Redditch Borough Council
Working together for our communities

Council

Monday, 29th June, 2026

MINUTES

Present:

Councillors Susan Eacock, James Aston, Joe Baker, Juliet Barker Smith, Roger Bennett, Brandon Clayton, Matthew Dormer, James Fardoe, Simon Farmer, Andrew Fry, Bill Hartnett, Sharon Harvey, Joanna Kane, Wanda King, Nicola Lloyd, Gemma Monaco, Ashley Monk, Nic Pioli, Rita Rogers, Gary Slim, Jen Snape, Jane Spilsbury, Monica Stringfellow, Craig Warhurst and Ian Woodall

Officers:

Ruth Bamford, Melissa Bassett, Neil Batt, Claire Felton, John Leach and James Walton

Democratic Services Officers:

Jess Bayley-Hill

Also present:

Mr T. Burton Fletcher and Mr J. Freemantle

15. WELCOME

The Mayor welcomed all those present to the meeting.

The Mayor reported that, prior to the meeting, an updated version of the Amended Empty Homes Strategy had been submitted. In order to allow Members sufficient time to review the revised document, it was agreed that consideration of the item would be deferred to the next meeting of the Council, scheduled for 21st September 2026.

16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors William Boyd and David Meredith.

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

18. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous Council meeting held on 26th May 2026 were submitted for Members' consideration.

During consideration of the minutes, the following amendments were requested in respect of the previous Mayor's Opening Remarks –

- The reference to 'welcoming visitors from Gruchet-Le-Valasse' be amended to 'visiting Gruchet-Le-Valasse'.
- The reference to 'hosting representatives from the Kerala community" be amended to "attending events hosted by the Kerala community'.

RESOLVED that

subject to the amendments as detailed in the preamble above, the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 26th May 2026 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Mayor.

19. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following announcements were made at the meeting.

a) The Mayor's Announcements

On behalf of the Council, the Mayor welcomed Councillor Bill Hartnett back to the Chamber following a period of absence.

The Mayor reported that she had undertaken a number of civic and charitable engagements during the previous month, accompanied by her Consort, County Councillor Nick Price. These had included meetings with local charities, attendance at Royal British Legion events to commemorate the eighty-second anniversary of D-Day, and the unveiling of a commemorative plaque as part of the Royal Enfield one-hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary celebrations on 24th June 2026.

In particular, the Mayor highlighted her attendance at the Royal British Legion 'Raising the Flag' event, where she was pleased to support the provision of a new standard and badges for youth cadets through Worcestershire County Council divisional funding.

The Mayor concluded by advising Members that she looked forward to continuing her support for local charities and to hosting a Mayoral Charity Auction in July 2026 in aid of her chosen charities.

b) The Leader's Announcements

The Leader informed Members that he had attended a meeting of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Board, during which he had met with the Mayor of the West Midlands, Richard Parker. Following receipt of correspondence from Mr Parker, the Leader had extended an invitation for him to visit Redditch to discuss opportunities for support and investment in the Borough and was awaiting a response.

The Leader also reported that he had met with the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and hoped to provide a further update to Members in the coming weeks. He advised that the PCC had agreed to assist in increasing parking enforcement capacity within the Borough.

c) The Chief Executive's Announcements

The Chief Executive provided an update on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Members were advised that contact had been received from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) during the previous week confirming that the Government remained committed to the LGR programme.

The Chief Executive further reported that an announcement was expected before the Parliamentary summer recess began on 16th July 2026. Members were assured that any updates received would be shared with them promptly.

20. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE (PROCEDURE RULE 9)

The following Question on Notice was submitted by a member of the public, Mr T. Burton Fletcher, in advance of the meeting for the consideration of the Mayor:

"As an openly gay father, a parent of a child of mixed heritage, and a Director of Redditch Pride CIC, I am deeply concerned by historic social media posts attributed to the Mayor that have been widely criticised as offensive towards Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer plus (LGBTQ+) people and people from ethnic minority backgrounds. These posts have received significant public attention and have caused concern among many residents.

Given the Mayor’s responsibility to represent all residents of Redditch regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity, what steps has the Mayor taken to rebuild trust with those communities, and why should residents who feel targeted or excluded by these views have confidence in her ability to represent them impartially?”

