

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 16th March, 2026

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor Matthew Dormer (Chair), Councillor Craig Warhurst (Vice-Chair) and Councillors William Boyd, Claire Davies, Andrew Fry, Rita Rogers and Paul Wren

Officers:

Judith Willis, Toni Ainscough, Matthew Bough, Mark Cox, Amanda Delahunty and Matthew Eccles

Democratic Services Officers:

M Sliwinski

82. APOLOGIES AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Fardoe.

83. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest nor of party whip.

84. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 17th February 2026 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

the minutes of the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17th February 2026 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

85. PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no public speakers registered to speak at this meeting.

Chair

86. CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2026 TO 2031 - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Climate Change Manager presented a report on the Climate Change Strategy 2026-2031 and in doing so recapped that the Council had declared a climate emergency in 2019 and had committed to place climate considerations at the centre of its decision-making.

The Strategy for 2026-2031 appended to this report updated and replaced the previous Carbon Reduction Action Plan and set out the pathway for the Council's own operations to achieve a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions of 50 per cent by 2030 and to achieve net zero by 2040. It was highlighted that current modelling suggested the Council was on course to achieve net zero by 2040.

The carbon emissions context was provided for Redditch. It was noted that the latest official data, for 2023, showed Redditch achieving emissions of 3.5 tCO₂e per capita, below both the regional and the national averages.

Information on the Council's initiatives for reducing greenhouse gas emissions had been provided. This included the £1.81 million invested by the Council in its social housing stock to provide energy efficiency upgrades alongside £260,000 for private home retrofits, expansion of electric vehicle (EV) charging across the Borough, and biodiversity improvements, for example through Council's mowing regimes and ways of treating weeds. It was highlighted that there was ongoing work to improve performance monitoring through the dashboard and expand reach of the Council's initiatives to the community and businesses.

Following the presentation of the report, a Member expressed disappointment that the report did not consider the environmental impact of the introduction of the Council's dedicated Pet Cremation Service at the Abbey Crematorium and, in particular, the proposed introduction of a capital budget of £50,000 to purchase a Pet Cremator Machine and ancillary plant equipment, as approved at the full Council meeting on 2nd March 2026.

The Member clarified that her concerns related to the Pet Cremator Machine being proposed for purchase would be fuelled by diesel. Although there were options to operate the proposed machine on natural gas or biofuel in the future, the Member highlighted that this was a missed opportunity for adoption of electric technology which would prevent emissions at source. The Member further stated that

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the Pet Cremation report suggested the potential switch to electric-powered cremators would not be considered by the Council until its next planned replacement window in approximately eight years. The Member commented that this contradicted the urgency for the Council to meet its net zero targets and improve local air quality.

Several other Members argued that the Pet Cremation Service would provide a good source of revenue for the Council and at the current state of technology, in industries such as cremation, electric machines were significantly less efficient than the fossil fuel powered counterparts. Some Members argued that consideration had to be given to emissions produced in the manufacturing of electric machines, such as from the production of batteries.

A Member questioned the lack of noticeable decline in tCO₂e following the declaration of the climate emergency by the Council in 2019, both in Redditch and across Worcestershire. The Climate Change Manager responded that there could be several reasons behind this including the initial focus of carbon reduction being on areas where emissions reductions could be easily achieved and subsequent difficulties in keeping the previous rates of decrease in emissions. Also highlighted was the difficulty for the Council in quantifying its scope 3 emissions, which were the indirect emissions created through Council's supplier operations and procurement decisions. It was noted that the Council would be undertaking a review and proportionate environmental impact assessments of key suppliers to identify scope 3 emissions hotspots. The Strategy aimed to provide a way to accelerate the rate of decline in Council's carbon (and other greenhouse gas) emissions over the next few years.

The lack of mention of the Council's relationship with key regional stakeholders in addressing environmental issues, such as North Worcestershire Water Management, was highlighted. It was clarified that although the Strategy did not directly reference some regional agencies, the Council would collaborate with these agencies when required. The Climate Change Manager explained that the Strategy focused not only on carbon emissions but also on the wider living environment and biodiversity. It was highlighted that when addressing these challenges, wider solutions would be explored, rather than simply technological solutions.

