

Minutes of the Meeting of **FULL COUNCIL** held at Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth on **Tuesday 13 December 2022** from 7.30pm to 10.00pm.

Present: Councillors Debbie Morris (Chair), Raj Khiroya (Vice Chair for the meeting), Matthew Bedford, Sara Bedford, Stephen Cox, Steve Drury, Andrea Fraser, Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Phillip Hearn, Tony Humphreys, Khalid Hussain, Joan King, Stephen King, Chris Lloyd, David Major, Keith Martin, Shanti Maru, Abbas Merali, Chris Mitchell, Sarah Nelmes, Kevin Raeburn, Paul Rainbow, Reena Ranger OBE, David Raw, Ciaran Reed, Andrew Scarth, Roger Seabourne, Dominic Sokalski, Jon Tankard, Alison Wall, Phil Williams and Anne Winter.

COUNCILLOR DEBBIE MORRIS IN THE CHAIR

CL63/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ruth Clark, David Coltman, Rue Grewal, Lisa Hudson, Stephanie Singer, Martin Trevett and Kate Turner

CL64/22 The Chair announced that under Rule 6(2) they had agreed to consider the Part II confidential item 1 – Recommendations on the Local Plan from the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 5 December 2022 - after item 10. As the Chair they had the authority to do this.

CL65/22 APPOINTMENT OF A VICE CHAIR FOR THE MEETING

Councillor Sarah Nelmes moved, seconded by Councillor Keith Martin, that Councillor Raj Khiroya be appointed Vice Chair for the meeting due to the absence of the Vice Chair, Councillor Kate Turner.

On being put to Council the motion was declared **CARRIED** by the Chair the voting being by general assent.

RESOLVED:

Councillor Raj Khiroya appointed Vice Chair for the meeting.

CL66/22 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Council meeting held on 18 October 2022 were agreed by general and were signed by the Chair.

CL67/22 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Highlighted some events attended in the last few weeks including the South Oxhey autumn fair showcasing local organisations who provide community support with over 200 people attending with free lunches on offer and children's activities. It was a tremendous event.

The Volunteer fair in Rickmansworth showcased fantastic charities who need help from various people with all different skills. If you would like to know more contact myself or Freddy Chester who organised the event.

Would be visiting the Compassionate café in Croxley Green next month.

Attended a senior citizens tea party in Clitheroe House in South Oxhey supported by the Watford Rotary Club and attended by the local MP and Luther Blissett OBE.

I opened the Mitzvah Day at the Northwood United Synagogue.

The Winter fairs in Rickmansworth and Moor Park and Eastbury were great along with the winter weather.

There was a great production of the Calendar Girls by the Rickmansworth Players at Watersmeet

Along with the Leader and numerous staff I showed support for the Day of Action to eliminate Violence Against Women by wearing orange.

Looking ahead there is Holocaust Memorial Day on Friday 27 January 2023 in this Chamber and would really like you all to try and come along. The other event I am organising is the Big Quiz Night at Watersmeet on Saturday 4 March 2023 in aid of my charity "Pets in Therapy" with booking details released next month.

For those unable to be here today due to ill health and on behalf of the Council I wish you well, to Cllr Philip Hearn and Zainab congratulations on the birth of your son Daniel.

CL68/22 RECEIVE ANY PETITIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 18

None received.

CL69/22 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 15

The Chair took both the written public questions as read and advised they would use their discretion to take any supplementary questions provided by either organisation, the Chorleywood Residents Association or Chorleywood Parish Council who had submitted the original questions.

Only the Chorleywood Residents Association had a supplementary question which was as provided below:

We have highlighted our concerns over the proposals with the example of making Shepherds Lane a cycle route linking Mill End to Chorleywood. We believe this idea is manifestly impractical given the hills that surround Chorleywood, as opposed to looking at a flat map. It will lead to lower use of William Penn as our local fitness centre and increase traffic on Berry Lane and Long Lane, two even narrower lanes which already regularly gridlock with traffic. This is the very antithesis of TRDC's walking and cycling policy aims.

Our concerns over an imminent wider consultation remain:

The Infrastructure Committee, when considering the proposals, was apparently and incorrectly advised that the local Residents Association was supportive of

the Shepherds Lane cycle route. Chorleywood Residents' Association is the only pan-Chorleywood Residents Association and we were not consulted about, let alone supportive of, this idea.

Chorleywood Parish Council also asked TRDC why they were not consulted on the proposals, and they are a statutory consultee. CPC highlighted their concerns with the example of the proposed cycle route over the Common. They have asked me to include their continuing concerns in this supplementary question, to save the Council's time.

Chorleywood Parish Council have confirmed that they were not consulted before the recent presentation to the Infrastructure Committee. They are supportive of increasing cycling and walking in the district, but Chorleywood Common is owned by CPC and safeguarded by local bye-laws. To consult residents about a cycle route over Chorleywood Common without first consulting the Common's owners beggars belief.

Overall both the Residents' Association and Parish Council feel that the cycle route proposals in Chorleywood make no sense and have no chance of succeeding. If Chorleywood residents are consulted on the proposals as they stand, we believe TRDC's cycling and walking strategy will lose credibility, and TRDC will incur costs for no purpose.

We ask that TRDC pause the wider residents consultation, to allow proper consultation with Parish Councils and Residents Associations, and in particular with CPC and CRA, before the wider consultation takes place.

Our aim is to put significantly improved proposals to residents. This will save TRDC's costs, protect TRDC's reputation for taking real-life local circumstances into account, and greatly increase the TRDC's chance of gaining residents' support for their cycle and walking route proposals.

Councillor Paul Rainbow, the Lead Member for Transport and Economic Development, responded thanking the Residents Association for attending the meeting and for explaining their position. They welcomed the comments and the Association was on the whole supportive of the scheme although do have some concerns. At the IHED meeting it was about setting up and getting the consultation into process so no decision was made at that time. Everything you have provided today could be used as part of your consultation response. The Council will be consulting everyone and will not be making any decisions without speaking to all parties concerned. Welcomed the points made but the consultation has not been issued yet and it is too early to be starting to talk about certain elements. Once those do become into focus we can talk about them. I am keen we do this as it will benefit people's health and hopefully bring down emissions here in Three Rivers and make it safer for cyclists, pedestrians and younger cyclists and pedestrians who use the pathways to get to schools.

The Chair thanked the members of the public for putting forward the questions.

Under Rule 16(14) a Councillor clarified they were in support of cycle routes in Chorleywood but were not supportive of these particular proposals.

CL70/22 MEMBER ALLOWANCES 2023/24

Councillor Sarah Nelmes moved, seconded by Councillor Keith Martin, the Independent Remuneration Panel recommendations as set out in the report but

broadly matched the medium percentage rise for the post common pay scale in the Council.

Councillor Ciaran Reed moved, seconded by Councillor Philip Hearn, an amendment to the recommendation that the number of Lead Members be reduced from 7 to 5 therefore reducing the number of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) from 7 to 5. When the Councillor was asked to clarify the proposal and which Lead Members roles would be removed out of the 7 and which Lead Members would take on these roles out of the 5 remaining Lead Members they were not able to clarify the details and substantiate the remits.

It was also provided that the amendment would require changes to the Council Constitution but limited details had been put forward to Members on what the Lead Member identified roles would be and which roles would be removed. It was advised by the Chair that Council can amend the Constitution should it agree to do so.

Following a debate with Councillors Rogers Seabourne, Keith Martin, Reena Ranger, Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Stephen Cox and Sara Bedford speaking on the proposed amendment it was advised by officers that the proposed amendment should be withdrawn and not taken forward.

Councillor Sarah Nelmes summed up the roles of the Lead Members is not just chairing meetings it is all the briefings and the work that they do with officers and if we attempted to merge without very careful consideration then we would disenfranchise any Councillor who had a job because there is a lot of work involved for any Lead Member. They urged that Council follow the recommendation of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

The proposer and seconder of the motion amendment agreed to withdraw their amendment.

On being put to Council the original motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being 23 For, 0 Against and 9 Abstentions

RESOLVED:

Agreed the recommendations outlined in Paragraphs 4.1 to 4.5 of the report as follows:

- A 5% increase to the Members Allowance and SRA for 2023/24 as detailed in Point 3.3 above.
- That the Chair and Vice Chair allowance be increased in line with the basic allowance for Members for the Chair and half the basic allowance for the Vice Chair as detailed in Paragraph 1.2.
- Recommend that both the Dependent carer's allowance and mileage allowance remain unchanged (£12.50 per hour and 52.2p a mile respectively).
- That the Member Transportation and Taxi arrangements remain unchanged.
- That no extra allowance be provided to the Deputy Leader of the Council.

