusive Play Policy Statement.

The purpose of the report was to set out proposals for installing inclusive play equipment at play areas across the Borough. Officers explained that two parks in Redditch had been identified as having the greatest potential to meet inclusive play requirements. Arrow Valley Country Park already benefitted from good access arrangements, including pathways, car parking and accessible toilet provision. Morton Stanley Park similarly offered facilities that made it a strong candidate for seeking Plan Inclusive Play Areas (PiPA) accreditation. It was, however, acknowledged that Morton Stanley Park was unlikely to achieve full PiPA accreditation, although every effort would be made to secure the highest standard possible for the site.

The distinctions between 'accessible' and 'inclusive' play spaces were highlighted, with it being noted that that inclusive play extended provision to meet the needs of children with a wide range of abilities and requirements.

Members were advised that, for all other outdoor equipped play areas, the Council would seek to improve accessibility and inclusivity through use of an Inclusive Play Policy Assessment and Design Checklist. Play companies and contractors would be required to propose improvements using this checklist to ensure the highest achievable level of inclusivity.

Officers informed Members that funding had been allocated and proposed for the purpose of enhancing play areas to make them more accessible and inclusive. The recommendations sought delegated authority for the Assistant Director for Planning, Leisure and Culture Services to pursue the appropriate level of accreditation and to implement the new plans.

Members were advised that learning from the work at Arrow Valley Country Park and Morton Stanley Park would be applied to other outdoor play areas across the Borough, with the intention that even smaller local parks should include some equipment accessible to children with differing needs.

Following the presentation, Members had detailed discussion and commented on the following points:

- Thanks were expressed to the Leisure and Parks team for their work in producing the report.
- Members welcomed the policy, noting that play was essential for children and that many families had requested accessible equipment in local parks. Members were therefore pleased that the policy would support such provision.
- Members were pleased with the focus on inclusive rather than solely accessible play, recognising that this represented a more comprehensive approach to meeting all children's needs and ensuring barrier-free play environments.
- It was noted that the policy provided a clear and detailed explanation of how the proposals had been assessed against equality impact criteria.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Inclusive Play Policy Statement be adopted;**
- 2) the detailed audit of play provision at Arrow Valley Country Park (against the Plan Inclusive Play Areas [PiPA] accreditation criteria/checklist) be approved;**

- 3) the proposals for Arrow Valley Country Park improvements will be implemented during 2026/27 and strategic and local sites by April 2028;
- 4) subject to completion of resolution 3 above, authority be delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services to apply for accreditation for the Arrow Valley Country Park play area against the PiPA standard;
- 5) authority be delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services to develop plans to make the play space in Arrow Valley Country Park a Borough wide exemplar for accessible and inclusive play;
- 6) authority be delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture to commission an assessment of Morton Stanley Park against the PiPA standard, which should include establishing the viability of gaining accreditation;
- 7) the Inclusive Play Policy Assessment and Design Checklist be approved as a tool for improving the accessibility and inclusivity of all other play areas in the Borough; and
- 8) To NOTE that a budget bid of £300,000 in the capital programme was approved by Council in March 2026 as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan 2026/27 to 2028/29 to pay for inclusive play improvements and for additional officer support.

109. EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY

The Senior Housing Strategy Officer presented a report on the Empty Homes Strategy.

Members were informed that in October 2025 there were 542,276 empty homes recorded across England, representing 2.1 per cent of all homes. At the same point in time, Redditch Borough had 660 empty homes, of which 320 had been empty for more than six months.

The strategy set out the Council's commitment to identifying empty homes and developing options to bring them back into use as quickly as possible. It outlined the priorities and actions for tackling empty homes across the Borough and for applying the most effective interventions available.

Officers highlighted that a contribution of £7,681 from Redditch Borough Council's Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant (2026/27) had been agreed to support the funding of a part-time Empty Homes Officer.

The aims of the strategy were to:

- help alleviate housing need
- improve housing conditions
- offer a wider choice of housing to residents
- minimise the blight that could result where properties were left empty and neglected

It was explained that there were two main types of empty homes. Short-term empty homes were those unoccupied for under six months and typically occurred as part of property sales or routine changes in personal circumstances. Long-term empty homes were dwellings unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for six months or longer. Bringing long-term, privately owned empty homes back into use was the primary focus of the strategy, as these properties often remained empty due to additional underlying factors.

