

Redditch Borough Council Shareholders Committee Annual Report 2025 - 2026



Chair's Foreword

As Leader of Redditch Borough Council and Chair of the Rubicon Shareholders Committee I am pleased to be able to present this annual report.

Rubicon is a key asset for our Council, delivering many of our commitments to leisure and recreation in the Borough.

We have seen Rubicon grow and develop commercially, with increasing numbers of customers using these services.

The positive trajectory is testament to the commitment of the Rubicon Leisure Limited Board, supported by a wealth of professional staff and a host of dedicated volunteers as well as Council officers.

Moving closer to Local Government Reorganisation our intention is for Rubicon to continue as a highly effective organisation. Rubicon should be considered as an exemplar which will continue to deliver leisure services for many years to come.

The Shareholders Committee forms an essential layer of governance in the Rubicon model. Accountability and transparency are essential parts of our ethos, and we are proud of the robust oversight we have provided in terms of financial reports and the aspirational business plan for 2026/2027.

I would like to thank my colleagues who have served on the Committee this year alongside me: Councillors Ian Woodall, Juliet Barker Smith, Bill Hartnett and Jane Spilsbury.

I commend this Annual Report to Council.



Councillor Sharon Harvey
Chair, Shareholders Committee
Redditch Borough Council

Introduction

The annual report outlines the work undertaken by Redditch Borough Council's Shareholders Committee in the 2025 – 2026 municipal year. This is the second annual report to have been prepared on behalf of the Shareholders Committee, as this was a new requirement introduced at the Annual Council meeting in May 2024.

The Shareholders Committee is an integral part of the governance arrangements for the Council's company; Rubicon Leisure Limited, which was established in 2018. Rubicon Leisure Limited manages many of the Council's leisure and cultural assets on behalf of the authority, including the Abbey Stadium, the Arrow Valley Countryside Centre, Forge Mill Needle Museum and Pitcheroak Golf Course.

Currently, Rubicon Leisure Limited is the Council's only company. The role of the Shareholders Committee is distinct from the role of the Rubicon Board. The Rubicon Board, comprising Executive and Non-Executive Directors, is responsible for running the business and the proper delivery of services. There are officers at the Council responsible for managing the client side of the business, who monitor the service contract. The Shareholders Committee holds the Board to account and is responsible for a number of reserved matters, detailed in the articles of the company. A diagram relating to the governance structure for Rubicon Leisure Limited can be viewed at Appendix 1 to the report.

Matters reserved to the Shareholders Committee include:

- Approval of the company's annual Business Plan
- Approval of the appointment, remuneration and dismissal of the Managing Director of the company
- Approval of the appointment or dismissal of Directors on the Board
- Approval of above inflation pay increases and any other remuneration packages
- Approval of litigation defences or claims for the company
- Approval of the appointment of bankers and auditors for the company

The Shareholders Committee is a Sub-Committee of the Executive Committee. Any recommendations arising from meetings of the Shareholders Committee, that are not within the remit of the Committee to determine or do not relate to reserved matters, should be presented for the consideration of the Executive Committee.

Whilst a lot of the reports that are considered at meetings of this Committee contain exempt information, relating to the financial and business affairs of the company, the content of this report is public.

Membership

The Members of the Shareholders Committee are all Members of the Executive Committee. In 2025/26, the membership of the Committee was as follows:



**Councillor Sharon
Harvey (Chair)**



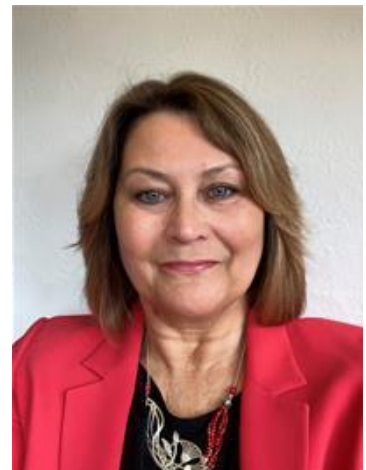
**Councillor Ian Woodall
(Vice-Chair)**



**Councillor
Juliet Barker
Smith**



**Councillor Bill
Hartnett**



**Councillor
Jane Spilsbury**

Members of the Committee

As the Shareholders Committee is a Sub-Committee of the Executive Committee, all Members of the Committee must also be members of the Executive. The Executive Committee determined nominations to the Shareholders Committee at a meeting of the Executive Committee held in June 2025.