In responding to the question, the Mayor acknowledged that concerns had been raised regarding a number of her historic social media posts and apologised for any offence or upset caused. The Mayor explained that the posts had been made several years prior to her entering public office, during a period of undertaking grassroots community work and personal difficulty, and she accepted that greater care should have been taken in the choice of language used.

The Mayor advised that holding public office had provided an opportunity for reflection and learning, particularly regarding the impact of words on others. She reaffirmed her commitment to representing all sections of the community with respect and dignity, regardless of faith, background or sexuality, and apologised if the posts had conveyed a different impression.

In concluding her response, the Mayor stated that she remained committed to engaging with individuals and communities who wished to discuss the matter and to continuing to serve all residents of the Borough.

In a supplementary statement, Mr Burton Fletcher welcomed the Mayor’s apology and extended an invitation for her to attend a community event on 4th July 2026 focusing on the history of LGBTQ+ people. He expressed the hope that the Mayor would attend this and similar events as an opportunity to engage with and learn from communities affected by the historic social media posts.

The following Question on Notice was submitted by Councillor Monica Stringfellow in advance of the meeting for the consideration of the Leader of the Council:

“Will the Leader join me in condemning the racist, homophobic, divisive remarks made by The Mayor and what steps will you take to reassure our diverse community that these comments do not reflect the values of our town?”

In response, the Leader stated that he unequivocally condemned racism, antisemitism, homophobia and discrimination in all its forms, noting that such behaviour had no place in society, local communities or public life. He reaffirmed the Council’s commitment to serving all residents fairly and equally and advised that this principle would continue to guide the administration. The Leader further emphasised the importance of bringing communities together, treating all people with dignity and respect, and ensuring that residents could access Council services without fear of prejudice or discrimination. He also stated that equality was a principle that all Members should uphold.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Stringfellow asked how the Council intended to audit its civic policies to protect communities and staff and to ensure that local government remained a safe and welcoming environment.

The Leader advised that a written response would be provided to Councillor Stringfellow.

The final Question on Notice was submitted by Mr J. Freemantle for the consideration of the Leader of the Council:

“Following the recent controversy surrounding the Mayor and allegations of homophobic comments and conduct, many members of the LGBTQ+ community in Redditch are deeply concerned about whether they can have confidence in the Council's commitment to equality, inclusion and support for LGBTQ+ residents.

As Leader of the Council, can you please answer the following:

Does Redditch Borough Council support Redditch PRIDE CIC and the work it does to promote inclusion, visibility and community cohesion across the borough?”

In responding to the question, the Leader confirmed that Redditch Borough Council supported organisations that made a positive contribution to the community, promoted inclusion and brought people together, including Redditch PRIDE CIC. He reiterated the Council’s commitment to treating all residents with dignity, fairness and respect and advised that this commitment was reflected in the Council’s policies, services and conduct as a public authority.

The Leader further stated that all residents should feel valued and respected and assured those present that the Council would continue to serve all members of the community equally, regardless of their background or personal characteristics. He added that the Council remained focused on delivering high-quality services, strengthening communities and ensuring that Redditch remained a welcoming place for everyone.

In a supplementary question, Mr Freemantle extended an invitation to the Leader to attend an event at Redditch Library on 4th July 2026 and advised that further details would be provided by email.

21. MOTIONS ON NOTICE (PROCEDURE RULE 11)

The following Motion on Notice was presented by Councillor Jane Spilsbury at the meeting:

“This Council notes:

- The murder of Jo Cox MP on 16 June 2016 and the 10th anniversary of her death in 2026.
- The murder of Sir David Amess MP on 15 October 2021 whilst carrying out a constituency surgery on behalf of his constituents.
- The continuing abuse, intimidation and threats directed towards elected representatives at all levels of government.
- Research showing that a significant number of councillors have experienced abuse, intimidation or harassment whilst carrying out their public duties.

This Council further notes:

- That democracy is strengthened when people with differing political views can engage in robust but respectful debate.
- That, as Jo Cox said in her maiden speech, "we have far more in common than that which divides us."
- That public service should never place an individual at risk of abuse, intimidation or violence.

- That elected representatives from all political parties, and those with no political affiliation, deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.
- That abuse, intimidation and threats have no place in local government, national politics or wider public life.