Post meeting note: the Leader Allowance is £10,920

CL71/22 COUNCIL TAX BASE FINANCIAL YEAR 2023/24

Councillor Keith Martin moved, seconded by Councillor Sarah Nelmes, the recommendations as set out in the report. We have a statutory duty to set the Council Tax base and have to do it by 31 January. The methodology is not set by Three Rivers it is set by a statutory instrument with details set out in Point 2.3 to 2.5 of the report.

On being put to Council the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being by general assent.

RESOLVED:

That the calculation of the Council's tax base for the year 2023/24 be approved.

That in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by the Three Rivers District Council as its council tax base for the year 2023/24 shall be:-

Parish	Band D Equivalents
	2023/24
Abbots Langley	8,671.1
Batchworth	6,341.0
Chorleywood	6,309.0
Croxley Green	5,783.5
Sarratt	1,101.6
Watford Rural	7,669.9
Unparished Area	3,669.1
Total District	39,545.2

CL72/22 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 7 NOVEMBER 2022 AND 5 DECEMBER 2022

a) Minute - PR65/22 - BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

Councillor Keith Martin moved, seconded by Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst, the recommendation from the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 7 November 2022. The recommendation referred to the Budget Monitoring report to 30 September 2022 and included two variances with one being on revenue which included further variances for the following two years due to the salary increase. The second variance was in respect of capital which provided savings for money not spent.

On being put to Council the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being 23 For, 0 Against and 9 Abstentions.

RESOLVED:

That the revenue and capital budget variations as shown in the table at paragraph 5.1 be approved and incorporated into the three-year medium-term financial plan

b) Local Development Scheme

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst moved, seconded by Councillor Matthew Bedford, an amended recommendation to that agreed by the Policy and Resources Committee on 5 December as follows:

1. That the Local Development Scheme as set out in Appendix 1 of the report be amended to include a further REG 18 Public consultation on **"Our vision for Three Rivers - our preferred Local Plan and housing numbers"** in September/October 2023 (provisional) prior to any submission to the Planning Inspectorate of a Local Plan with consequential changes to other timelines.
2. That the further Regulation 18 consultation in January/ February be focussed on new sites submitted as a result of the 2021 Regulation 18 consultation to enable full evaluation of public views to be considered alongside the original Reg18 consultation.
3. That public information be circulated to all residents of these decisions and progress on the Local Plan.
4. That delegated authority be granted to the Head of Planning Policy & Conservation and the Director of Community and Environmental Services in consultation with the Lead Member for the Local Plan to make any minor changes that are required before documents are published for consultation.

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst advised that the Government had changed its tactics with the letter of 5 December, circulated to all Members, which made it clear that the number is advisory not mandatory. Previously the Secretary of State (SoS) was clear it was mandatory but had now changed their mind. We are pleased they have done so. When we started this we were dictated to 180 housing units per year which changed to 630 housing units per year none of which we have been able to achieve in the last 10 years. All Councils were given a strict instruction that any submission to the Planning Inspectorate (PI), who has to agree our plan, had to be submitted in accordance with those numbers. A neighbouring authority tried to do a plan recently and it was rejected out of hand. Here tonight and in the public framework, is a request for officers to amend the LDF, in terms of the timescale, which will inevitably mean a delay to the final published Regulation 19 which is the final plan we would have to submit to the PI. The reason for that is we want to have the right figure for Three Rivers. We need to consult properly i.e. on the new sites which are in Part II and take them into the mix with the consultation we have already carried out on Regulation 18 and considered them all. We need to evaluate our policies, the effect on the Green Belt, what has changed in terms of housing numbers, the census, instructions from Government and the SoS letter which indicated no more 5 year land supply. A lot of things are potentially changing. They won't physically change until the Bill, which is being debated this evening, actually becomes law. It is yet to go through its final stages and through the Lords, and come back for Royal Assent and confirmation which is going to take I understand, from speaking to a senior MP, 6 months. Therefore why rush into it now when we can get a figure we want and I know the Joint Residents Association equally want who officers are working with in terms of getting something better for Three Rivers hence the reason for the delay. I am not going to promise that there will be Regulation 19 next year. We will consult on a new Regulation 18 next year after the initial consultation on the new sites that are potentially considered which allows us to tell the public which sites we

will be ruling out automatically. When we get to the Regulation 19, having done that consultation and re-evaluated what are the figures and what the situation is with other authorities which are at the Regulation 19 stage (Elmbridge), but have not yet submitted a plan but are meeting around 70% of their target although they have more brownfield and urban areas and will see how they are treated by the PI. If the SoS letter is worth the paper it is written on Elmbridge will be successful as indeed will other LAs and therefore with our due diligence and the way we have dealt with this we will be successful. Alternatively we will be calling the SoS bluff by stating you said this on 5 December and this is our plan which is our figure we want you to agree which is why I hope we can unanimously agree this tonight.

Councillor Ciaran Reed said the Council had already been advised by the SoS that the standard methodology figure was only a starting number. They sought clarification on the details in bold in the recommendation "Our vision for Three Rivers - our preferred Local Plan and housing numbers" would that be a consultation on the entire plan as we propose putting into the Regulation 19 assuming all the comments come back positively or if not I would suggest amendments so that is what we do in September/October as I think our residents should see and comment on what could be the final document before it goes out for consultation. That was their interpretation of what is intended.

Councillor Ciaran Reed also then moved an amendment to Point 4 of the recommendation, seconded by Councillor Reena Ranger, that any minor changes required to the documents be brought back through the sub-committee then to full Council for determination.

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst made a point of order under Rule 16(14) that Point 4 was to enable any minor amendments/changes to the consultation and that these would be things like typos or minor changes/corrections to the consultation document. If this was to come back it would need to go through the sub-committee, P&R and then Council which would mean it would be February before it would come back unless we call a special Council meeting. We would then not be able to consult before May due to the pre-election period and this would delay the process by 6 months.

Councillor Ciaran Reed then moved another amendment to Point 4 of the recommendation, seconded by Councillor Reena Ranger, that the urgent decision making procedures be undertaken on any minor changes required to the documents before their publication.

Councillor Chris Mitchell said this provided clarification going forward and made it clear what we want to do for our numbers but had one concern that we would have death by consultation and how we can get round this with the potential two Regulation 18 consultations. We are consulting on a lot of sites and will be calculating our own figures which are coming out lower than what the Government has told us in the past and we would end up having many more sites than we actually need.

Councillor Stephen Cox said although the Lead Member had given some examples of a minor amendment they wished to move, seconded by Councillor Stephen King, a further amendment with regard to Point 4 of the recommendation that all the Group Spokespersons be consulted as well as the Lead Member on any minor changes required to the documents before their publication which

would encompass everyone. They welcomed the letter from the Secretary of State but wanted clarification from the Lead Member on the 5 year land supply.

Councillor Sara Bedford strongly supported what had been put forward by the Lead Member. The Council don't have a delegated Executive system here and this process had gone through a number of stages to get to this point. Any decision on Point 4 would be made with a Senior Officer and not done by the Lead Member as they do not have Executive powers. What we are doing is not a popularity contest we don't have to keep asking residents to write in to stop a site being taken forward. It has been made clear that the sites which are chosen are not the ones which are continually written in about because residents don't want them built on that will have no effect.

Councillor Reena Ranger did not feel it would be death by consultation and a lot of work had been done under Part II. We represent our residents and we should be consulting with them on what they need and all Groups should be consulted on any minor amendments/changes and should not be taken unilaterally.

Councillor Matthew Bedford said the motion specifically stated minor changes which related to typos/grammar and we are not talking about bringing in extra sites or deleting sites and they are not political decisions being made.

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst summed up that the Point of doing the Part II item was to look at the sites so that they can all be put together. This Council, through the Local Plan sub-committee, then Policy and Resources Committee and then Council considers what is the right figure and potentially the right sites. If we don't do a consultation on those we can't subsequently then say at the Regulation 19 stage we did look at these sites in December 2022 and we would now like to suggest them when we get to the Regulation 19 stage we would not be able to do that if we had not consulted on them. Doing the consultation provided a robust plan which stands up to what the PI require and what the Government policies are at that time and will be more assured of getting our plan through. On the minor amendments the Lead Member clarified the areas these would be and this was standard practise and it was actually delegated to the Officers in consultation with myself.

On being put to Council the first amendment was declared LOST by the Chair the voting being 12 For, 20 Against and 0 Abstentions.

On being put to Council the second amendment was declared LOST by the Chair the voting being 13 For, 19 Against and 0 Abstentions.