A further comment was made by a Member regarding the Worcestershire County Council's environmental campaigns such as 'Let's Waste Less Worcestershire'. It was asked whether local campaigns/initiatives organised or supported by the Borough

Council would be protected during the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). It was responded that the ambition was for the Climate Change Strategy and initiatives and plans detailed in this to be continuing through the LGR. However, it was highlighted that the Strategy was designed to be also adaptable to new local government arrangements that would be in place post-LGR.

The Vice-Chair stated that the Council needed monitoring of the monetary costs (or savings) of achieving the reductions in tCO₂e through the Climate Change Strategy. It was suggested that monitoring the Strategy should include a graph to monitor the Council's CO₂ emissions from its own operations against the cost/saving achieved. In response, the Officers explained that the Climate Change Strategy covered all Council departments and that the cost and environmental impact of each initiative, programme or procurement decision that the Council was proposing to undertake would be considered as part of every report that was considered by Members. The Committee was reassured that climate change implications had to be considered as part of a business case submitted by service areas/departments for every new proposal.

Before the Committee deliberated on the recommendations set out in the report, it was clarified that this Climate Change Strategy was due to be further considered by both the Executive Committee in March 2026 and by full Council in May 2026.

The Committee endorsed the recommendations as set out in the report.

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.**

87. SHARED HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2026-2031 - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Shared Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2031 report was presented for Members' consideration. It was explained that the Homelessness Act 2002 required all housing authorities to have a homelessness strategy in place based on a review of all forms of homelessness in their local authority area.

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It was noted that the Government published 'The National Plan to End Homelessness' in October 2025 which provided a vision that homelessness should be rare, brief and non-recurring and that people who become homeless should receive support quickly and effectively. Local authorities were expected to move from crisis to prevention. A key requirement of the Plan was for greater collaboration across government departments. There were 5 pillars to the Plan as stated in the report.

In developing the local Strategy, as submitted in the report, a comprehensive assessment was undertaken across the authorities in Worcestershire that would be sharing this Strategy. It was explained that this new Shared Homelessness Strategy had been developed by the five district authorities in Worcestershire: Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Wychavon, Wyre Forest, and Redditch. The sixth district authority in the county, Worcester City Council, would be developing its own strategy separately.

The Shared Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2031 set out how the Council would invest in early intervention and support systems to stop homelessness before it happens. The Strategy also covered how the authority would work to eliminate use of bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation beyond statutory short stays (above 6 weeks) and improve the quality of temporary accommodation (TA). Further strands to the Strategy included focus on eliminating negative impact of staying in TA on children and how the structural causes of homelessness would be tackled through building more affordable and social homes and through reform to the private rented sector.

It was stated that in terms of Government grant funding to local authorities, from April 2026 a Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) would replace the previous emergency welfare schemes including Household Support Fund (HSF) and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). The CRF allocation would be used to provide welfare support to those who had experienced short-term emergency problems, such as an income shock or unexpected bill. Local authorities were required to look at person's circumstances holistically when making decisions on allocating funding.

Furthermore, the Government funding streams had been amalgamated into a new Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant. It was explained that this consolidation of funding into a single grant over a three-year period (April 2026-March 2029) provided greater stability for local authority's partners to prioritise local needs. Officers noted that the grant award to the

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Council was circa £30,000 higher than anticipated. It was clarified that this consolidated grant would bring together the previous separate grants of: Prevention, Relief and Staffing element of the Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG), Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery Grant (RSPARG), Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP), and Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Grant.

In response to a question, it was clarified that the Council was required to adhere to statutory duties when an eligible homeless applicant presented to the Council. The Prevention Duty provided that when a person was eligible and at risk of homelessness the Council was required to provide advice and assistance to prevent such a person from becoming homeless within 56 days' period. The Relief Duty applied when a person was eligible and homeless in which case the Council was required to assist the person to take 'reasonable steps' to secure accommodation to end their homelessness. This could include assisting the person to find their own accommodation, or in some cases, the local authority providing the person with accommodation.

The Council had no statutory duty to provide support beyond the two 56-day periods above in line with the legislation. Officers would, however, continue working where necessary to assist in finding housing solutions for people beyond this statutory period, albeit there was no duty on the Council to do so.

There was a further question about supported housing and the use of Government grants to undertake retrofits in those properties. It was explained that the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 introduced a new statutory duty for local authorities to formulate and publish a Local Supported Housing Strategy. It was noted that for Redditch this would necessitate the Council undertaking a supported housing needs survey, with the Government providing funds to undertake this over 12 months. This was before this grant could be accessed. It was noted that Redditch Borough Council would be a licensing authority for supported housing purposes.