This Council resolves:

- To mark the lives and public service of Jo Cox MP and Sir David Amess MP through a minute's silence and reflection at this meeting.
- To reaffirm its commitment to respectful political discourse and democratic engagement.
- To stand united against abuse, intimidation and violence directed towards all elected representatives, regardless of political party or personal beliefs.
- To encourage all those involved in public debate, both online and offline, to engage respectfully and constructively with those holding different views."

The Motion was proposed by Councillor Spilsbury and seconded by Councillor Sharon Harvey.

In proposing the Motion, Councillor Spilsbury reflected on the tenth anniversary of the murder of Jo Cox MP on 16th June 2016 and the impact her death had on her family, friends, colleagues and the wider public. Reference was also made to the violent murder of Sir David Amess MP whilst undertaking similar constituency duties.

Members were reminded of the increasing levels of abuse, intimidation and harassment experienced by elected representatives at all levels of government. It was noted that public servants should be held accountable for their actions, but that threats, harassment and intimidation were unacceptable and risked creating further division within communities. Councillor Spilsbury encouraged all Members to join in condemning such behaviour and to support efforts to promote respectful democratic engagement.

Following the presentation of the Motion, Members discussed a number of points relating to the subject in detail:

- Members discussed their own personal experiences with online abuse, harassment and intimidation and highlighted the significant increase in such behaviour directed at elected representatives in recent years, particularly through social media.

- Noted that all elected representatives should be able to undertake their public duties without fear or intimidation.
- Incidents of other politically and ideologically motivated violence, such as the murder of Lee Rigby and the Sousse attacks in 2015 in Tunisia, were discussed with Members stressing that such acts transcended party politics and should be universally condemned.
- Members spoke of the emotional impact that sustained abuse could have on individuals, including its effects on wellbeing and mental health.
- That criticism should focus on policies and decisions rather than personal attacks on individuals.
- Concerns were raised regarding the growing division within society and the role that social media had played in widening those divisions.
- The importance of treating one another with dignity, courtesy and respect, both within the Chamber and in wider public discourse.
- Residents and community leaders were encouraged to challenge abusive behaviour and discrimination whenever it was encountered and that Councillors should set a positive example for the community through their conduct and interactions with others.
- Noted that elected representatives must remain accountable for their actions and views, while ensuring that political debate could continue in a respectful and constructive manner.

In closing the debate, Councillor Spilsbury thanked Members for their contributions.

On being put to the vote the Motion was carried.

Following the vote on the Motion, Members observed a one-minute silence in memory of Jo Cox MP and Sir David Amess MP, recognising their public service and dedication to their constituents.

A second Motion on Notice was presented by Councillor Matthew Dormer at the meeting:

"Members will be aware of the extraordinary achievements of Redditch residents Jordan Adams and Cian Adams in undertaking and completing a series of endurance challenges to raise awareness of frontotemporal dementia (FTD).

Their efforts have attracted local, regional and national attention, bringing significant recognition to the Borough of Redditch whilst raising awareness of a devastating condition that has affected their own family and many others.

Jordan and Cian have through their efforts made an extraordinary contribution in terms of charitable fund raising. In addition, their campaign has raised awareness and had a positive impact in supporting individuals and families affected by dementia.

Jordan and Cian have provided inspiration to residents through their determination, resilience, selflessness and commitment to helping others. The recent homecoming celebrations and widespread community support demonstrated the pride and affection with which they have been received by the people of Redditch.

In light of the achievements set out above, Members are asked to RESOLVE as follows:

1. That the service given by Cian and Jordan to the Borough is formally recognised and placed on record.
2. That the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer take the necessary steps to bring forward the required report and arrangements for a Special Meeting of the Council to be held in August 2026 to consider the formal conferment of the title of Honorary Freemen of the Borough on Jordan Adams and Cian Adams in accordance with the relevant statutory provisions"

The Motion was proposed by Councillor Dormer and seconded by Councillor Nic Pioli.

The exceptional efforts of Jordan and Cian Adams in raising awareness of frontotemporal dementia (FTD) and funds for charity following their family's experience of the condition were highlighted. It was noted that their achievements had inspired people locally and nationally, brought positive recognition to Redditch and demonstrated courage, determination and community spirit.