On being put to Council the original motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Local Development Scheme as set out in Appendix 1 of the report be amended to include a further REG 18 Public consultation on "**Our vision for Three Rivers - our preferred Local Plan and housing numbers**" in September/October 2023 (provisional) prior to any submission to the Planning Inspectorate of a Local Plan with consequential changes to other timelines.
2. That the further Regulation 18 consultation in January/ February be focussed on new sites submitted as a result of the 2021 Regulation 18 consultation to

enable full evaluation of public views to be considered alongside the original Reg18 consultation.

3. That public information be circulated to all residents of these decisions and progress on the Local Plan.

4. That delegated authority be granted to the Head of Planning Policy & Conservation and the Director of Community and Environmental Services in consultation with the Lead Member for the Local Plan to make any minor changes that are required before documents are published for consultation.

c) Request to Change the name of the Pensioner Forum

Councillor Keith Martin moved, seconded by Councillor Sarah Nelmes the recommendation from the Policy and Resources Committee to change the name of the Pensioner Forum to Seniors Forum. The Council had not been able to get social media coverage and other local media coverage due to the name of the forum. We consulted at the November Remembrance Day Forum on what the name should be and the unanimous response was it should be called the Seniors Forum.

Councillor Joan King said whilst in favour of this would they like to see the meetings moved around the area which might get more people attending.

On being put to Council the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

The Pensioner Forum name be changed to the Seniors Forum

d) Business Rates Pooling

Councillor Keith Martin moved, seconded by Councillor Sarah Nelmes, the recommendation from the Policy and Resources Committee on 5 December 2022 and clarified the two recommendations which Council were being asked to agree, what the Business Rates Pool was and the benefits for the Council of being in the pool. The Lead Member also advised that we are due to receive details on the Local Government Settlement for 2022/23 on 21 December but it could be received on 19 December.

On being put to Council the motion was declared CARRIED the voting being by general assent.

RESOLVED:

1. Agreed that, subject to a final review following the Local Government Settlement for 2022/23, Three Rivers District Council enters into the Hertfordshire Business Rates Pool.

2. Delegated authority to the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee to sign up to the Hertfordshire Business Rates Pool, within 28 days of the Local Government Finance Settlement.

e) CIL Spending Applications

Councillor Keith Martin moved, seconded by Councillor Sarah Nelmes, the recommendation from the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 5 December 2022. These applications had been to Council previously but Council were now being asked to provide additional CIL money as detailed in the table. There was some disquiet at the P&R Committee as Members had not been expecting this and the amounts being requested. What was deduced in the meeting was that the process we have currently would be looked at so if there are any increases Members of P&R Committee are made aware of that as soon as possible as it maybe we can approve something at a given amount of money. A key problem here had been inflation which had been driven externally to the Council which we have no control over.

Councillor Ciaran Reed was in favour of the proposals. They understood the reasons for the South Oxhey Playing Fields as explained at P&R Committee but had concerns about the Denham Way Playing Area with the application making a distinction between pre works and works. The works according to the CIL form completed were due to have started in April but as a result the delay had cost a significant amount of money. Why was this not sorted by May, who is responsible for that delay and the overspend.

On being put to Council the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

Approved CIL funding for the following schemes detailed in Table 1 of this report and summarised in the table below for 2022/2023:

Applicant & Project Name	Infrastructure	CIL Amount
TRDC Leisure Team Denham Way Play Area/ Maple Cross Playing Fields (Appendix 1)	New play area Community pavilion, 3 floodlight tennis courts Outdoor fitness zone MUGA Playing pitch improvements Access pathways Seating formal garden	£86,750.
TRDC Leisure Team South Oxhey Playing Fields (Appendix 2)	Tennis Courts AGP Basketball Court Skate/BMX Park Outdoor Gym Pathways	£93,750.

f) Discretionary Fees and Charges 2023/24

Councillor Khalid Hussain declared a pecuniary interest on the taxi licence proposed taxi licence fares as a taxi driver in the District and left the meeting for the consideration of this item.

Councillor Keith Martin moved, seconded by Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst, the recommendation from the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 5 December. We set the budget on 22 February but on 24 February Ukraine was invaded by Vladimir Putin. At the point of the budget we had a 2% increase in salary built in but as we have seen tonight there has been a 6% increase. The Bank of England at the time of the budget stated that inflation was to fall but we have seen it hit its highest rate since 1982. All of the inflationary costs have fed through into our

costs. No-one wants to increase the fees and charges but the increases will bring back in line with covering the costs of providing these services. If we don't do this we would have to look at cutting our services and we don't want to do that. We don't welcome doing this but have to act as prudent Council

Councillor Alison Wall, seconded by Councillor Ciaran Reed, moved an amendment to one of the fees on the removal of dead animals (non domestic) to be free of charge. The charge had been increased by 10% but I feel no charge should be attached and the relevance test is the Equalities Act and discrimination of two aspects age and disability. I think waiving the charge would not make a huge difference but would be fair and reasonable for the Council to do this.

Councillor Ciaran Reed provided details of an example of the removal of a dead animal in Chorleywood this year where an elderly resident had a deer hit by a train then stagger from public land into their back garden and they were not able to remove the deer from their back garden and it became a health risk to them and the neighbours. They agreed with Councillor Wall's request to remove the charge.

Councillor Joan King remarked on the concern in South Oxhey with regard to taxis and that a meeting had been refused by the Council. The Lead Member for Community Safety and Partnerships agreed to facilitate a meeting.

Councillor Reena Ranger stated that although today was exceptional in the cold weather temperatures the brown bins which were collected were only half emptied as a number were frozen at the bottom but when residents called they were told the next collection would not be for another month and wondered if it was worth the rise.

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst advised that in terms of the garden waste that is a discretionary service which the Council provides, and other Authorities have followed, and for which we are trying to seek cost recovery which we have not done yet. When the fees went up last year more people brought into the service. There were no proposed changes to CPZs but as stated at the P&R Committee CPZs and the parking account will be subject to a separate review with reports coming back to IHED and P&R Committee. With regard to items on private property this is discretionary service and there are a large number of operators out there and do not need to provide the service but we are at the moment.

On being put to Council the amendment to not charge for the removal of dead animals (non domestic) was declared LOST the voting being 10 For, 19 Against and 3 Abstentions.

On being put to Council the original motion was declared CARRIED the voting being 20 For, 0 Against and 12 Abstentions.

RESOLVED:

1. Approved the Fees and Charges set out in the schedule at Appendix 1 to be effective from 1 January 2023
2. Approved the Fees and Charges set out in the schedule at Appendix 2 to be effective from 1 April 2023

Post meeting note: Amendments have been made to the fees and charges schedule to reflect the treatment of VAT on some services.

CL73/22 COUNCILLOR REQUEST FOR EXTENDED LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Councillor Ciaran Reed, seconded by Councillor Philip Hearn, moved the recommendations as set out in the report and given that previously this year we had given exceptions for two Councillors they hoped that Council would agree this extension tonight.

On being put to Council the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being by general assent.

RESOLVED:

That Council approves the request from Councillor David Coltman for an extension beyond the six month period of non-attendance on health grounds.

That such an extension be granted until the end of May 2023 which would allow for any request for a further extension being considered by Annual Council at its meeting on 23 May 2023.

In the event of that meeting either being cancelled or postponed, such an extension to remain in place until after the next available meeting of the Council.

CL74/22 COUNCIL OUTSIDE BODIES NOMINATIONS

RESOLVED:

Noted that Councillor Rue Grewal will replace Councillor David Coltman on the South Oxhey Community Board.

CL75/22 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC (WAS 14 ON THE PUBLISHED SUMMONS)

The Chair moved, seconded by the Vice Chair for the meeting, the following motion:

If the Council wishes to consider the remaining item in private, it will be appropriate for a resolution to be passed in the following terms:-

“that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined under Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act. It has been decided by the Council that in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.”

On being put to Council the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being by general assent.

CL76/22 TO RECEIVE THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE ON THE LOCAL PLAN

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst moved, seconded by Councillor Matthew Bedford, the recommendations from the Policy and Resources Committee held on 5 December 2022. Having this Regulation 18 consultation on the sites would allow the Council to consult on the additional sites.

Councillor Ciaran Reed agreed with the consultation but raised concern about the decision made to inset the village of Bedmond due to its compact form, density and variable relationship with the Green Belt, which was agreed by the

Policy and Resources Committee in July 2020 and ratified at Full Council in May 2021 and that there were still 2 sites in Bedmond.

Councillor Stephen Cox was of the view that 2 sites had been taken out of Bedmond.

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst clarified, as agreed at the Local Plan sub-committee, 2 sites had been removed and would not be consulted on.