Whilst only Executive Committee members can be appointed to a sub-committee of the Executive, it has been recognised that the work of the Shareholders Committee will be of interest to all Members. Consequently, group leaders are invited to attend meetings of the Shareholders Committee to participate in the debate, although any group leader who is not also a member of the Shareholders Committee cannot take part in the vote. In addition, all Redditch Borough Councillors are entitled to attend meetings of the Committee to observe the proceedings, although they can only contribute to the debate at the discretion of the Chair.

Meetings of the Committee in 2025/26

Meetings of the Shareholders Committee were scheduled to take place in August, December, February and April. The February meeting was postponed, following consultation with the Chair, and was rescheduled to take place in March 2026.

At every meeting of the Committee, there were a number of standard items of business that were considered by Members. This included:

- Quarterly Performance Monitoring Reports, which detailed the performance of Rubicon Leisure Limited during the previous quarter of the Financial Year. These performance reports highlighted Performance in relation to the range of services and activities provided by Rubicon Leisure Limited across the different leisure venues. Members welcomed positive feedback on improving performance, including in respect of increasing numbers of customers using services managed by the company.
- Quarterly Budget Monitoring Reports, which provided updates to Members on the financial performance of the company, including of specific venues managed by the company. These reports also highlighted any budget pressures as they emerged. The Committee welcomed the positive trajectory of the financial performance of the company compared to previous years.



Figure 1: Forge Mill Needle Museum, 1940s Day (May 2025) – The Violettes

- Updates on Council support to Rubicon Leisure Limited were provided for Members' consideration at every meeting of the Committee. As Rubicon Leisure Limited is a Council company, the authority continues to provide some support services to Rubicon Leisure Limited through Service Level Agreements (SLAs). The Council is also a source of finance, including capital finance, to the company to enable it to grow and expand its offering and information relating to this support was highlighted for the Committee's consideration.

The Committee was particularly pleased to learn about progress during the year at a number of venues managed by Rubicon Leisure Limited, although the Committee was proud of and grateful for the hard work of staff and volunteers at all of these venues.

Forge Mill Needle Museum has held a number of exciting events during the year that were well attended and the Committee welcomed the growth in visitor numbers. The Committee recognised that the new food and beverage offer at the museum had also attracted new visitors and Members expressed hopes that this positive trajectory would continue in 2026/27.

The Boathouse at the Arrow Valley Countryside Centre was also welcomed by the Committee and Members felt that this had positively enhanced the experience of visitors to the Arrow Valley Country Park. Members also welcomed news that the Boathouse was shortlisted in the New Tourism Business of the Year Category in the Visit Worcestershire Awards 2025/26.

In addition, the Committee was pleased to note the positive contribution that venues and facilities provided by Rubicon Leisure Limited contributed to the health and wellbeing of residents living in the Borough. In particular, fitness and swimming opportunities at the Abbey Stadium were identified as making a positive contribution to the health and wellbeing of local residents.



Figure 2: The Boathouse, Arrow Valley Visitor Centre

In line with the reserved matters for the Committee, Members considered and approved the company's annual Business Plan in March 2026. This business plan details the targets and aspirations for the company in 2026/27.

An annual budget report, detailing the company's budgetary plans for 2026/27, was also considered and approved at the meeting of the Committee held in March 2026.

No recommendations were made by the Shareholders Committee to the Executive Committee in 2025/26.



Figure 3: Fitness equipment in use at the Abbey Stadium

Informal Meetings of the Shareholders Committee with Rubicon Board

In previous years, members of the Shareholders Committee have highlighted a desire to meet with members of the Rubicon Board. Whilst these meetings have no formal status and decisions could not be taken at these meetings, Members felt that they would be helpful in order to develop a better understanding of each other's roles, responsibilities and respective aspirations for Rubicon Leisure Limited.

In 2025/26, informal meetings were arranged which was welcomed by Members.

The Shareholders Committee would like to thank members of the Rubicon Board for taking the time to attend these informal meetings. It is hoped that these informal meetings will continue in future years.

Looking to the Future

The Shareholders Committee has received a lot of positive feedback regarding the performance and financial management of Rubicon Leisure Limited during the 2025/26 municipal year. However, the Committee recognises that it is important to continue to monitor the work of the company closely to ensure that best value is achieved in the deliver of leisure services within the Borough.