Officers reported that residential properties could remain empty for various reasons, including unresolved inheritance or ownership issues, new homes awaiting sale, abandonment, lack of funds for repairs, awaiting planning decisions, repossession, or perceived difficulties in renting. In some cases, owners also retained sentimental attachment to a property.

The Committee was advised that there was no Act of Parliament that placed a statutory duty on Local Housing Authorities to tackle empty homes. However, Councils had a general duty under the Housing Act 1985 to review housing conditions and housing needs. National policy empowered Local Authorities to bring vacant dwellings back into use, guided by a local strategy.

Local Authorities also had discretionary powers to charge Council tax premiums and a range of legislative tools to address empty homes.

The strategy focused on supporting homeowners to bring empty properties back into use and utilising enforcement measures where necessary. It centred around three priority areas:

1. Developing systems, processes and multi-agency working
2. Improving intervention pathways, resources and performance

3. Strengthening early intervention, engagement and monitoring

Officers advised that the action plan had been developed in line with the Local Government Association's Empty Homes Toolkit, which promoted a staged approach focused on accurate data, early engagement, proportionate enforcement and strong partnership working.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing asked Members to note that Redditch was in the lower bracket nationally for the proportion of empty homes, with 8.43 long-term empty homes per 1,000 dwellings. The Portfolio Holder welcomed the strategy and commented that the Council continually sought to improve its approach.

Members also made the raised the following points:

- Thanks were expressed to officers for their work in producing the report.
- The action plan provided clarity about when Members and the public could expect to see empty homes being brought back into use.
- Members welcomed the alignment of the strategy with Local Government Association good practice guidance.
- It was noted that the strategy represented a positive step towards bringing homes back into use at a time when many residents were in need of housing.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) The Redditch Borough Council Empty Homes Strategy 2026 – 29 be adopted.**

110. CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2026 TO 2031

The Climate Change Manager presented the Climate Change Strategy 2026 - 2031 report.

The proposed strategy sought to update and replace the previous Carbon Reduction Action Plan. Members were advised that the strategy provided a practical and affordable approach to keeping the Council on track to achieve Net Zero by 2040, with an interim target of a 50 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030. This remained aligned with, and ahead of, central Government's statutory target of Net Zero by 2050.

Members were informed that emissions continued to decline, with Redditch recording 3.5 tonnes of CO₂ per capita in 2023, a figure below both the regional and national averages.

The Climate Change Manager drew Members' attention to several key highlights within the report:

- Investment into retrofitting housing stock. £1.81 million had been invested in social housing energy efficiency upgrades, alongside £260,000 for private home retrofits, with further funding streams expected to deliver £4.27 million of improvements to Council housing stock.
- Updates to the Council's fleet and fuelling options.
- Biodiversity improvements, including revised mowing processes and the introduction of battery-powered equipment.

Members were asked to note that this strategy covered every service area within the Council. Officers provided reassurance that the strategy was sufficiently adaptable to meet the requirements of Local Government Reorganisation and would place the Council on a strong footing ahead of the transition to a unitary authority.

Following the presentation, Members raised the following points:

- Members welcomed the fact that the strategy covered all Council service areas, demonstrating a whole-Council approach to tackling climate change.
- Practical actions had been set out, enabling the Council to contribute proactively to climate change solutions.
- Members emphasised the importance of communicating with residents regarding the importance of Net Zero.
- Members welcomed the long-term commitment to making Redditch a good place to live for future generations.
- Clear targets and outcomes had been established to enable ongoing monitoring of progress.
- A Member welcomed the proposal to install solar panels on commercial buildings; it was expressed that this would avoid disturbance to residential areas and the green belt.
- The commitment to utilising external funding as one of the capital sources to deliver the strategy.

- The positive impact the strategy would have on reducing fuel poverty and making Redditch more self-sufficient in producing its own energy.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) The Council's Climate Change Strategy 2026–2031 be approved; and**
- 2) an annual review of the Climate Change Strategy be reported to Council.**

111. QUARTER 3 2025/26 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Policy Manager presented the Quarter 3 2025/26 Performance Monitoring Report.

Members were informed that there were thirty two corporate measures in place, aligned to the Council priorities as set out in the Council Plan.