On being put to Council the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

- Approved the Local Plan Regulation 18: Part Three: Additional Sites for Potential Allocation document as set out in Appendix 1 for public consultation in accordance with the regulations and the Local Development Scheme
- Agreed the following amendments:
 - NSS4 - Cedars Village, Chorleywood to be removed as the promoters are now going down the planning application route.
 - CFS8d Notley Farm, Bedmond Road – subject to suitable access arrangements and allocation of eastern fields to East Lane as an extension to Leavesden Country Park and allotment improvements will be required.
 - CFS26e - Land to the south west of Kings Langley Estate, Abbots Langley – to ensure the remainder of area south of the M25 should be dedicated open space and woodland.
 - NSS13 - Land to the rear of The Shires High Elms Lane - Section 106 obligation to provide parkland and woodland in perpetuity would restrict any alternative form of use on site.
- That delegated authority be granted to the Head of Planning Policy & Conservation and the Director of Community and Environmental Services in consultation with the Lead Member for the Local Plan to make any minor changes that are required before the documents are published for consultation.
- That public access to the report be denied until after Full Council (13 December 2022)
- That public access to the decision be denied until after Full Council (13 December 2022)

Council moved back into Part I business.

CL77/22 QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER, LEAD MEMBERS, CHAIRS OF COMMITTEES AND REPORTS FROM THE CHAIRS OF THE COMMITTEES AND QUESTIONS ON THE CHAIRS REPORTS

Questions to Councillor Sarah Nemes, Leader of the Council, from Councillor Sara Bedford

11a) *What was the purpose of the 'wreath laying protocol' published a few weeks before Remembrance Day this year?*

Written response:

A wreath laying protocol has always been in place and has been updated continually to ensure its relevance the last review being in 2019. In circulating the protocol to Councillors, along with the list of Remembrance Services where wreaths were to be laid, the aim was to be transparent and open on the guidelines for wreath-laying on Remembrance Sunday, and the precedence there of to allow for the laying of official wreaths at dedicated memorials. It is, of course, always open to all Members to put forward amendments or changes to the protocol and these will always be considered.

Supplementary question:

If the protocol has been in place for a number of years why were Councillors not previously made aware of it, why was the ability to put forward an amendment not made clear, and how could an amendment be put forward when it was only published two weeks before the wreath laying was sought.

Written response to supplementary question:

The protocol has been issued to Members in previous years, any Member can discuss the protocol with their Group and bring forward amendments. In this instance a request for a wreath was received, it was considered against the policy and declined.

11b) *How many wreaths were laid on behalf of the Council and where were they laid?*

Written response:

These details were sent to all Councillors by email on 27 October 2022 from the Committee Team. 17 wreaths were laid on behalf of the Council at dedicated memorials.

Supplementary question:

At least two of the places where wreaths were laid were not dedicated memorials. They were laid at schools or places which do not have any form of dedicated memorial or otherwise. Can this be checked?

Written response to supplementary question:

The venues where the wreaths were laid fell within the protocol. Please accept our apologies as the response should have made it clear that other sites were also covered by the policy.

11c) *How many requests for wreaths were refused?*

Written response:

One which was outside of the protocol and not for a dedicated memorial.

Supplementary question:

If you can't lay a wreath if they are not at a dedicated memorial why was one refused, the wreath laying at the South Oxhey Jets? If a wreath can be laid at a school why can't it be laid somewhere where far more people are present?

Written response to supplementary question:

The request received was outside of the Protocol which was the reason for declining the request to provide a wreath. The Member was advised that they were able to purchase their own wreath.

11d) At the full Council meeting on 12 July, I was assured that the Council's standard response time was 10 working days. What should be a Councillor's actions when no response is received from senior management, despite chasing emails, after 65 days?

Written response:

At the Council meeting in July I asked that any problems should be escalated to me in the first instance. This did not happen in this case.

Since being made aware of this issue, through these questions, I have looked into the case and I can report that the issue arose due to an officer oversight, following officer leave arrangements.

The delay in the response should not have happened and officers did apologise for this when responding to the request. I have stressed to the senior officer that replies must be sent within the standard response time or an explanation on why this cannot be done is sent.

Supplementary question:

The item the Councillor was referring to was copied to more than one officer and more than one chasing email was made before the response was provided, it was not simply due to one email and one officer going on holiday. Does the Leader think it is reasonable that Opposition Councillors should run things past them rather than through officers as that is what is being said?

Response to the supplementary question:

The Leader would discuss with the Member.

11e) How does the Council prevent the misuse of the full version of the electoral register?

Written response:

Any inspection to view the register takes place under supervision at Three Rivers House. There is provision for inspection at Three Rivers House by appointment. The legislation does not prescribe the level and nature of supervision of those who inspect the register.

In addition, the Electoral Commission details those who have immediate access to the full register on publication and those that can make a written request to receive it. The detail of those persons can be found [here](#).

Supplementary question:

The answer is disingenuous. Full registers are sent to Political Parties, how is that governed to prevent misuse and what are the sanctions for the misuse of that data by Political parties?

Written response to supplementary question:

The Council is not liable for the misuse of the full register by a third party. This is something that the Electoral Commission could look at if it was the subject of a complaint to them by the individual whose information was misused.

It is also a data protection matter, in the sense that the full register contained personal data of individual electors. However, again, the Council is not liable for the misuse of the register by a third party. What happens to the data in the hands of a third party is not within the Council's control.

If it is believed that the data has been misused a complaint should be made to the Information Commissioner's Office.

11f) When the Council is made aware that a third party has misused the Council's data, what action should the Council take?

Written response:

When an allegation is received the Council will follow the existing procedure for reporting a personal data breach and consideration is then given as to whether this constitutes a breach by the Council and is reportable to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

In accordance with Data Protection Act 2018, the Council is responsible for data in which it is the data controller and/or data processor. It is not responsible for a third party committing a data breach.

Supplementary question:

Once the Council has been made aware that a breach of personal data has been committed and confirmed by the Information Commissioner's Office are any actions taken by the Council.

Written response to supplementary question:

The Council follows the processes as outlined above and will consider what actions are appropriate once it has received a formal response from the Information Commission's Office.

11g) What steps should the Council take to prevent the data it holds being misused?

Written response:

The Council has mandatory training for all staff which is updated regularly and compliance with the mandatory training is also monitored.

We also have a procedure which sets out how we deal with a potential data breach.

No supplementary question

11h) Why did the press release on Islamophobia Awareness Month not state that the Council was a signatory in support of the Muslim Council of Britain's supported APPG definition of Islamophobia? Surely as one of a minority of Councils to do so, that would have that would have added strength to our position?

Written response:

This was an oversight and should not have occurred and for which on behalf of the Council I apologise however the information about the APPG definition has since been added to the live web story and shared further across the Council's social media channels.

Supplementary question

Was an updated media release issued in this instance or was it a convenient omission due to the embarrassment over the policy?

Written response to supplementary question:

No, an updated press release would only be sent if we were correcting a factual error. As this was the omission of a relevant piece of information for which the Council has already apologised, there is no requirement to send an updated press release. The item on the Council's website was updated at the time the omission was identified and so the web page link in the original press release will direct media to the updated information.

Question to Councillor Sarah Nelmes, Leader of the Council, from Councillor Andrea Fraser

11i) What will Three Rivers District Council do to better promote Local Area Forums? They are poorly attended and are not being promoted on the District's noticeboards. They are only listed on the website as a meeting to attend rather than encouraging community attendance and involvement.

Written response:

The agendas for the Local Area Forums are posted on the Council's social media channels, and on the website. In addition, the agendas are circulated to the respective Parish Council's and Local County Councillor(s) when published to all District Councillors and we ask the Parish Councils to promote the meetings locally. Details are provided with the agenda on attendance and if the meeting is being held remotely details are included on how the public can register to attend virtually along with details to contact the Committee Team with any enquiries. In addition, if the meeting is being held virtually all the relevant Councillors are provided with the virtual meeting details as a meeting appointment and are free to forward the virtual meeting details to anyone who wishes to attend. Further work will be taking place to develop content to help encourage community attendance and it would be helpful if Ward Councillors could suggest items for inclusion and use their own network to encourage attendance. District notice boards are updated once per month and notices about these Forums are included.

Supplementary question

The use of social media and the lack of advertising on the noticeboards is not working and the agenda requires more in it of public interest. Can the Administration please reach out to the residents, particularly senior residents, who are discriminated against by the electronic messaging which they don't engage in or don't have means to engage in.

Supplementary response:

We certainly try and reach out to all of our residents but will endeavour to advertise the Forums more widely.

Question to Councillor Sarah Nelmes, Leader of the Council, from Councillor Rue Grewal

11j) What is a reasonable time for a Lead Member to come back when they promised a written response to a question from a Member at Full Council?