Members were advised that the Motion did not seek to confirm the title of Honorary Freeman at the meeting, as this required a separate statutory process and special meeting of the Council. Instead, the Motion sought formal recognition of their outstanding service and requested that officers prepare the necessary report to enable the Council to consider their admission as Honorary Freemen of the Borough at a future meeting.

In considering the Motion, Members had detailed discussion and commented on the following points:

- Praise was expressed to Jordan and Cian, and their support team, for their exceptional physical achievements and fundraising efforts in support of FTD.
- Members shared their own experiences with witnessing the impact of dementia.
- Members highlighted the importance of raising awareness and understanding of FTD, a condition that had previously received limited public attention.
- Noted the courage shown by Jordan and Cian in undertaking fund raising challenges despite having first-hand knowledge of the disease's potential impact on their future lives.
- Emphasised the need for continued funding, research and support services for those living with FTD, and other types of dementia, and their families.
- Members acknowledged the pride and positive recognition the brothers had brought to Redditch.
- The significance of the award was emphasised as well as the brothers' outstanding contribution to the community.
- It was noted that the local Member of Parliament, Chris Bloore, was also working to highlight the brothers' work in Parliament.
- Members hoped that funds raised would contribute towards research into treatments and a potential cure for FTD.

In closing the debate, Councillor Dormer thanked Members for their support.

The Motion was <u>carried</u>.

[Following the vote on this Motion, the meeting was adjourned from 8:35pm until 8:43pm]

22. REQUEST FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF CHARTER TRUSTEES IN THE STRUCTURAL ORDER FOR THE NEW UNITARY AUTHORITY

Council considered a report on proposals for the appointment of Charter Trustees for Redditch as part of the Structural Change Orders (SCO) associated with Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

Members were advised that, whilst the final decision from Government regarding LGR was still awaited on the date of the meeting, there was the opportunity to take steps to protect Redditch's civic identity and ceremonial traditions as part of the transition process. Members were reminded that Redditch had been granted Borough status in 1980, enabling the appointment of a Mayor and the establishment of civic traditions which had continued since that time.

It was noted that, once the Borough Council ceased to exist, these arrangements would not automatically continue unless specific provision was made within the SCO. Members were advised that the report sought Council's support for a request to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for the establishment of Charter Trustees for the unparished areas of Redditch. It was explained that Charter Trustees were a recognised mechanism used to preserve civic and ceremonial functions following LGR and would be responsible for matters such as the Borough Charter, civic regalia and ceremonial property.

Members were further advised that additional work would be required during the transition period to identify relevant civic and ceremonial assets and to consider the associated governance, financial and administrative arrangements.

Following presentation of the report, Members discussed the item in detail and commented on the following points:

- Members highlighted the importance of preserving the role of Mayor as a non-political civic representative for the Borough and maintaining Redditch's civic identity and traditions.
- The contribution made by successive Mayors in supporting local charities, community organisations and civic events, both during and after their term of office was recognised.

- The value of the Mayor in promoting civic pride, raising the profile of Redditch and acting as an ambassador for the Borough and the King's representative.
- Members expressed concern that LGR could result in smaller towns losing their identity and visibility within a larger authority area.
- It was suggested that retaining a civic head would help provide representation, influence and advocacy for Redditch within future local government structures.
- Questions were raised regarding the future ownership and management of civic and ceremonial assets, including regalia, gifts and other items associated with the office of Mayor. Officers confirmed that an inventory would need to be made.
- Members requested further information regarding the likely costs of establishing Charter Trustees and the level of any future precept. Officers advised that the estimated precept was expected to be low and that further details would be established as part of the transition process. It was noted that the unitary authority would provide financial support in the first year while expenses were being established and that the additional precept would be implemented in the following year.
- Concern was expressed about the impact of any additional precept on residents, particularly those experiencing financial hardship.
- It was questioned whether a ceremonial mayoral function remained necessary with a suggestion being made that civic responsibilities could potentially be undertaken through alternative arrangements.
- Some Members expressed the view that the role represented an unnecessary expense and that residents should be consulted on whether such arrangements should continue.

The resolutions were proposed by Councillor Craig Warhurst and seconded by Councillor Matthew Dormer.