In reviewing the quarterly performance breakdown, it was reported that fourteen measures were rated green, three amber and four red. The unclassified category reflected areas where no targets had been set due to the nature of the data.

It was noted that two new measures had been added for quarter three, which were the number of active environmental enforcement cases and environmental enforcement fixed penalty notices. Members were advised that additional new measures would be incorporated in future iterations of the report.

Following the presentation of the report, Members had detailed discussions and commented on the below points:

- Thanks were expressed to the Policy Manager and the Assistant Director for Corporate Services and Transformation for their work in preparing the report.
- Members welcomed the format of the update, stating that it increased transparency and was easy to understand.
- Members highlighted a number of positive statistics, including: a Council Tax collection rate of 82.52%, an increase in Business Rates collection, a significant reduction in the number of complaints, and a decline in incidents of anti-social behaviour.

- Members were pleased with the progress made overall, while acknowledging that further work was required to address the measures rated red and amber.
- A query was raised regarding data on completed penalties that had been issued by the Worcestershire Regulatory Service (WRS). Officers advised that WRS intended to publish notices and enforcement data on their website so Members and the public would be able to access the figures.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The Quarter 3 Performance Report for the period October to December 2025 be noted.**

112. PERMISSION TO REVOKE THE FIRST HOMES POLICY

The Housing Development and Enabling Manager presented a report on the proposed revocation of the First Homes Policy.

Members were advised that the Government had introduced an affordable housing product, known as First Homes, which all local housing authorities had been required to provide from 28th March 2022 as 25 per cent of affordable housing on Section 106 sites. These homes were required to be sold at a discount of at least 30 per cent against open-market value.

It was reported that First Homes had become increasingly expensive due to rising new-build house prices, meaning that they were often unaffordable for local residents. Members were informed that shared ownership properties offered a more accessible route into affordable home ownership for residents.

Officers explained that meetings had taken place with several Registered Providers, who had indicated that reducing the proportion of shared ownership units in favour of First Homes compromised the viability of Section 106 sites.

In terms of operational issues, Members were advised that administering the First Homes scheme placed a significant burden on local authorities, as it required detailed processing and approval of applications from prospective purchasers. Removing the requirement for First Homes would therefore reduce this administrative burden.

Regarding financial implications, the Committee was informed that while Councils charged £508 for administering variations to Section 106 agreements, this cost would be offset by the developer not

having to obtain valuation reports for First Homes properties from a RICS-qualified valuer.

Officers advised that revoking the First Homes Policy would support residents on lower incomes in accessing affordable home ownership and strengthen the viability of Section 106 sites for Registered Providers.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing thanked the Housing Development and Enabling Manager for the report. He highlighted that none of the sites with First Homes requirements had yet been built out and, as a result, no First Homes properties had been sold. He stated that revoking the policy would be a positive step to help lower-income households onto the housing ladder while also reducing the administrative demands placed on officers. It was hoped that developers would welcome the change, as it would make sites more viable and ultimately lead to the delivery of more homes for residents.

Members commented that they were keen to see more effective use of Section 106 agreements.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the Council's First Homes Policy be revoked with immediate effect;**
- 2) and that any development sites that currently include an element of First Homes provision is offered an opportunity to revert to shared ownership and other forms of affordable home ownership.**

113. SHARED HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2026-2031

The Housing Development and Enabling Manager presented a report on the Shared Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2026-2029.

The Committee was advised that the Council had undertaken a review of all forms of homelessness over the previous six months and had been working closely with partner agencies. A consultation event had been held on the 30th September 2025 with partners and stakeholders to consider housing from both a strategic and client-based perspective. The event was attended by a range of partners from a range of statutory and voluntary organisations.

Members were informed that central Government had published a National Plan to End Homelessness in October 2025, and that the new Shared Homelessness Strategy aligned with the five pillars of that plan.

The strategy set out how the Council would invest in early intervention and support systems designed to prevent homelessness before it occurred. It aimed to strengthen cross-service collaboration to ensure that risks were identified at an early stage.

The Committee was advised that the Crisis Resilience Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments would be used to support individuals struggling with their income or facing unexpected financial pressures. Residents experiencing sudden income shocks would receive holistic advice and support.

It was noted that Government would be providing nearly £3.5 billion in funding for homelessness prevention and rough sleeping services for the period 2026/27–2028/29.