Written response:

The Committee Team apologise for missing the action from the action sheet circulated on 25 October 2022 to all Councillors. The action sheet is prepared using our notes as there is a 5 working day turnaround to get the information out

to Councillors with any agreed supplementary written responses. The action was only picked up when the minutes were being drafted. I would ask that when the action sheet is circulated to all Councillors that you check to see if any actions you feel are missing are reported to the Committee Team so that a response can be organised straightaway and the action sheet updated accordingly.

Post meeting note: As Councillor Grewal gave apologies for the meeting, the Chair agreed that they could be contacted to see if they had a supplementary question. The Committee Team contacted the Councillor on 14/12/22 but no supplementary question was provided.

Urgent questions accepted under Rule 14(3) to Councillor Sarah Nelmes, Leader of the Council, from Councillor Sara Bedford

11j(i) To ask the Leader of the Council for details of any information or briefings they have received regarding the Secretary of State for Levelling Up's statement on Local Government Finance.

Written response provided at the meeting:

A policy statement was issued yesterday repeating much of what was announced in the autumn statement including the 3% Council Tax referenda limit for Districts. There was also a webinar with Ministers Lee Rowley and Nico Heslop this afternoon. The impact of the 3% referenda limit is £26,000 for Three Rivers. The Council is currently working through the details of the statement but is unlikely to have a clearer picture until the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement is announced which is expected to be early next week either Monday or Tuesday as they are the only days Parliament are sitting next week. One of reassurances we did get in the webinar this afternoon was that they understand we wish to have some more certainty and will attempt to give us some information about the expected way of working out the settlement for 2024/25 as well. As yet we are short on detail.

Supplementary question

Can I ask when details are received they are circulated to Councillors.

Response to supplementary question

The Leader agreed to ensure details are circulated to all Councillors once received.

11j(ii) To ask the Leader of the Council for any specific comments on the effect of the measures in the Statement above on lower tier authorities and specifically Three Rivers.

Written response:

See written response given for urgent question 11j(i)

Supplementary question

Can I ask when details are received they are circulated to Councillors in a timely manner i.e. when they are received.

Response to supplementary question

The Leader will ensure details are circulated to all Councillors once received.

Questions to Councillor Paul Rainbow, the Lead Member for Transport and Economic Development, from Councillor Sara Bedford

11k) The local police recently circulated an email via Neighbourhood Watch giving erroneous information about the method of enforcement against obstructive pavement parking. Have Three Rivers had any conversations with Neighbourhood Teams regarding this?

Written response:

Officers and I are not aware of the email mentioned here and have not seen it. The roles and responsibility of the TRDC are clear. The only parking enforcement that the civil penalty officers can undertake is where there are legally enforced parking restrictions such as double and single yellow lines and residents parking zones as well as in car parks.

In the absence of such restrictions backed by a Traffic Regulation Order it would fall to the Police to deal with obstructive parking and pavement parking.

The Police have not recently contacted Regulatory Services (which oversees Parking Policy and Projects through the Transport and Parking Projects team) to discuss any aspect of enforcement of parking on footways.

Officers are happy to discuss issues with the Police and ensure the right information is made public.

There was no supplementary question

11l) Does the Lead Member agree with HCC's Head of Integrated Transport that 'Abbots Langley has fared reasonably well' after changes to bus services earlier this year? These changes have left residents with gaps between buses of up to and occasionally over two hours, buses terminating at Watford Junction rather than continuing north, dangerous levels of overcrowding and buses shown on the 'real-time' signs disappearing on route.

Written response:

No. Lead Members believe that many towns and villages in the District, including Abbots Langley, are currently not well-served by public bus routes. Some settlements have been hit harder than others as a result of commercial decisions by bus operators following the huge effect of the Pandemic on passenger numbers and now with fuel price increases.

The recent changes in bus services have clearly hit Abbots Langley and I know from colleagues the removal of the direct services from Abbots Langley to the Dome has particularly hit residents hard depriving them of direct access to the supermarkets and medical facilities. It is to say the least disappointing that neither the bus operators or the County Council has accepted the loss of service and tried to restore it.

Reductions in public funding for bus services particularly by the County Council and the continuing problems caused by bus de-regulation and short notice changes or termination of routes by operators remains a big concern. I am pleased that despite budget constraints TRDC is one of the few District Councils, whilst not required to do so, provides support for some bus services and is supporting new service models such as our new Shopper Service which provides a demand-responsive, door-to-shop bus one of which serves Abbots Langley

Supplementary question:

Buses in this area at the moment are a disgrace. I have been told it took someone 4 hours to get from Abbots to Sainsbury's and back again. People are being left waiting at Watford Junction station for 1.5 to 2 hours for buses to not turn up or go past full in order that they can get back to Abbots Langley. People are constantly walking home from the station which is quite a distance or having to get taxis when they have a free bus pass or when they have paid for season ticket. Does the Lead Member agree that people across the District are being let down and would they urgently contact Arriva and the County Council to express these views.

Supplementary response:

Yes we are concerned and from what we have heard in the Abbots Langley and Kings Langley area people are not able to access the Dome for shopping or if they work there and it does seem to me that a lot of improvement in planning is needed.

Question to Councillor Paul Rainbow, Lead Member for Transport and Economic Development, from Councillor David Raw

11m) Parking enforcement is vital for public confidence, safe parking and passage. Noting that parking is subcontracted out to another council, does this administration believe it needs more enforcement officers to achieve these aims?

Written response:

As advised at the previous Full Council Hertsmere BC (HBC) currently provide the parking enforcement service on behalf of TRDC and they use their knowledge and expertise on parking enforcement to prepare relevant deployment plans for their Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) to ensure parking controls and restrictions across the District are covered. They have not suggested additional enforcement officers are required. You are at liberty of course to propose that the Council employs additional staff but this will come as an increased cost.

Supplementary question:

Have you checked the working schedule and timetable of the current CEOs to ascertain whether they are working efficiently and organised across our District? If not why not and if yes can you send me their timetable and tell me your opinion of the working timetable for the CEOs.

Supplementary response:

CEOs work in areas where there are traffic orders. If it is pavement parking, this is outside of a traffic order area, and would be the responsibility of the police. I am quite happy if you write to me we can try and get some information sent to you from officers.

Question for Cllr Paul Rainbow, Lead Member for Transport and Economic Development from Cllr Andrea Fraser

11n) As Rickmansworth car parks are still way below pre-pandemic capacity, does this allow us to introduce two hours free parking?

Written response:

It is acknowledged the use of the Council car parks remain below pre pandemic levels but the use is continuing to increase and is up on last year and 2020. The purpose of charging as previously explained on many occasions over several

years and supported by consultant's reports to this Council is to encourage a churn of visitors to Rickmansworth and clearly prior to the Pandemic this was clearly very effective with few complaints. Also there is also a requirement for parking services charges to enable the District Council to balance its parking account, to ensure it is not funded by all taxpayers, i.e. by users. Unlike most other Councils this Council is determined to continue provide the first 1 hour free to shoppers to ensure that the short-stay car parks are well-used for their proper purpose.

Supplementary question:

On the two hour parking, TRDC recently supported HCCs proposal to pedestrianise Rickmansworth High Street to create this café lifestyle. Would it not make it worthwhile to have 2 hour free parking around the area of the High Street so that people have the pedestrian lifestyle that we are all hoping for.

Supplementary response:

My understanding of what took place a few months ago was part of an experiment to see if we can get this running in the longer term and think it is best to actually see what is the result from this before we look at how we do the parking in that area.

Question for Cllr Paul Rainbow, Lead Member for Transport and Economic Development from Cllr Reena Ranger

11o) When will the revised report on the possible introduction of parking restrictions along Sandy Lodge Way, Northwood be made available to ward councillors and then, to residents

Written response:

The updated report is expected in early December following an extended consultation period ending in November as agreed with Ward Members.

Updated written response – 7/12/22:

The updated report, which Ward Councillors will initially be sent, is expected in early December following an extended consultation period which ended on 31 October 2022. A good response rate was received which has required mapping and investigation which has taken longer than anticipated given other team work commitments and priorities.

Supplementary question:

When this process began in June 2021 it was right to re-consult but in March 2022 when 17 people out of 56 responded Ward Members were promised a report in early November and it is now middle of December. Where is the report and when can we expect it.

Supplementary response:

I have been advised by officers that it is imminent and as we have pointed out at previous meetings this year locally important schemes are actually several different schemes so we have to take into consideration that there are several schemes running at the same time. They will all be reported at the same time but understand the report will be imminent.