RESOLVED that

1) **A request be submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for provision to be included in the relevant Structural Changes Order for the establishment of Charter Trustees for the unparished areas of the current Borough of Redditch from the re-organisation date; and**

2) **Authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader of the Council**

and the Monitoring Officer, to agree the wording of the request and to take any necessary steps to progress the proposal through the Local Government Reorganisation process.

23. REDDITCH BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN - NOTICE OF INTENTION TO COMMENCE LOCAL PLAN PREPARATION, LOCAL PLAN TIMETABLE AND SCOPING CONSULTATION

Council considered a report regarding the commencement of the new Local Plan process.

The Leader explained to Members that the Council had begun work on a Local Plan previously. However, changes to the national planning system and the introduction of a new plan-making framework required a new plan to be prepared.

Following presentation of the item, Members had detailed discussions about the content of the report and commented on the following points:

- That the Council needed to adhere to the prescribed timetable, with important decisions scheduled throughout the plan-making process.
- Members noted that the Local Plan preparation period had been reduced to thirty months and that there was an opportunity for the Council to progress early and secure Government funding to help offset costs.
- The process remained at an early stage and that no decisions had been made regarding the locations of future development.
- The role of the Planning Advisory Panel (PAP) was highlighted as an important forum for discussion and engagement throughout the preparation of the plan. It was also noted that the Local Plan would help shape the future of the Borough and that housing targets would be set by Government.
- Members emphasised the Council's legal responsibility to produce a Local Plan and highlighted the importance of public consultation. It was noted that there would be several opportunities for residents to contribute to the process and that Members should encourage participation within their wards, as the plan would affect all communities across the Borough.
- It was queried whether the Council was in a position to publish a Notice of Intention the following day in order to secure £108,000 of funding from MHCLG. It was confirmed that the Council was ready to proceed.

The resolutions were proposed by Councillor Matthew Dormer and seconded by Councillor Craig Warhurst.

RESOLVED that

1) **The Notice of Intention to Commence Local Plan Preparation be approved; and**
2) **The Local Plan timetable be approved; and**
3) **The Local Plan Scoping Report be approved.**

24. CHANGE TO OUTSIDE BODY APPOINTMENT

Members were asked to note that following the Annual Council meeting on 26th May 2026, the Council was advised that the authority's representative on the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel needed to be a Labour Group member, in accordance with the political balance for the panel.

RESOLVED that

1) **Councillor Jane Spilsbury be appointed as the Lead Member on the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel for the remainder of the 2026/27 municipal year; and**

2) **Councillor Andy Fry be appointed as the Substitute Member on the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel for the remainder of the 2026/27 municipal year.**

25. CHANGE TO COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT - PLANNING COMMITTEE

Council was asked to note a change to the Conservative Group's nomination to the Planning Committee for the 2026/27 municipal year.

Councillor Brandon Clayton was replacing Councillor Matthew Dormer on the Committee.

26. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26

The Mayor advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2025/26 had originally been scheduled to be considered at the Council meeting held on 2nd March 2026. However, consideration had been deferred due to the absence of the then Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee. It was noted that, following their subsequent election as Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, they were no longer able to participate in the scrutiny process. The Mayor therefore proposed that the report be noted.

On behalf of the Council, the Mayor thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and all Members who had served on the Committee during 2025/26 for their hard work and contribution throughout the municipal year.

Members highlighted the importance of effective scrutiny and governance in holding the administration to account and expressed their appreciation to the Chair, Vice-Chair and all Members who had served on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during 2025/26. Support was also expressed for the continuation of this work under the newly appointed Committee.

RESOLVED that

the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report for 2025-2026 be noted.

27. REGULATORY COMMITTEES

Council considered a recommendation from the Licensing Committee meeting held on 4th June 2026.

In considering the recommendation, Members noted that the Licensing Committee had taken account of representations received from taxi operators regarding proposed fee increases. It was recognised that taxi firms continued to face financial pressures, including increased fuel costs and the rising cost of living, and that freezing fees demonstrated acknowledgement of the challenging circumstances experienced by local operators. Members also highlighted the high standards required of licensed drivers and vehicles within the Borough and considered it appropriate to maintain the fee freeze at the present time.

Concerns were expressed regarding the impact of licensing arrangements in neighbouring authorities. It was suggested that the current funding model and fee structure should be reviewed in greater detail in future to ensure that licensing costs remained sustainable.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Nic Pioli and seconded by Councillor Matthew Dormer.

