

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Joanna Kane (Mayor), David Munro (Deputy Mayor), and Councillors Joe Baker, Juliet Barker Smith, Juma Begum, Brandon Clayton, Claire Davies, James Fardoe, Andrew Fry, Bill Hartnett, Sharon Harvey, Chris Holz, Wanda King, Rita Rogers, Gary Slim, Jen Snape, Jane Spilsbury, Monica Stringfellow, Ian Woodall and Paul Wren

Officers:

Claire Felton, Debra Goodall, John Leach, Julie Lorraine and Guy Revans

Democratic Services Officers:

Jess Bayley-Hill and Eve Davies

72. WELCOME

The Mayor welcomed all present to the meeting.

73. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors William Boyd, Matthew Dormer, Sid Khan, Alan Mason, Sachin Mathur, Gemma Monaco, Jen Snape and Craig Warhurst.

74. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

The Mayor advised Council that the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee had granted all Members a dispensation earlier in the year to speak and vote on both the budget and Council Tax.

75. MINUTES

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meetings of Council held on 13th January and 26th January 2026 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Mayor.

76. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following announcements were made during the meeting:

a) The Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor circulated a written update at the meeting which detailed the civic engagements that she had attended since the start of the year (Appendix 1).

In delivering her announcements, the Mayor thanked all the Members who had attended her civic service on 1st February 2026. Council was informed that the Mayor's civic dinner was due to take place on 24th April 2026. A number of Councillors had already booked to attend but Members were asked to notify the Mayor if they wanted to book to attend and had not already done so.

b) The Leader's Announcements

The Leader confirmed that she did not have any announcements to make on this occasion.

c) The Chief Executive's Announcements

The Chief Executive confirmed that he did not have any announcements to make on this occasion.

77. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Council considered recommendations that had been agreed at two separate meetings of the Executive Committee held on 23rd February 2026 and on 2nd March 2026, immediately prior to the Council meeting.

Pet Cremation

A report proposing the introduction of a Pet Cremation service was considered. Members noted that this would add to the service that was already provided at the Redditch Crematorium to people. The pet cremator would involve the use of separate equipment to that

which was used for humans. The pet cremation service, once introduced, would involve the provision of a compassionate service designed to meet the needs of local residents.

In considering the report, Members were asked to note that the UK pet cremation service was expected to grow over the coming decades as owners would be aiming to use a dignified method to lay their pets to rest. The cremator that would be purchased for the service was considered to be cost effective and was manufactured in the UK. The payback period for the cremator was reported to be good and it was anticipated that by month five the service would break even, with a steady income stream being provided to the Council thereafter.

During consideration of this item questions were raised about how long urns containing the ashes of people's pets would be stored at the Redditch Crematorium. Questions were also raised about the potential for owners to scatter their pets' ashes and the land where this could be undertaken. In addition, reference was made to pet cremation services in other parts of the country and whether lessons had been learned when reviewing the potential to introduce this service in the Borough. In response, Members were advised that there might be the potential to expand the service in the long-term, although the initial aim would be to introduce the service. The Council would aim to return a pet's ashes to their owner as soon as possible.

Consideration was given to the introduction of a new cremator for the service and the implications that this could have for carbon emissions in the Borough. Questions were raised about whether the cremator that would be used was the most energy efficient option available to use. Furthermore, concerns were raised about whether use of the pet cremator represented the most appropriate way to process animal fatalities arising from collisions on the highways. The potential for the energy arising from the use of the pet cremation service to contribute to energy mitigation measures at the Abbey Stadium was also highlighted and Members queried whether this option had been explored. In relation to animal fatalities on the roads, Members were informed that this would result in financial savings as the current contract involved the transportation of animals outside the county. The use of a pet cremator would also assist with addressing problems arising in relation to bird flu. Members were assured that every effort would be made to invest in a new cremator which would be more energy efficient than older systems. In respect of offsetting carbon emissions, it was noted that clarification would be requested and further information would be provided to Members on this subject after the meeting.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Sharon Harvey and seconded by Councillor Jane Spilsbury.