Question for Cllr Paul Rainbow, Lead Member for Transport and Economic Development from Cllr Andrea Fraser

11p) *With the seemingly never-ending spread of CPZ's across our area, is the Lead Member not worried that this is placing a stealth tax on our residents when many are already struggling?*

Written response:

Parking Permit fees are not a tax – there is a fee for the service provided by the District Council to prioritise parking in favour of people in the CPZ who have purchased the permits. This helps to support the costs of introducing Zones and their enforcement and ensures those that have permits can park near to their address.

The reasons why Local Authorities are required by law to charge parking fees are explained in detail on our website, as parking services must be paid for by the people who benefit from them, not by general taxpayers. More information can be found on the website (www.threerivers.gov.uk/permitparkinginfo.)

The website explains that: *“People with addresses within Permit Zones are charged a small annual fee for permits. Residents do not “pay to park in their street” - the permit they pay for gives priority parking to residents, by stopping non-residents from parking near their homes.”*

Finally CPZ's are widely consulted upon before they are introduced and residents are made aware of the costs in advance so nothing is hidden.

Supplementary question:

On the CPZ you mention there being a consultation. Recently in a consultation, which lasted 5 years, for our residents in Rickmansworth, they did not ask for a CPZ but were clearly asking for parking enforcement. Can you say you are acting democratically when this CPZ means that many of our residents are being dictated to?

Supplementary response:

For that particular area there was consultation on 3 separate occasions and extensive consultations on the way forward for that area and I am more than happy with what has happened. We do hear from residents on both sides with some wanting to be part of the parking scheme and some don't.

Questions to Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Lead Member for Planning Policy and Infrastructure, from Councillor Ciaran Reed

11q) *Having had years to think about it, what is the housing number this administration believe is right for our District?*

Written response:

The Council has followed national legislation and policy in its approach to calculating housing need. Prior to the Standard Method for calculating housing need the Council undertook a piece of evidence base work for the Local Plan, the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA, 2016), which included a calculation of objectively assessed housing need. This resulted in a housing target of 514 dwellings per annum. From the introduction of the Standard Method in 2018 the Council has followed the approach set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance as required by national policy and legislation.

It has been agreed by Full Council that the Council will consider an alternative version of the Local Plan with lower housing numbers than the standard method. Further work needs to be undertaken before a figure can be proposed and

agreed as this will need to be supported by robust evidence. Officers will commence the detailed work on this once the Additional Sites for Potential Allocation consultation is underway. However it clear the evidence gathered from the Regulation 18 and the sites considered and rejected following detailed analysis work will provide useful background evidence when and if we are required to submit a final figure to a government inspector who will as you know have the final say under the current rules laid down by Parliament and this government. Naturally I wish that were not the case.

My reports to Council details other aspects of the Local Plan and the work we are undertaking on this.

Supplementary question:

You have been complaining for years about the housing targets but given the timetable we voted through tonight can you give any indication on the number you expect to be consulted on throughout next year?

Supplementary response:

Absolutely not because we need the professional advice from the officers analysing the data as I have already laid out in my earlier statement in relation to the LDS and my report. We need to have evidence which can stand up to the Government Inspector.

11r) Does this Council treat everyone equally when it comes to planning enforcement and will it ensure that it does not shy away from taking the necessary action to ensure that planning law is obeyed?

Written response:

The quick and simple answer is Yes and Yes.

In 2021 the Council adopted a new Planning Enforcement Plan which sets out in some detail as to how officers will treat all planning enforcement cases across the District. The Plan emphasises the importance that officers are 'to react to breaches of planning control in a confident, professional and proportionate manner'. The same plan also details a number of key principles which must be considered when making decisions. These principles include proportionality, expediency, consistency, transparency and equality. In respect of the latter, under the Human Rights Act 1998 it is unlawful for any public authority to act in a way which is incompatible with any convention right. As such, any formal action taken by the department must consider the circumstances of the individual(s) affected. As per the assessment of planning applications, every site is different and therefore each enforcement case must be considered on its individual merits, having regard to its location, nature of the breach and importantly, its harm when assessed against national and local planning policies and any relevant material considerations.

As advised at the previous Full Council, the National Planning Policy Framework states that Council's should act proportionally and proactively to enforcement matters and this is reflected in the Council's own Enforcement Plan (2021). The Council must only take the appropriate enforcement action where it is expedient to do so. It is important to note that enforcement cases can be complex and before notices can be issued officers need to be satisfied that they have all the available facts to ensure that any notice issued is likely to have a good chance of success if appealed against. In a large majority of cases it is simply not expedient to pursue enforcement action as the works may not be harmful and would accord with the Council's development plan. Additionally, the planning

system allows the submission of retrospective planning applications and such applications must be determined by the Local Planning Authority.

Nevertheless, the department has and will continue to take enforcement action where it is expedient to do so. This year the department has issued a range of notices such as enforcement notices, section 215 notices (untidy land), breach of condition notice and sought an injunction concerning a possible unauthorised use in the Green Belt. There are a number of on-going prosecution cases whereby the Council has identified non-compliance with notices to ensure any identified breach of planning control is remedied/removed.

No supplementary question

11s) What is Three Rivers doing to assess whether any other areas could become Conversation Areas?

Written response:

Work on assessing existing or any potential new Conservation Areas is currently on hold as the Local Plan is currently the priority. The Planning Policy and Conservation team lacks the resources, and successive recruitments have failed to secure an officer to undertake this work. The Conservation Officer post is currently outsourced to Place Services which gives us more capacity to deal with any Conservation Area issues. However the budget is limited to just existing areas.

Supplementary question:

If we are not going to assess Conservation Areas before we go through the Local Plan process and not going to consult on places like Bedmond how are we going to revalue our Conservation Areas many of which were last done years ago. How are we as Members meant to vote on development schemes and a Local Plan when we don't know what we are meant to be conserving in the areas which we are considering putting houses into.

Supplementary response:

Having a Conservation Areas does not mean there can't be any development in them. With statutory criteria laid down by Central Government to enable a Conservation Area to be established it has to go through rigorous consultation as some people like them and some people don't. We will be reviewing Conservation Areas as a programme but clearly the Local Plan has the priority. Just because the Conservation Area may be a bit dated does not make it invalid and I am given to understand that we have been successful in defending applications in Conservation Areas on our existing Conservation Plans.

Question to Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Lead Member for Planning Policy and Infrastructure, from Councillor Abbas Merali

11t) The Conservation Area Appraisal for Moor Park was last updated in 2006? Why does this administration not update their Conservation Area Appraisals?

Written response:

I refer to my previous answer: Work on assessing existing or any potential new conservation areas is currently on hold as the Local Plan is currently the priority. The Planning Policy and Conservation team lacks the resources, and successive recruitments have failed to secure an officer to undertake this work. The Conservation Officer post is currently outsourced to Place Services which gives us more capacity. The Moor Park area will be assessed as soon as is practical along with other workloads.

Supplementary question:

Historic England recommend that Conservation Area statements should ideally be updated every 5 years and the longer the time is left the likelihood the statements become out of date and are given less credence. Why is the average of a Three Rivers Conservation Area Appraisal 16 years which is more than 3 times the recommendation. Why has the Council not updated the Croxley Green, Rickmansworth Town or Sarratt Conservation Area Appraisals for over 25 years, 5 times the recommendation? Blaming on resources or saying it is on hold is not good enough.

Supplementary response:

I refer to my previous answer already given.

Urgent questions accepted under Rule 14(3) to Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Lead Member for Infrastructure and Planning Policy from Councillor Sara Bedford

11t (i) What official communications has the Lead Member received regarding the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' letter announcing likely changes to the Levelling Up Bill in respect of planning policy and housing numbers?

Written response:

At the time of writing this reply no official communication to us as the local planning authority has been received however as the member is aware, as I have circulated it, I have the letter dated 5 December to MPs and seen the House of Commons Statement.

No supplementary question

11t (ii) What effect on the Local Plan process and housing numbers does he expect this to make?

Written response:

There will, it appears, be no immediate impact as the announcements from the Secretary of State (SoS) for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities have limited weight until such time as the changes to legislation progress through the formal stages to become an Act with related regulations. The SoS has in their letter said they will consult on the changes so clearly they are not yet in play. Whilst the announcements are welcome, in especially removing nationally imposed housing targets - if that is indeed the intention, until the Act is passed the current requirements for 5 years housing land supply remain. We will keep a close eye on the Planning Inspectorate decisions in the meantime given the SoS said they would instruct the Planning Inspector to 'no longer override sensible local decision making'. We will continue to progress our own locally determined plan, rather than one based on the government imposed standard methodology, as the SoS has now said it will no longer be 'mandatory'. I have outlined this in my reports to Council and I will again outline this at Council on Tuesday. Naturally I hope, and expect, the words of the letter of 5 December will be fully reflected in changes in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill when it is passed.