RESOLVED that

the licence fee in respect of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicle licences and operator licences for 2026/27 remain at the current fee level.

28. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Council considered recommendations that had been agreed at three separate meetings of the Executive Committee held on 17th March 2026, 21st April 2026 and 9th June 2026. Members were asked to note that the recommendations arising from the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 2nd March 2026 had already been considered at the Council meeting held later that same day and, therefore, were not included for consideration at this meeting.

Empty Homes Strategy

As previously detailed, this item had been postponed for consideration at the following meeting to allow Members time to review the updated version of the Empty Homes Strategy.

Climate Change Strategy 2026 to 2031

The Portfolio Holder for Climate and Biodiversity presented a report on the Climate Change Strategy 2026 to 2031. In opening the presentation, she thanked the previous Portfolio Holder for her work.

Members were advised that the Climate Change Strategy 2026 to 2031 represented an important step in the Council's response to the climate emergency declared in 2019 and would ensure that climate considerations were embedded within decision-making across the authority. The Strategy replaced the previous Carbon Reduction Action Plan and set out a clear and deliverable pathway to reduce emissions from the Council's own operations by fifty per cent by 2030 and achieve net zero by 2040. It was noted that the Strategy directly supported the Council's priority of creating a Green, Clean and Safe Borough and focused on delivering practical benefits for residents, the environment and the local economy.

During the debate on the report, Members thanked officers involved for their work in developing the Strategy and highlighted the importance of public engagement in delivering positive environmental outcomes. Reference was made to initiatives undertaken to increase public awareness and involvement in climate and biodiversity issues, including engagement events, woodland management communications and awareness campaigns. Members welcomed the progress that had been achieved to date and expressed support for continuing this work. The Strategy was described as a positive and ambitious document which would help the Council play its part in addressing climate change through clear commitments and actions.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Gemma Monaco and seconded by Councillor Matthew Dormer.

Renters' Rights Act 2025

Council considered a report on the Renters' Rights Act 2025, the purpose of which was to provide an overview of the Act and the changes that would be implemented over three phases, commencing in May 2026. In introducing the item, the Leader thanked officers for their work in preparing the report and described the legislation as a positive step forward.

During consideration of the report, Members discussed the following points:

- Members welcomed the additional protections introduced through the Act, noting that it would improve security for tenants by eliminating the risk of no-fault evictions and strengthening standards within the private rented sector.
- Support was expressed for the work undertaken by officers in preparing for the implementation of the legislation and responding to the additional responsibilities arising from it.
- It was noted that the Act would provide greater support for tenants through access to the Ombudsman and help hold landlords to higher standards.
- Concerns were raised that some landlords viewed the changes as increasing the financial and regulatory burden of renting properties, which could result in some landlords leaving the sector and potentially reducing the supply of private rental accommodation.
- It was acknowledged that some concerns among landlords stemmed from uncertainty about the detail of the legislation and that responsible landlords meeting their obligations should not be adversely affected. Members noted that the measures would help ensure that poor landlord practices were challenged and tenants were treated fairly.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Matthew Dormer and seconded by Councillor Craig Warhurst.

Introduction of Enforcement of littering from Vehicles

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Local Services presented the report and welcomed the introduction of enforcement measures for littering from vehicles.

Concern was expressed regarding the additional workload that the policy would place on Civil Enforcement Officers. It was noted that, although the report introduced new enforcement responsibilities, there was no corresponding increase in funding or resources to support this work. Members also commented that additional duties could not continue to be placed on a single officer without adequate support and the suggestion was made that the resourcing of the service would be reviewed as the policy was implemented.

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

- Members welcomed the policy as a sensible measure that would provide officers with an additional enforcement tool to tackle littering from vehicles and issue fines where appropriate.
- It was noted that the effectiveness of the policy would become clearer over time as enforcement activity commenced and the number of offences identified could be assessed.
- In response to a query, it was confirmed that the offence related specifically to littering from vehicles and that fines would be legally enforceable through the identification of vehicle registration numbers.
- Members acknowledged concerns regarding enforcement capacity and highlighted plans to invest in dedicated enforcement officers who would be able to issue notices using DVLA data, alongside undertaking parking enforcement duties.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Brandon Clayton and seconded by Councillor Matthew Dormer.