Repairs and Maintenance and Damp and Mould Policies

Members considered the Repairs and Maintenance and Damp and Mould Policies, which formed part of the Council's Housing Asset Management Strategy.

The Repairs and Maintenance Policy had been designed to ensure that Council practice complied with both national best practice and Government guidelines. The Mould Policy would enable the authority to address in a timely manner an issue that could otherwise impact negatively on the health of tenants.

The content of the policies was discussed in detail. Concerns were raised about potential problems with damp and mould in Council properties and Members noted that the authority had duties, as a landlord, to ensure that tenants could live in accommodation that met appropriate standards. The suggestion was made that the stock condition survey had an important role to play in enabling the authority to identify issues and that these surveys should therefore be undertaken regularly.

Clarification was provided that the policies were being updated in response to Awaab's Law. The content was designed to make processes more straight forward and to provide clarity to tenants about timescales as well as the action that could be taken. Members were asked to note that landlords of properties in the private sector would be required to meet the same duties as the Council in respect of damp and mould on their properties.

Reference was made to the fact that everybody was entitled to live in homes that were safe and maintained to a decent standard. Members expressed hopes that the policies would enhance the living conditions of tenants living in Council properties. To ensure that issues with damp and mould did not recur after corrective action was taken or occur in the first place, Members noted that it would be helpful to educate tenants on actions that they could take to prevent this from becoming an issue in their homes.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Bill Hartnett and seconded by Councillor Jane Spilsbury.

Medium Term Financial Plan 2026/27 to 2028/29 (Including Treasury Management Strategy, Capital Strategy and Investment Strategy)

The Mayor advised, prior to consideration of this item, that no alternative budgets had been received for discussion at the meeting.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the Medium Term Financial Plan 2026/27 to 2028/29 (Including Treasury Management Strategy, Capital Strategy and Investment Strategy). Members were advised that the Council was in a good position financially. The following arrangements were highlighted in relation to this point:

- The capital programme was fully funded.
- There was no reliance on reserves to balance the budget.
- No unidentified savings had been included in the budget.
- The budget would be balanced in 2026/27 and prudent plans were in place for the subsequent two years of the plan period.
- The financial position of the Council was more stable than many other local authorities.

However, there were pressures on the Council's budget that needed to be acknowledged. This included:

- A volatile international environment that could impact on budgets.
- The uncertainty created by Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

There was a desire to invest in the local community prior to LGR. Therefore, a community Investment Fund of £1.6 million was proposed for the 2026/27 financial year.

Once the report had been presented Members discussed the following points in detail:

- The positive impact of being able to set a balanced budget for 2026/27.
- The proposed new fees for St David's House and the potential impact that this could have on tenants.
- The extent to which the budget would have a tangible impact on residents living in Redditch.
- The hard work of the Financial Services team in preparing the report. Members thanked officers for their work.
- The fact that Redditch Borough Council was the only local authority in Worcestershire which retained Council housing

stock and the need to carefully manage the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

- The rent and service charges for Council houses managed by the authority and how these compared to rents and fees in the private rented sector.
- The increase in costs and fees for the Dial a Ride service and the implications for service users.
- The impact of the financial situation at Worcestershire County Council on Redditch residents.
- The Executive Committee's aim to match spending proposals to the priorities detailed in the Council Plan.
- The feedback that had been received from residents in the consultation process in respect of the budget and how this had informed the content of the report.
- The potential for the Community Investment Fund to have an impact on local residents.
- The opportunities available to Members to suggest how the Council could make the best use of the Community Investment funding to benefit local residents.
- The value of ensuring that the Council was in a financially prudent position prior to LGR.
- The level of funding that had been invested in the environment, particularly initiatives that aimed to reduce carbon emissions.

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

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 the vote in respect of the budget was taken as a formal recorded vote.

Members voting FOR the budget recommendations:

Councillors Juliet Barker Smith, Juma Begum, Claire Davies, James Fardoe, Andrew Fry, Bill Hartnett, Sharon Harvey, Joanna Kane, David Munro, Rita Rogers, Gary Slim, Jane Spilsbury, Monica Stringfellow, Ian Woodall and Paul Wren (15).