It was proposed that the Executive Committee should consider whether to approve the draft strategy for public consultation and, following the consultation and subject to any feedback, the final version would need be submitted to Council for approval at a later date.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing highlighted that the strategy would no longer be delivered on a county-wide basis, as Worcestershire had chosen not to participate in the partnership. The strategy nevertheless covered support for rough sleepers, victims of domestic violence and care leavers. The Portfolio Holder suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee might wish to receive a progress report once the consultation had concluded and funding had been confirmed.

Following the presentation, Members held detailed discussions and commented on the below points:

- Members welcomed the measures aimed at preventing homelessness before it occurred, emphasising that early intervention was crucial and preferable to responding in crisis situations.
- The commitment to supporting care leavers was highlighted, along with the importance of providing support for those with neurodivergence and other protected characteristics.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the draft Shared Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2031 and action plan be approved for public consultation for six weeks starting 13th April 2026.**

114. RENTERS RIGHT ACT 2025

The Private Sector Housing Manager presented a report on the Renters Right Act 2025.

Members were advised that the Act had received Royal Assent on 27th October 2025, with reforms being introduced through a phased approach. New investigatory powers came into effect from 27th December 2025, and Phase 1 of the reforms was scheduled to commence on 1st May 2026.

The report outlined the key reforms that would affect residents in Redditch. It was estimated that the private rented sector in the Borough comprised approximately 5,318 homes.

Members were informed of the three phases of implementation and the elements included within each stage:

- Phase 1 – Key reforms included the abolition of Section 21 “no fault” evictions, limits on rent increases and making it illegal to discriminate against renters.
- Phase 2 – Scheduled for late 2026, this phase would introduce the regional landlord and local council database, along with the establishment of the new Ombudsman service.
- Phase 3 – Expected to come into effect between 2026 and 2027, this phase would introduce a new Decent Homes Standard for the private rented sector.

Officers noted that an increase in demand for support was anticipated, including higher volumes of enquiries to the Private Sector Housing team, an initial rise in homelessness, and some landlords leaving the sector. To prepare for this, the team had been expanded from three to five officers, with training and upskilling underway. Funding had also been secured for a new case-management system to ensure statutory deadlines could be met.

Following the presentation, Members had detailed discussion and commented on the following points:

- Members welcomed the increased support for those renting in the private sector, including the introduction of assured tenancies and a ban on rental bidding.
- It was highlighted that the Council would have strengthened enforcement powers to address rogue landlords who were not providing a good service to their tenants.
- Members expressed that everyone deserved to live in a decent home, and this policy would improve the living conditions for many residents across Redditch.
- A query was raised regarding the level of new burdens funding that had been awarded and how costs would be met. Officers advised that the funding was intended to support Councils in preparing for the reforms and that income from fines would be reinvested into the Private Sector Housing team. The Council would also receive a portion of the fees paid by landlords registering on the regional database. Members noted that expenditure would need to be monitored as the service developed.

It was proposed that the new burdens funding of £20,057.95 be noted, rather than recommending to Council that the 2026/27 Medium Term Financial Plan be updated.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The update provided in the report in respect of the Renters Rights Act 2025 be noted.**
- 2) The new burdens funding of £20,057.95 be noted.**

RECOMMENDED that

- 3) The Scheme of Delegations be amended to incorporate new powers under the Renters Rights Act 2025 in accordance with the wording as set out below.**

| 2. Private Sector Housing | | | |
|---|--|----------------------------|---|
| Subject | Detail | Delegated by: | Delegated to: |
| Power of entry | To exercise the powers of Authorised Officers in respect of entry, inspection and investigation in relation to housing conditions as specified in any legislation the enforcement of which is delegated to Director of Leisure, Environment and Community Services | Executive Committee | [Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services] / [Housing Strategy Manager] / [Private Sector Housing Team Leader] / [Housing Strategy C Enabling Team Leader] / [Private Sector Housing Officer] |
| Service of Notices and obtaining warrants <u>Housing legislation</u> = <u>regulatory powers</u> | To exercise <u>all the powers in respect of entry, inspection, investigation, service of notices and other functions of</u> Authorised Officers for the purposes of the legislation listed below, serve notices and obtain warrants of entry from a Justice of the Peace for the purposes of the <u>following at</u> legislation: - | <u>Executive Committee</u> | [Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services] / [Housing Strategy Manager] / [Private Sector Housing Team Leader] / [Housing Strategy C Enabling Team Leader] / [Private Sector |