<u>Redditch Council Plan Update Report</u>

The Leader presented the report, which provided an update on delivery of the Redditch Council Plan and was structured around the Council's three priorities: Economy and Regeneration, Green, Clean and Safe, and Community and Housing.

In discussing the report, Members expressed satisfaction with the overall progress made against the Council Plan and welcomed the range of objectives that had been successfully delivered. Reference was made to the Red Amber Green (RAG) ratings contained within the report, with Members noting that only one objective, relating to food waste collections, had been assessed as red.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Matthew Dormer and seconded by Councillor Craig Warhurst.

Quarter 3 2025/26 Financial Monitoring Report

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance presented a report in respect of the Quarter 3 2025/26 Financial Monitoring position. In doing so, Members were advised that the Council's financial position remained stable at Quarter 3. It was noted that there were no issues arising from Treasury Management activity, that treasury performance remained within capital financing requirements, and that there had been no breaches of prudential indicators. Members were informed that the proposed adjustments reflected additional Government funding received through the Pride in Place programme. It was also noted that, in future, only key Treasury Management reports, including the strategy, mid-year and outturn reports, would be considered by Council, with quarterly monitoring reports being considered by the Executive Committee. Members further heard that the Council's budget would be increased to reflect the additional Pride in Place funding and that a review of balances and reserves was underway to ensure available funds were utilised appropriately and in a timely manner.

In considering the report, Members had detailed discussions and commented on the following matters:

- Members welcomed the report as evidence of the Council's robust and stable financial position, noting the positive budget forecasts for future years.
- Reference was made to the successful acquisition of external grant funding, including funding targeted at areas of deprivation and through the Pride in Place programme.
- Members acknowledged that wider economic and geopolitical pressures continued to present financial challenges, including ongoing inflationary pressures.
- It was noted that some capital projects had been reprofiled, including the Innovation Centre project, resulting in capital spending being delayed while proposals were redesigned.
- Members welcomed the award of Pride in Place funding and the potential benefits it would deliver for residents, particularly within Greenlands and Woodrow.
- Updates were provided regarding the recruitment of the Pride in Place Board Chair, with Members welcoming the quality of applicants and congratulating the successful candidate on their appointment.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Craig Warhurst and seconded by Councillor Matthew Dormer.

<u>HRA Business Plan Update to Enhance the Delivery of the Housing Improvement Plan</u>

A report on the subject of the HRA Business Plan Update was considered by Council, which sought approval to review and refresh the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan to ensure that it remained financially robust and able to support delivery of the Housing Improvement Plan. Members were advised that the existing plan had been approved in 2023 but that the operating environment had changed significantly since then, with increased regulatory requirements, building safety obligations, inflationary pressures and the Council's regulatory judgement placing additional demands on the HRA.

In considering the report, Members had detailed discussions and commented on the following points:

- Members welcomed the review of the HRA Business Plan and stressed the importance of maintaining a financially sustainable HRA to support existing housing stock and future investment.
- Concerns were raised regarding the future of the Council's housing stock in the context of Local Government Reorganisation, with Members emphasising the need to protect Council housing assets.
- Members highlighted the importance of maintaining high-quality, well-maintained and affordable housing, noting that all residents deserved access to decent housing.
- Support was expressed for annual reviews of the HRA Business Plan to ensure ongoing financial resilience and effective oversight by the Council.
- Members emphasised the importance of local accountability and ensuring that tenants continued to have a strong voice in decisions affecting housing services.
- A discussion took place regarding the impact of the Right to Buy scheme and historical restrictions on local authority housebuilding, with differing views expressed on the causes of declining Council housing numbers and the pace of new housing delivery.
- Members reiterated their commitment to protecting, maintaining and, where possible, increasing the Council's housing stock for the benefit of current and future tenants.
- A query was raised regarding the size of the Town Hall and its suitability for meetings. It was clarified that, once completed, it would have the largest civic suite facilities in Worcestershire.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Matthew Dormer and seconded by Councillor Craig Warhurst.