Members voting AGAINST the budget recommendations:

Councillors Joe Baker, Brandon Clayton and Chris Holz (3).

Members voting to ABSTAIN on the budget recommendations:

Councillor Wanda King (1).

Therefore, on being put to the vote, the recommendations were carried.

Council Tax Resolutions 2026/27

A report in respect of the proposed Council Tax Resolutions for the 2026/27 financial year was considered. In doing so, the Leader confirmed that at the meeting of the Executive Committee held immediately prior to Council the Committee had endorsed the proposals detailed in the report.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance explained that Redditch Borough Council was proposing an increase to Council Tax of 2.99 per cent. This increase had been proposed to ensure that there was prudent management of the authority's finances.

Following the presentation of the report, Members discussed a number of points in detail:

- The different proposed increases to Council Tax for the various precepting authorities, which included Worcestershire County Council's agreed increase of 8.98 per cent.
- The fact that Redditch Borough Council collected Council Tax for all the precepting authorities but only retained a very small proportion as the remainder was distributed amongst the preceptors.
- The fact that the 2.99 per cent increase for Redditch Borough Council was lower than the rate of inflation on the date of the meeting.
- The impact on financial management of a local authority where Council Tax was not increased each year.
- The impact that various Council Tax increases could have on local residents and the extent to which the most vulnerable residents could afford to meet these increased costs.
- The Council Tax Support Scheme and Debt Advice Service that was available for residents to access.
- The transparency in respect of public money arising from LGR in respect of Council Tax, as the local authority that collected Council Tax would be the same organisation that retained most of the Council Tax in future.
- The level of alternative funding that had historically been made available to local authorities and the impact of recent changes to funding models on Council Tax rises.

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

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 Members determined the Council Tax Resolutions 2026/27 by taking a formal named vote and the votes were recorded as follows:

Members voting FOR the Council Tax Resolutions 2026/27

Councillors Juliet Barker Smith, Juma Begum, Claire Davies, James Fardoe, Andrew Fry, Bill Hartnett, Sharon Harvey, Joanna Kane, David Munro, Rita Rogers, Gary Slim, Jane Spilsbury, Monica Stringfellow, Ian Woodall and Paul Wren (15).

Members voting AGAINST the Council Tax Resolutions 2026/27

Councillors Brandon Clayton and Chris Holz (2).

Members voting to ABSTAIN on the Council Tax Resolutions 2026/27

Councillors Joe Baker and Wanda King.

Therefore, on being put to the vote, the Council Tax Resolutions 2026/27 were carried.

RESOLVED that

- 1) **The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 23rd February 2026 be approved and all recommendations adopted.**
- 2) **The calculation for the council tax requirement for the council's own purposes for 2026/27 (excluding parish precepts) as £7,571,719.791.2.2.**
- 3) **The following amounts be calculated for the year 2026/27 in accordance with sections 31 to 36 of the Act:**
 - a) **£64,256,433.00 being the aggregate of the amounts which the council estimates for the items set out in section 31A(2) of the Act (taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils)(i.e., gross expenditure);**
 - b) **£56,618,713.21 being the aggregate of the amounts which the council estimates for the items set out in section 31A(3) of the Act. (i,e gross income);**
 - c) **£7,637,719.79 being the amount by which the aggregate of 1.2.2(a) above exceeds the aggregate of 1.2.2(b) above, calculated by the council, in accordance with section 31A(4) of the Act, as its**

council tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in section 31B of the Act);

- d) £288.43 being the amount at 1.2.2(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (1.1(a) above), calculated by the council, in accordance with section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year (including parish precepts);
- e) £66,000 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Feckenham Parish precept) referred to in section 34(1) of the Act;
- f) £285.94 being the amount at 1.2.2(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 1.2.2(e) above by Item T (1.1 (a) above), calculated by the council, in accordance with section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no parish precept relates;
- g) £459.26 being the amount given by adding to the amount at 1.2.2(f) the amount for the special item relating to the parish of Feckenham 1.2.2(e), divided by the amount in 1.1(b) above.
- h) The amounts shown below given by multiplying the amounts at 1.2.2(f) and 1.2.2(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band, divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwelling listed in band D, calculated in accordance with section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwelling listed in different valuation bands.