No supplementary question

Questions for Councillor Andrew Scarth, Lead Member for Housing, from Councillor Sara Bedford

11u) Many of us are fortunate to have much-loved pets as part of our families. Bearing in mind the positive effect of pets on the mental health of companions, why do none of the temporary social housing buildings used by this Council allow well-controlled pets?

Written response:

The Councillor was made aware by Officers in October 2022 that the Council currently has a no pets rule in our occupancy agreement for temporary accommodation. Allowing pets would potentially increase the costs to the Council and cause additional delays in void turnovers. Effective use of our temporary accommodation in our District is vital to ensure households are able to access it as soon as possible. Additional delays could mean households are placed out of District in emergency accommodation.

Supplementary question:

The conversation with the Housing Manager had the Lead Member copied into the communication. I had asked the Manager concerned why pets would cause any more increase to costs or timings of the re-letting say for children or adults. Most pets are very well behaved and don't make a mess or a smell. I was never given an answer. Has there ever been a calculation of these costs or it is simply a guess made by members of staff?

Written response to supplementary question:

Officers have not previously been requested to provide a cost breakdown. Explanations have been provided by Officers, in their professional opinion and based on their experience, that turnaround times in temporary accommodation would likely increase should pets be allowed.

The managing agents of temporary accommodation have also confirmed that the void turnaround times would need to be extended and the management fee would be increased.

It is important to note that the restriction of pets being taken into temporary accommodation is common amongst many Local Authorities.

11v) The reasons I have been given for not allowing pets in social housing include noise, dirt, smell, damage, and the possible allergies of other residents. All of these apart from allergies could be caused by humans and can be controlled by tenancy conditions. Allergies should not be an issue in self-contained accommodation and can be caused by the behaviour of humans. What can be done to enable pets on a reasonable basis in temporary accommodation, rather than using a blanket ban? What can be done to support the keeping of pets in permanent accommodation?

Written response:

The Councillor has been made aware of the numerous reasons why pets are not allowed in temporary accommodation. The approach we take has to be fair and consistent to all our customers. People consider various animals as pets, such as cats, dogs, birds and snakes, and each pose different possibilities. Whilst animals are companions for some, they are a phobia for others.

Consideration is also given as to the risk of infestation, flea's, noise, allergies, damage, parasites that can be transferred to humans and the vulnerabilities of some residents and Officers feel that these cannot be managed by tenancy conditions as the list is endless. Officers believe the potential issues caused by pets is not comparable to those caused by people.

As a non-stock holding Authority, the decision to accept or refuse pets in permanent accommodation rests solely with those Registered Provider landlords.

Supplementary question:

Did not recall questioning anyone's professionalism or expertise. I asked for details on the calculation of extra costs incurred which have not been provided to me. The problems potentially caused by tenants and their families are also endless as are apparently the ones by pets and can be very dramatic for neighbours potentially involving law enforcement. I have not heard of pets smoking cannabis where it can be smelled by their neighbours or pass into neighbouring properties or one having late night parties with loud music or ones which threaten neighbours. Can the Lead Member please commit to finding a way where pets of homeless residents can be housed with them using tenancy conditions to control the type, number and behaviour of pets?

Written response to supplementary question:

Officers have not previously been requested to provide a cost breakdown. Explanations have been provided by Officers, in their professional opinion and based on their experience, that turnaround times in temporary accommodation would likely increase should pets be allowed. The Council cannot commit to allowing pets in temporary accommodation for all of the reasons as outlined above.

Question for Councillor Andrew Scarth, Lead Member for Housing, from Councillor Ciaran Reed

11w) Following the tragic death of Awaab Ishak from a severe respiratory condition after prolonged exposure to mould in his home, what steps are this Council taking to ensure that all accommodation – temporary and permanent – in which the homeless are placed is fit for human habitation and how will it respond to the letter from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing dated the 19 November 2022?

Written response:

The Council have a duty to ensure that any offer of accommodation made to a homeless household, either permanent or temporary, is a suitable offer of accommodation for that household. Part of this suitability is to ensure that the property offered to the household is of a reasonable condition. Section 17.25 of the Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities states that when determining the suitability of accommodation secured under homelessness legislation, we should, as a minimum ensure that all accommodation is free of any Category 1 Hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating system (HHSRS).

The suitability of an offer of temporary accommodation made to a homeless household, specifically with regards to the condition of the property, is covered by Section 5.1.2 of the Council's Temporary Accommodation Placement Policy. The suitability of an offer of permanent accommodation in the private rented sector that is made to a homeless household, specifically regarding the condition of the

property, is covered by Section 5.1 of the Council's Private Rented Sector Offer Policy.

For any offer of permanent accommodation made through the Council's Housing Register to a homeless household, the responsibility that this property is fit for habitation for the nominated household rests with landlord of that property (the Registered Provider).

The Council have received the letter from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities dated the 19 November 2022 and intend to provide the information and data requested within the required timescales.

Supplementary question:

The Council seems to have not investigated any private properties for damp and not taken any civil enforcement on the issue of damp anywhere in the District. Does the Lead Member think as a District we are protecting our residents given that track record and is there a potential that the Council has left residents in danger as a result of that.

Response to supplementary question:

Officers are working through the letter from the Secretary of State which will be a considerable exercise to achieve by 27 January. There have not been any cases of taking Private Landlords to court and they do take great care about where the accommodation is for our residents. They are doing their best to comply with the law. I will get a response and also see the response to the Secretary of State is provided to you.

Written response to supplementary question

To clarify, although the Council have not issued any civil penalty notices in relation to non-compliance with enforcement action over damp and mould hazards within the last three years periods and therefore have not pursued any prosecutions in relation to damp and mould in these periods, it does not mean that any reports received by residents of damp and mould hazards in their property are not investigated. Any report of housing disrepair, including those about damp and mould hazards, to the Council are investigated by Officers to the fullest and in all cases Officers will attempt to work amicably with all landlords in the district, both private and social, to ensure any housing disrepair complaints are dealt with before the need for any formal enforcement action.

The fact that no housing disrepair complaints in relation to damp and mould hazards in a property have progressed to the issuing of a civil penalty notice or prosecution should be seen as a positive sign that Officers have built effective partnerships with landlords in the district, that enables a collaborative approach to solving these issues when reported. It is important to note that should an Officer identify a Category 1 Hazard during a Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) assessment, formal enforcement action is a statutory requirement.

I will ensure that you receive a copy of the Council's full response to the Secretary of State's letter, once this has been composed by Officers.

Questions to Councillor Chris Lloyd, Lead Member for Leisure, from Councillor Sara Bedford

11x) *What is being done to find the vandal frequently damaging the HIVE building in Leavesden Country Park and to repair the damage?*

Written response:

The damaged sign has been reported to the Police, but there has been no outcome from this. Officers delayed replacing the sign to allow the repeated ASB to stop over the summer/lighter evenings. A new sign is currently being developed and will be positioned higher up on the building. It is anticipated this sign will be installed in mid-December.

Supplementary question:

What action had been taken by the police and can a copy of the new sign design be sent to the usual list of Councillors who are informed on Leavesden Country Park issues.

Response to supplementary question:

The Lead Member would provide a written response on what action the Police had done. They assumed the design had not been done but if it had it should be shared. Due to the weather conditions I don't think it would have been installed by mid-December.

Written response to supplementary question:

Officers are presently awaiting a response from the Police on their investigations at LCP on the vandalised HIVE sign.

The style of the design will be the same as previous but with a different fixing to the building. Latest information from the contractors is that the sign will be installed next week. Once this has been confirmed, an email will go out to Ward Councillors.

11y) *Why has the defibrillator installed on the wall of the cafe at Leavesden Country Park (for which I obtained the funding) STILL not been commissioned by the YMCA?*

Written response:

This project is being managed by the YMCA. However, Officers understand that the defibrillator was installed on the 23 November 2022.

Supplementary question

I have been chasing this up for 6 months. As I and others seem unable to get answers out of YMCA does the Lead Member know what the reasons for delay were and why did Council officers not inform me, as soon as they were informed, requiring me to chase it up after the question was submitted to Council.

Response to supplementary question:

The project was managed by the YMCA. I have requested on numerous occasions the answer to the question but have not had an adequate answer. Happy to support you in getting the answer we both want.