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|----------------------|----------------------|
| | | | Housing Officer] |
| | <p>Renters Rights Act 2025 sections 114 to 132 (investigatory powers) and section 110 (reporting to government) Housing Acts 1985 (as amended), Housing Act 2004 (as amended)</p> | | |
| 2. Private Sector Housing | | | |
| Subject | Detail | Delegated by: | Delegated to: |
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| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | <p>Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation Regulations 2006</p> <p>Licensing C Management of HMO C other Houses (Miscellaneous Provisions) (England) Regulations 2006</p> <p>Environmental Protection Act 1990</p> <p>Building Act 1984</p> <p>Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Acts 1976, 1982</p> <p>Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949</p> <p>Public Health Act 1961</p> <p>Licensing and Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (additional provisions) (England) Regulations 2007</p> <p>Mobile Homes Act 2013</p> <p>Caravan Sites C Control of Development Act 1960</p> | | |
|--|--|--|--|

| 2. Private Sector Housing | | | |
|---|--|----------------------------|--|
| Subject | Detail | Delegated by: | Delegated to: |
| | | | |
| <u>Renters Rights Act 2025 - Discrimination in rental market/ requirement to state rent</u> | <u>To undertake investigations into potential offences under sections 33, 34, 39 and 56 of the Renters Rights Act 2025</u> | <u>Executive Committee</u> | <u>[Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services] / [Housing Strategy Manager] / [Private Sector Housing Team Leader] / [Housing Strategy C Enabling Team Leader] / [Private Sector Housing Officer]</u> |

4) Authority be delegated to the Assistant Director of Community & Housing to spend the new burdens funding for Renters Rights Act 2025 preparations.

115. INTRODUCTION OF ENFORCEMENT OF LITTERING FROM VEHICLES

The Principal Officer from Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) presented a report on the introduction of enforcement measures for littering from vehicles.

It was explained that littering was currently enforced as a criminal offence. However, it was often difficult to prove beyond reasonable doubt who had committed the offence. Officers were therefore seeking delegated authority to issue Litter Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs).

Members were advised that the PCNs would be issued to the registered keeper of the vehicle, in the same way that parking charges were administered.

Officers reported that this approach would enable the Civil Enforcement Team to use their time proactively while undertaking their parking-enforcement duties.

Members welcomed the report and commented that it was important to provide officers with appropriate enforcement tools, which they hoped would contribute to behaviour change around littering.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) Civil enforcement of Littering from Vehicles be introduced.**
- 2) The Civil Enforcement Team be given delegated authority to issue Litter Penalty Charge Notices.**
- 3) The parking administration team be authorised to deal with appeals and enforcement matters in respect of Litter Penalty Charge Notices.**
- 4) The Penalty Notice Charge be set at the level set by Council for Criminal offences where a Fixed Penalty Notice is served for Depositing Litter (section 87/88 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990) which for 2026/27 subject to Council approval are proposed to be set as:
 - a) £250; and**
 - b) £125 for prompt payment (within 14 days).****
- 5) Authority be delegated to the Assistant Director Regeneration & Property to issue Penalty Notice Charges for Littering from Vehicles under The Littering From Vehicles Outside London (Keepers: Civil Penalties) Regulations 2018.**

116. REVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME ENFORCEMENT POLICY

The Principal Officer, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS), presented the Revision of Environmental Crime Enforcement Policy report.

The purpose of the report was to introduce an update on the existing joint environmental enforcement strategy. Members were advised that the revised policy would mirror the WRS policy already

in operation for environmental health and licensing enforcement across the six Worcestershire districts for which WRS delivered environmental crime functions on behalf of. The updated policy also ensured that the most current procedures and enforcement options were clearly set out in a transparent manner.

Following the presentation, Members discussed the report and made the following comments:

- Members welcomed the strategy and the clarity it would provide to the public regarding enforcement processes.
- A query was raised about the policy for abandoned and nuisance vehicles. Officers advised that responsibility for these matters remained with the Council's Environmental Services team.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) The Redditch and Bromsgrove Enforcement Policy be adopted and replace the current Joint Environmental Enforcement Policy.**

117. PRIDE IN PLACE PROGRAMME GOVERNANCE MODEL

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund Manager presented a report on the Pride in Place Programme Governance Model.