Clarification was sought about access to Council's homelessness support. It was clarified that only individuals with 'recourse to public funds' had access to homelessness support from local authorities. People who did not meet national immigration conditions had 'no recourse to public funds' and could not access homelessness support from local authorities other than general advice. It was noted that applicants for homeless support were required to have a

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local connection to Redditch in order to access the Council's help, although there would be circumstances where people from outside the area were also eligible.

A Member requested that paragraph 3.3.8 of the draft Shared Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy be corrected with regard to the number of days' notice to quit Home Office accommodation after asylum is granted. The Officers undertook to correct this within the final version of the Strategy to be submitted following the public consultation.

Members sought assurance that the 'duty to collaborate' for key public services, (planned for future legislation) would be followed through at the local level in Redditch. It was responded that this was recognised by all partners at the local level and efforts were being made to tackle the structural causes of collaboration issues. Officers commented that where the issues occurred was usually in relation to supply issues, such as accommodation. It was added that in Redditch the Council had been able to avoid supply issues through the use of its own temporary accommodation (TA) and through investing in the council housing stock.

It was commented that much of the funding for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy came from Government grants and it was questioned whether there was a possible risk of services and initiatives not being delivered if the grants became unavailable. Officers responded that a number of grants stated within the Strategy were recurring grants, however, the Council also needed to be creative in terms of how the homelessness and rough sleeping services operated in order to respond to any possible uncertainties in funding provision. It was further stated that the grants in place provided initiatives to strengthen the resilience and sustainability of these services.

It was clarified by Officers that only recommendation 1 of the report would be considered as part of this reporting (with the report being further submitted to Executive Committee only) and that another report would be produced following the period of public consultation on the Strategy.

The recommendation 1 as set out in the report was endorsed by the Committee.

RECOMMENDED 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.

88. REVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME ENFORCEMENT POLICY - PRE-SCRUTINY

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

The purpose of the report was to update 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 of the report, a Member commented that recent reporting suggested an increase in larger, organised fly tipping in the Borough. A question was asked about the agencies responsible for dealing with investigating the different types of fly tipping issues. Officers responded that enforcement against large, hazardous or industrial fly tipping on private land was primarily the responsibility of the Environment Agency (EA). WRS would primarily investigate and undertake enforcement work around fly tipping on public land and would do so in cooperation with other agencies as necessary.

Some Members expressed the view that insufficient officer resources were allocated to Redditch to provide effective enforcement of fly tipping and other environmental issues and this needed to be reviewed as a priority.

The recommendation as set out in the report was endorsed by the Committee.

RECOMMENDED that

the Redditch and Bromsgrove Enforcement Policy be adopted and replace the current Joint Environmental Enforcement Policy.

89. INTRODUCTION OF ENFORCEMENT OF LITTERING FROM VEHICLES - PRE-SCRUTINY

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. Delegation of authority was therefore sought to enable Civil Enforcement Team 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. This report specifically dealt with enabling Civil Enforcement Officers to issue notices for littering when they witnessed littering offences from vehicles being committed.

Members commented that whilst it was positive to provide officers with appropriate enforcement tools, concerns were expressed by Members around the effective ability to enforce this given the Civil Enforcement Officer staff level currently available to Redditch.

The recommendations set out in the report were endorsed by the Committee.

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.

90. STRATEGIC ENVIROCRIME UPDATE

The Principal Officer, Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS), introduced the Strategic Environmental Crime Update report. The report updated Members on fly tipping, littering, dog fouling and untidy land enforcement activity within the Borough.

It was noted that in Redditch the majority of fly tipping consisted of small amounts of domestic waste. Waste crime offences were often conducted inadvertently because of a lack of knowledge or understanding that leaving waste outside of a refuse bin is an offence. Recognising this, a significant focus of WRS activity in Redditch had been on informal warnings to provide education on appropriate behaviour. During 2025, 20 streets / local areas in Redditch were targeted by WRS through this activity.

It was noted that intelligence assessments were used to identify hot spot areas where informal warnings and letter drops had been unsuccessful so that those areas could be prioritised for enforcement action.