Shareholders Committee Annual Report 2025/26

The Shareholders Committee Annual Report 2025/26 was considered by Council. It was explained that the Shareholders Committee comprised five members of the Executive Committee and provided governance oversight of Rubicon Leisure Limited (RLL). Members were advised that the Committee monitored the company's business planning, performance and future direction to ensure that it not only met its obligations but also delivered services and outcomes that benefitted the residents of Redditch. It was reported that RLL was in a strong position, with improved profitability attributed to the work of staff and the leadership of the Managing Director. Members also noted strong performance in food and beverage income and welcomed the range of successful events delivered throughout the year. Thanks were expressed to the members of the Shareholders Committee, RLL staff and volunteers for their contributions.

Particular recognition was given to the management of Forge Mill Needle Museum, with Members noting growth in visitor activity, events and income generation in recent years.

Councillor Sharon Harvey proposed the recommendation and Councillor Jane Spilsbury seconded.

Shared Homelessness Strategy 2026 – 2031

The Council considered a report regarding the Shared Homelessness Strategy 2026-2031.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Matthew Dormer and seconded by Councillor Craig Warhurst.

Enforcement and Civil Penalties Notice Policy

A report regarding the Enforcement and Civil Penalties Notice Policy was presented for Members' consideration.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Matthew Dormer and seconded by Councillor Craig Warhurst.

Housing Tenant Engagement Policy

Council considered the report, which sought approval for the Housing Tenant Engagement Policy.

During consideration of the item, Members had detailed discussions and commented on the following matters:

- Members noted that tenant engagement had been identified as an area requiring improvement by the Regulator of Social Housing and expressed disappointment that the policy had taken approximately one year to be brought forward following the regulatory inspection.
- Questions were raised regarding the role of the proposed Tenant Engagement Officers and how these would differ from the responsibilities already undertaken by Neighbourhood and Tenancy Officers.
- Concerns were expressed regarding value for money and the potential for duplication of roles, with Members seeking clarification on whether additional staffing resources were required.
- Members requested further information regarding the financial model underpinning the policy, including the source of any additional funding and the impact on existing budgets.

In concluding discussion of the item, it was emphasised that the policy aimed to improve tenant engagement and ensure that a broader range of tenants were involved in shaping housing services. It was acknowledged that any additional expenditure would need to be carefully monitored to avoid unnecessary duplication and to ensure improved outcomes for tenants.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Matthew Dormer and seconded by Councillor Craig Warhurst.

Construction of Redditch Innovation Centre

The Leader presented a report on the construction of Redditch Innovation Centre. In doing so, he explained that design work for the Redditch Innovation Centre had been completed and that the costs associated with the construction phase were close to being agreed with the preferred design and build contractor. The purpose of the report was to seek approval for the total project cost and funding package. Members were advised that construction costs had increased significantly since the project was originally developed, with further increases arising from global economic conditions. Although sufficient funding was available to meet the initial contract sum, a further contingency allocation was required.

Members considered the report and commented on the following matters:

- Members welcomed the external funding secured for the project and acknowledged that significant work had been undertaken to redesign the scheme and improve its long-term viability.
- Thanks were expressed to the officers involved in the project.
- Members highlighted that the project was intended to support economic development through business incubation, innovation, skills development and job creation.
- Reference was made to the involvement and support of local businesses and training providers in developing the project.
- Concerns were expressed about rising project costs and Members questioned whether the funding could have been better directed towards investment in local communities and regeneration projects elsewhere in the Borough. Clarification was provided that the funding streams allocated to the Innovation Centre were subject to specific criteria and could not have been redirected to projects outside the designated area.
- Members noted that delays to the project and wider economic pressures had contributed significantly to increased costs.
- It was emphasised that the facility would provide opportunities for start-up businesses, advanced engineering and technology sectors, and local skills development, reducing the need for residents to travel elsewhere for higher-level training and education opportunities.
- It was further noted that no Council funding had been committed to the project, with funding having been secured from external sources including the Town Deal programme and other grant allocations.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Matthew Dormer and seconded by Councillor Craig Warhurst.

RESOLVED that

1) **the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 2nd March 2026 be approved; and**
2) **the minutes of the Executive Committee meetings held on 17th March 2026, 21st April 2026 and 9th June 2026 be approved and all recommendations adopted.**

29. URGENT BUSINESS - RECORD OF DECISIONS

The Mayor advised that no urgent decisions had been taken since the previous Council meeting.

30. 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 11.16 pm