The Committee was advised that an area covering parts of Greenlands and parts of Woodrow had been selected to receive Pride in Place funding, which was the Government's flagship communities programme.

It was reported that the programme would be community-led, with funding decisions made by a Neighbourhood Board following extensive consultation with local residents. Redditch Borough Council's primary role would be to act as the accountable body, ensuring that funding was distributed fairly and transparently and that all legislative requirements were met.

Members were informed that the Council was required to appoint an independent Chair, alongside the local Member of Parliament (MP). The Chair would need to have a strong connection to the local area, and officers proposed that the recruitment process should commence immediately after the local elections in May 2026. A full-scale promotional campaign was being planned to ensure that candidates represented a broad cross-section of the community.

Shortlisting and interviews would be carried out by a panel comprising a senior officer, the MP, a Member for the Greenlands and Lakeside ward, and a Member for the Matchborough and Woodrow ward. A Community Panel of local residents would also be invited to provide views on the shortlisted candidates, and other ward Members for the relevant areas would have the opportunity to meet candidates before the final appointment.

Following the appointment of the Chair, they would lead the recruitment of the remaining Board members, with a requirement for a minimum of eight members in total. It was highlighted that representation from the MP was mandatory, and at least one ward Member must also sit on the Board, although officers would recommend two Members to ensure representation from both wards.

Members were advised that the deadline for submitting the final Board membership to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for approval was 17th July 2026.

Following the presentation, Members discussed the report and made the following comments:

- It was clarified that the Chair could not be an elected representative.
- Members noted that there was a prospectus which set out guidance on spending and emphasised the importance of ensuring that Board decisions reflected community priorities while adhering to due diligence requirements.
- The wider implications for residents in surrounding areas. For example, any new facilities would be available for all to use.
- Members welcomed the clear timescales outlined in the report to support strong community engagement.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Authority to recruit and appoint an independent chair of the Greenlands and Woodrow Pride in Place Neighbourhood Board be delegated to the Assistant Director Regeneration & Property following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Environmental Services and in agreement with the MP for Redditch and the Villages;**
- 2) Authority to approve the final membership of the Greenlands and Woodrow Pride in Place Neighbourhood Board be**

delegated to the Assistant Director Regeneration & Property following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Environmental Services and in agreement with the MP for Redditch and the Villages; and

3) The Council agrees to act as Accountable Body for the Pride in Place Programme and adopt programme governance arrangements.

118. REDDITCH COUNCIL PLAN UPDATE REPORT

The Policy Manager presented the Redditch Council Plan Update Report.

The purpose of the report was to provide an update on the Council Plan that had been adopted in Spring 2025. Members were reminded about the development process for the Council Plan, which had been considered by the Executive Committee in March 2025.

The report summarised progress from April 2025 to January 2026, highlighting areas of work that had contributed to delivering the priority objectives, projects and vision of the Council Plan.

Following presentation of the report, Members discussed the below points:

- Members were pleased to note the progress made against the Council's priorities. While acknowledging that some targets had not been met, Members recognised that delays were often due to external or unforeseen circumstances.
- Visitor numbers to Redditch had increased to 199,556.
- Members expressed that the report served as an opportunity to celebrate the hard work of officers across the organisation.
- Members welcomed that residents would be able to see clear improvements in service delivery, for example with Dial a Ride and improvements to the Housing and Environmental Services teams. It was expressed that this demonstrated good value for money and showed that residents were receiving a fair deal.
- The report contributed to greater transparency and openness within the Council.
- Improvements within the Housing Department were highlighted, including increased Tenant Satisfaction Survey

responses, progress with the house-building programme, empty homes being brought back into use, the establishment of the Damp and Mould team, and improvements to the Caretaking team.

- Thanks were expressed to the Shopmobility and Dial-a-Ride teams for their hard work despite the challenges they had faced.
- Members noted that a designed, public-facing version of the report would be produced to support accessibility and engagement.

RECOMMENDED that

1) The Council Plan report and update table be noted.

119. QUARTER 3 2025/26 FINANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Interim Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer presented the Quarter 3 2025/26 Finance Monitoring Report.