A summary table was provided in paragraph 3.8 of the report. This provided data for Redditch Borough covering the period 2023 to January 2026 on the number of fly tips, littering, dog fouling, and untidy land cases reported and investigated, and data for the number of enforcement actions being taken against the number of cases reported and investigated. The enforcement actions included letter drops, warning letters, and Fixed Penalty Notices issued. It was highlighted that WRS took over the responsibility for environmental enforcement in the Borough from June 2024. Therefore, only data from that point on reflected activity undertaken by WRS.

Following the presentation of the report, Members debated the report and provided comments. Members expressed concern about insufficient staffing levels to enable effective environmental enforcement, with 1.5 full time equivalent (FTE) posts for environmental crime enforcement across the Borough. Some

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Members suggested that the Council should investigate how to fund additional officer resources in this area with the aim of improving the enforcement rate.

The Vice-Chair commented that enforcement in Redditch had been a long-term issue with low levels of enforcement actions taken against the number of environmental offences that were being reported. It was highlighted that data in paragraph 3.8 of the report suggested that only a low proportion of fly tipping cases reported and investigated by WRS would lead to an enforcement outcome. Data for 2025 was quoted, for example for fly tipping cases in the Borough that were reported to WRS, less than 0.25 per cent resulted in Fixed Penalty Notices being issued. If reported cases that were investigated by WRS was considered, the proportion of cases that resulted in Fixed Penalty Notices was circa 1.7 per cent.

It was reiterated that WRS officers were aware of fly tipping hotspots within Redditch and that every fly tip identified was recorded. The main issue in respect of fly tipping remained the lack of subsequent evidence that could allow enforcement action to be taken on the reported/investigated cases, as most fly tips in Redditch consisted of single bulky items that were not easily traced back to source. It was also noted that fly tipping was an urban issue in Redditch, and this limited the scope for use of covert camera deployment in tackling fly tipping.

The Technical Services Manager, WRS, explained further that letter drops to provide informal warnings were conducted in conjunction with Council's tenancy officers. Through letter drops and warning letters, potential offenders were reminded that for council housing tenants, fly tipping offences might impact on social housing tenancy.

The role of education and attitude was discussed. Members commented that the majority of residents in Redditch took pride in their neighbourhoods and wanted to see actions taken to eliminate fly tipping. It was highlighted that further work was needed to increase sense of community cohesion in some areas of the Borough. Members considered it important that fly tipping cases that led to prosecution be publicised widely to provide a strong message to potential perpetrators of environmental crime.

A question was asked about activities that were done to provide fly tipping / littering education in schools in Redditch. WRS Officers responded that the WRS currently had an air quality officer who

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engaged with schools on that subject, but this approach could be widened in the future to include education on fly tipping and littering.

RESOLVED that

the update on Environmental Crime Enforcement be noted.

91. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME - SELECTING ITEMS FOR SCRUTINY

The Executive Committee Work Programme was submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

the Executive Committee's Work Programme be noted.

92. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme was submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that

the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be noted.

93. TASK GROUPS, SHORT SHARP REVIEWS AND WORKING GROUPS - UPDATE REPORTS

Updates on the meetings of Task Groups and Working Groups were provided as follows:

- a) Budget Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Warhurst

Councillor Warhurst reported that the last meeting due to take place on 12th March 2026 had to be cancelled as the meeting was not quorate. Councillor Warhurst noted that the political Group Leaders would be contacted to ensure attendance issues were followed up and resolved.

- b) Performance Scrutiny Working Group – Chair, Councillor Warhurst

There was no further meeting of this group since December 2025.

- c) Post-16 Education Task Group – Chair, Councillor Warhurst

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Councillor Warhurst reported that a rescheduled date for the meeting of 18th February 2026 that had to be postponed had not yet been arranged.

RESOLVED that

the Task Groups and Working Groups Update Reports be noted.

94. EXTERNAL SCRUTINY BODIES - UPDATE REPORTS

Updates on the meetings of External Scrutiny Bodies were provided as follows:

- a) West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Council Representative, Councillor Boyd

Councillor Boyd reported that he had no update to provide at this meeting.

- b) West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Transport Delivery Overview and Scrutiny – Council Representative, Councillor Fardoe

As Councillor Fardoe had submitted his apology, there was no update provided at this meeting

- c) Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) – Council Representative, Councillor Fry

Councillor Fry reported that the last meeting of HOSC took place on 4th March and that an update with details would be provided to the next meeting of Overview and Scrutiny.

RESOLVED that

the External Scrutiny Bodies updates be noted.

The Meeting commenced at 6.30 pm
and closed at 8.08 pm