The last Annual Report from the Shareholders Committee was published at the start of the Local Government Reorganisation process and this has continued to progress in Worcestershire in 2025/26. There have been two submissions made to the Government in respect of Local Government Reorganisation. Whichever Unitary Authority model is introduced in Worcestershire, Rubicon Leisure Limited will not be the only Council company in the county to be impacted by these changes. Consideration will need to be given to the governance structure(s) for local authority companies that will be implemented as part of the move to Unitary Authority status.



Figure 4: Sounds in the Grounds, Arrow Valley Visitor Centre, August 2025.

Conclusion

This is the second annual report from the Shareholders Committee, which has been produced during a year in which considerable changes have been made to the governance structure and operating arrangements for the Committee.

Members have welcomed positive updates on the performance of the services delivered by the company. The Committee is keen for this positive trajectory to continue, to the benefit of local residents who use the leisure and cultural services provided by Rubicon Leisure Limited.

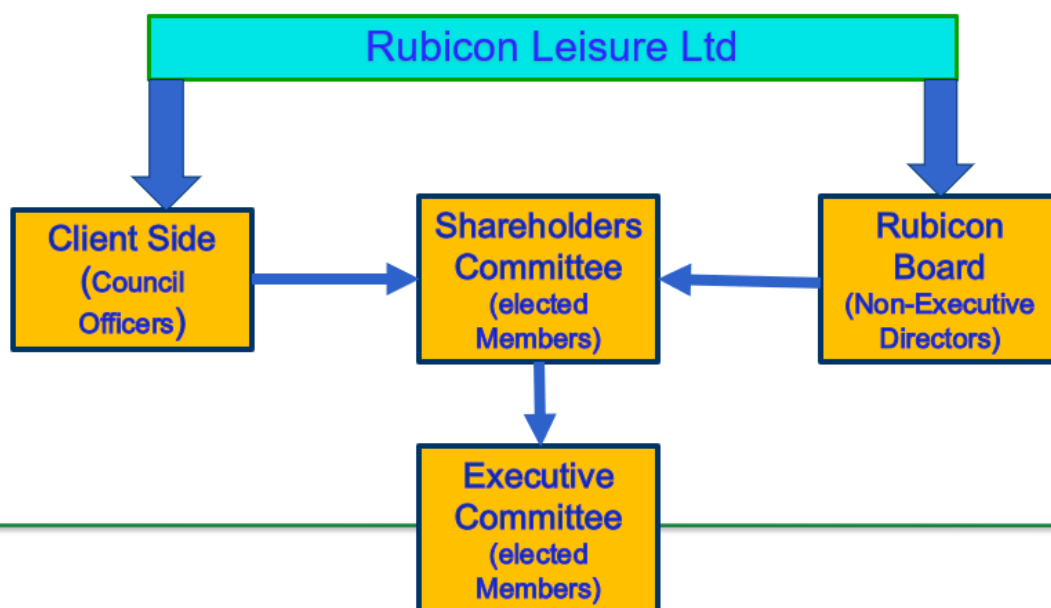
However, there are challenges on the horizon and the Committee will need to remain mindful of these and to maintain vigilance in reviewing the work of the company to ensure that services continue to best meet the needs of customers.



Figure 5: The Redditch Pantomime, Aladdin, at the Palace Theatre, 2025/26.

Appendix 1 – Governance Structure

Rubicon Leisure Limited: governance structure



Appendix 2 – Expressions of Gratitude

The Shareholders Committee would like to thank all the members of the Rubicon Board for attending informal meetings with Committee members during the year.

The Shareholders Committee would also like to thank the following people who have either attended meetings or provided support in alternative ways to the Committee during the year:

- Ruth Bamford, Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services
- Sarah Casserley, Head of Marketing and Events, Rubicon Leisure Limited
- Ben Clawson-Chan, Managing Director, Rubicon Leisure Limited
- Debra Goodall, Assistant Director of Finance and Customer Services
- Julie Lorraine, Interim Director of Finance

The Committee would like to thank all the staff and volunteers who work for Rubicon Leisure Limited and recognises the importance of their hard work to the ongoing provision of services by the company that meet the needs of local communities.

All images in this report have been provided courtesy of Rubicon Leisure Limited. The Shareholders Committee would like to thank the company for providing these images for inclusion in the report.