The report set out the key highlights for Quarter Three. Members were reminded that the Council had recently approved the 2026/27 budget, which had taken into account the pressures outlined within the report. The forecast position was noted to be within £19,000 of the position reported in the previous quarter.

The Interim Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer drew Members' attention to capital expenditure. Capital spending stood at £6.776 million against an original budget of £8.082 million, which had been revised with carry forwards to £19.921 million.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance acknowledged the pressures identified within the Quarter Three report and advised that mitigations had been implemented. In particular, reference was made to pressures within the Housing Revenue Account relating to expenditure on fire doors, which represented a Health and Safety requirement. Earmarked reserves had been factored into the following year's budget, and savings targets were reported to be close to being met. The Portfolio Holder also reminded Members that some ward budgets remained underspent.

Members commented on the following points:

- Members were asked to review any allocations made from ward budgets, and options for making donations to local charities were discussed.

- A Member queried whether capital spending should be included on the Corporate Risk Register. Officers clarified that this would depend upon the individual circumstances and status of particular projects. Reassurance was provided that the financial position had already been anticipated within the new budget and that additional resources had been identified to support capacity.

RESOLVED that

- 1) There is a forecast revenue overspend position of £399k at Q3 be noted.**
- 2) The current Capital spending of £6.776 million against an original budget of £8.082 million revised with carry forwards to £19.921 million be noted.**
- 3) The current savings delivery is £1.751 million against an annual target of £2.342 million for 2025/26 be noted.**
- 4) Forecast Earmarked Reserves at 31 March 2026 are £17.294 million be noted.**
- 5) The Ward Budget allocation position to date is 21 approved allocations at £32,100, leaving a balance of £21,900 to be allocated before year end be noted.**
- 6) There is an updated procurements position, with any new items over £200,000 to be included on the forward plan be noted.**
- 7) The position on Council Tax and Business Rates be noted**
- 8) The position on benefits processing be noted.**

RECOMMENDED that

- 9) That the Balance Sheet Monitoring Position for Q3 is noted – which is the Treasury Monitoring Report and required to be reported to Council.**
- 10) The Medium-Term Financial Plan is amended to include the Pride in Place Fund Allocation which is confirmed as £19,660,000 (capital £12,470,000 and revenue £7,190,000) over 10 years and includes the current year's capacity fund of £150,000, which has already been received.**

120. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting which took place on 17th February 2026 were noted.

121. 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.

122. 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.

123. GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY BODIES AWARDING OF GRANTS

The Assistant Director for Community and Housing Services presented the Grants to Voluntary Bodies Awarding of Grants report.

The purpose of the report was to outline the applications that had been received and the grants to be awarded to voluntary sector organisations as determined by the Grants Panel. It was noted that during their consideration of the applications, the Grants Panel had expressed a desire to improve the scoring criteria in future rounds to give greater priority to local Redditch organisations whose projects were based within the Borough.

The Portfolio Holder for Community Spaces and Voluntary Sector thanked the Assistant Director and the Grants Panel for their work in scrutinising the large number of applications received.

RESOLVED that

- 1) grants be awarded to voluntary sector organisations as set out below:**

| Organisation | Funding Recommended | Project |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---|
| Acorns | £10,000 | Specialist palliative care for children from Redditch |
| Astwood Bank Community CIC | £10,000 | Astwood Bank Carnival |
| Carers Careline | £10,000 | Carers Careline support for unpaid carers |
| P&E Sports CIC | £10,000 | Matchborough Positive Activities for Young People |
| Primrose hospice | £9,225 | Volunteer and Befrienders Wellbeing |
| Redditch Nightstop | £10,000 | Safe Accommodation & Support Project |
| Where Next | £10,000 | Where Next Redditch Core Costs |
| YMCA | £9,184 | Church Hill Youth Wellbeing & Mentoring Support |
| New Starts | £5000 | Local People Helping Local People |
| Oasis | £5000 | Christians Against Poverty Debt Centre |
| Total | £88,409 | |

- 2) the additional wording in bold set out below, be added to paragraph 9.5 of the Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Policy in order to allow scoring to support smaller and local charitable organisations:

“There will be no pre-determined demographic allocation of funds but **priority will be given to local Redditch organisations whose projects are based in Redditch and**

funding will be used only for the benefit of Redditch residents, this is compared to larger national charities”

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 8.27 pm