Valuation Band	Proportion of Band D	Feckenham Parish Council	Parish of Feckenham Total	All other Parts of the Council Area
A	6/9ths	115.55	306.18	190.63

B	7/9ths	134.80	357.20	222.40
C	8/9ths	154.06	408.23	254.17
D	1	173.32	459.26	285.94
E	11/9ths	211.84	561.32	349.48
F	13/9ths	250.35	663.37	413.02
G	15/9ths	288.87	765.44	476.57
H	18/9ths	346.64	918.52	571.88

- 3) It is to be noted that for the year 2026/27, Worcestershire County Council, Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia, and Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority have issued precepts to the council in accordance with section 40 of the Act for each category of dwelling in the council's area as indicated below:

	Valuation Bands							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Worcestershire County Council	1,173.87	1,369.51	1,565.16	1,760.80	2,152.09	2,543.38	2,934.67	3,521.60
Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia	204.33	238.39	272.44	306.50	374.61	442.72	510.83	613.00
Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority	71.48	83.39	95.31	107.22	131.05	154.87	178.70	214.44

- 4) Having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 1.2.2(h) and 1.2.3 above, that Redditch Borough Council in accordance with sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 hereby sets the amounts shown below as the amounts of council tax for 2026/27 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.

Valuation Band	Proportion of Band D	Parish of Feckenham Total	All Other Parts
A	6/9ths	1,755.86	1,640.31
B	7/9ths	2,048.49	1,913.69
C	8/9ths	2,341.14	2,187.08

D	1	2,633.78	2,460.46
E	11/9ths	3,219.07	3,007.23
F	13/9ths	3,804.34	3,553.99
G	15/9ths	4,389.64	4,100.77
H	18/9ths	5,267.56	4,920.92

- 5) **The Interim Director of Finance is authorised to make payments under section 90(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 from the collection fund by ten equal instalments between April 2026 to March 2027 as detailed below.**

	Precept (£)	Surplus/Deficit on Collection Fund (£)	Total to Pay (£)
Worcestershire County Council	46,626,160.00	(717,283.00)	45,908,877.00
Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia	8,116,150.65	(129,409.42)	7,986,741.23
Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority	2,839,196.32	(45,379.87)	2,793,816.45

- 6) **The Interim Director of Finance be authorised to make transfers under section 97 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 from the collection fund to the general fund the sum of £7,513,456.36 being the council's own demand on the collection fund (£7,571,719.79) and parish precepts (£66,000) and the distribution of the surplus/deficit on the collection fund (-£124,263.43).**
- 7) **The Interim Director of Finance be authorised to make payments from the general fund to Feckenham Parish Council the sums listed above (£66,000) by two equal instalments on 1st April 2026 and 1st October 2027 in respect of the precept levied on the council.**
- 8) **The above resolutions to be signed by the Chief Executive for use in legal proceedings in the Magistrates' Court for the recovery of unpaid council taxes.**
- 9) **Notices of the making of the said council taxes signed by the Chief Executive are given by advertisement in the local press under section 38(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.**

**78. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT
2025-2026**

In the absence of both the Chair and Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillors Matthew Dormer and Craig Warhurst respectively, the Mayor advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report 2025/26 would be deferred for consideration at the following ordinary meeting of Council.

79. URGENT BUSINESS - RECORD OF DECISIONS

The Mayor advised that there had been one urgent decision taken since the previous meeting, on the subject of a contract for a new kitchen supplier, which had had to be arranged after the previous supplier went into administration.

80. URGENT BUSINESS - GENERAL (IF ANY)

There was no urgent business for consideration on this occasion.

The Meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and closed at 8.35 pm