Written response to supplementary question:

1. The funding arrived promptly with no issues - thank you
2. The order form provided by the council was not accepted by London Heart initially, which added the first delay

3. After a longer wait for the unit to arrive (months, not weeks) it was clear that the installation arrangements were more complex than we had been led to believe by London Heart (i.e. the battery version needed an electrical supply and a specific one at that) -
4. All the Grant was spent on the device, with nothing left for installation and it took the YMCA team some time to work through their planned maintenance schedule and get to the installation
5. Once installation was complete, we switched it on...and were then informed it needed to be decommissioned until the process of registration with the NHS service was complete, which also took time
6. At the same time, the conversation with your colleagues about signage also began and I am not certain where the delays were here - both sides appeared to be waiting for each other.
7. We turned the unit back on again and put up a temporary sign above the unit, but my understanding is still that other signs about the park are intended

Question for Cllr Phil Williams, Lead Member for Environmental Services, Climate Change and Sustainability form Cllr Reena Ranger

11z) Many Three Rivers District Council streets are swept once a month, with main roads swept on a weekly basis. In the autumn some roads can become liable to flooding due to leaves blocking drains and some pavements can become slippery due to being covered in wet leaves. Will this administration consider adjusting the street sweeping schedule in autumn to increase the focus on those areas affected by fallen leaves?

Written response:

We are fortunate in Three Rivers to have an abundance of green and open spaces and well established trees lining the streets. The difficulty with dealing with leaf fall, as I am sure you will be aware, is that it happens quickly and all within a short period of time. This makes the clearing the leaves extremely difficult.

There is specialist equipment out there that can be purchased to clear leaves however this is a costly option to consider for only 6 weeks or so period a year consequently we try and utilise the existing mechanical sweeper's suction hoses to clear accumulations of leaf fall. This will mean that general sweeper's activities are delayed however in "normal" circumstance we do try and get round our schedules every 6 weeks.

The service targets known problem areas before working through their leafing schedules. Drains are often blocked by grit and general detritus before the leafing season begins and therefore leaf fall will over exacerbate the situation and lead to excess surface water and flooding.

Should any Councillors or members of the public know of any road or pavement that needs particular attention; please can they report it on our website along with a photo if possible?

Supplementary question:

When the leaves fall and they are not swept away and become spongy and barriers for water, block drains and provided a picture of resident in a puddle of water. Will you help residents not to have to stand in a puddle and get rid of the leaves in dangerous areas so that they may have safe passage?

Supplementary response:

My response is similar to the written answer given but asked the Member to share the photograph of the resident which it was understood was Cllr Scarth. As advised you can report details on the website and officers can deal with it. Officers are continually looking at ways to improve matters. The leaves fall between a 6-8 week period and it is impossible to get all the roads swept so advise the officers and they will look to clear it. The incidents I have reported have been cleared within 24 hours.

Councillor Andrew Scarth made a point of personal explanation and advised that the gully is reported to Herts County Council via their website which I do report regularly but they are not always able to deal with them urgently.

Question for Cllr Phil Williams. Lead Member for Environmental Services, Climate Change and Sustainability form Cllr Chris Mitchell

11aa) After your answer at our previous Council meeting, I attended the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership's (HCCSP) annual event on 9 November which emphasised the need for better preparation for adaptation and resilience. I see that our "climate emergency and sustainability action plan" has been updated. I consider that there is lot more that could be done on adaptation and resilience. I want to mention some particular risks and offer my help on this important subject. Following a storm on 23 October, when 30mm of rain fell on Three Rivers, we can see that road drains struggle to cope with heavy rainfall which is forecast to become more intense and more frequent. There is no mention of fire risk or disease in plants and trees in the plan. New buildings are included, but there is very little about adaptation and resilience of existing housing. This topic has been discussed at the LEC committee but much more needs to be done, with greater urgency.

Councillor Phil Williams, as you are leading on this, will you commit to making this a priority and work up a consultation, firstly with members and then the public to identify key issues and areas of concern?

We would then need to implement any measures identified and keep Hertfordshire County Council and Thames Water on their toes for maintenance and improvement of drainage infrastructure. Do you agree that more needs to be done on resilience and adaptation and what budget do you propose for this issue in the next year?

Written response:

Climate change, adaption, mitigation and resilience is very much priority for this Council. As it was discussed at the recent LEC Committee you will be aware that we are currently updating the Council's Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy with the revised strategy having greater emphasis placed on adaptation and resilience and we will be consulting on this in the coming spring. This leads on from a renewed focus on Net Zero and Climate Resilience within the draft Corporate Framework for 2023-26 which was considered at the same Committee and is currently out to consultation. Also within our recent Tree Strategy and the emerging Nature recovery strategy consideration is being given to disease in our plants and trees and how we can best manage and where possible prevent this. The Climate Strategy Emergency and Sustainability Strategy is just one avenue through which the council is addressing these issues, it is work that is embedded across services and a range of strategies and action plans. You are also aware

that officers are compiling an adaptation risk register for the Council and would welcome any contribution from Councillors regarding specific issues in their ward. As you know the budget setting process for next year is underway but this is a complex process not least because we will not get our settlement from Government until just before Christmas. Climate Change and Sustainability is a priority work stream for this Council and as such is at the heart of new Corporate Framework, however, what exact budget we will be able to assign to this work is something that will have to evolve over the coming weeks and months as we work towards Budget Council in February.

Maintenance of surface water drains is the responsibility of Highways and out of the control of this Authority. However to encourage residents not to build over driveways our Greening Your Home leaflets given out at pre-apps and advertised through social media helps to discourage this activity, thus helping to raise awareness of the consequence of impermeable driveways and their contribution to surface water flooding.

It is worth understanding that we do not have direct influence with either Thames Water or Affinity but working with them and the Lead Local Flood Authority through the Water Partnership to ensure that critical issues in the District are not overlooked. For example our recent robust response to Thames's DWMP will be followed through at the Water Partnership requiring Thames to explain their plans (or lack of them) for this District. We have set up an engagement event for Affinity Water's Water Resources Management Plan on December 6 in order to ensure that all stakeholders are fully aware of the proposals, and we hope this will make it simpler for them to feed in to these critical plans which are going to be crucial for our water and chalk stream resilience over the coming decades.

Following several small grass fires this summer, officers have been reviewing areas of meadow grass on TRDC open space and will be proposing amendments, which incorporate fire breaks to reduce fire risk to neighbouring property during periods of particularly hot, dry weather. This will be added to the adaptation section in the next update to make it more clear on the actions we have already taken. With regard to plant and tree disease this is referenced in the biodiversity section of the action plan and with more detail in the Tree Strategy. https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/media/project_tr/document/tree-strategy-2022.pdf

You suggested that the plan has little to help prepare existing dwellings for adaptation. As you know there is no funding available for the able to pay sector, but we are working as hard as possible to insulate the homes of our more vulnerable residents by making the most of every grant opportunity as they are released namely: LAD1b completed with 87 homes receiving measures, LAD2 completed with monitoring figures expected imminently and LAD3 has just commenced,. In addition the ECO4 targeted programme saw works at 137 homes in the district and ECO4 has recently been made accessible to all residents. The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 1 saw retrofitting implemented at 83 Thrive Homes and we have just applied for Wave 2 for a further 155 homes. Insulation is of course critical in keeping homes warm in winter and cool in summer. The Council's Greener Living leaflet encourages able to pay residents to think about improving their insulation, and by targeting information at them when they apply for planning permission we hope this increased the chance of people taking action higher. The leaflet provides information on renewable energy, driveways, saving water, and planting trees to

provide shade. Through our engagement work with residents association, parishes, local areas forums and various social media campaigns we work hard to spread these messages.

Supplementary question:

About resilience and adaptation would you be prepared to meet up before the next LEC meeting to see that we are doing all we can to protect our residents in Three Rivers

Written response to supplementary question:

A meeting is being arranged for the New Year.

Question for Cllr Phil Williams. Lead Member for Environmental Services, Climate Change and Sustainability from Cllr Stephen King

11bb) Is the Lead Member content that that all mixed recycling bins serving blocks of flats in South Oxhey are being emptied on a weekly basis and what evidence does he have to support his answer?

Written response:

I am aware that there are still a few issues with some of the new blocks of flats in South Oxhey not receiving a regular collection. There has been a consistent problem with not being able to access contaminated bins however most of the problems have been resolved now apart from Pugh Court which even the residents are finding difficulty accessing. Contamination issues are also ongoing and Management Companies are being contacted by the Environmental Enforcement Officers when reported by the collection crews.

Supplementary question:

Some photographs were circulated to Members of the issues at the flats and thought the Lead Member had not fully understood the question. There is far more to South Oxhey than new blocks and what is their opinion on the state of this and what is this authority going to do about it.

Supplementary response:

Will need to know the context behind this. It does not look great but context is everything. Throughout the country authorities have major issues, not just three rivers, with flats and recycling and is something Herts Waste Aware are working on alongside us. We do aim to get it sorted but it is so easy for one person in a flat to contaminate a whole load which means it does not get collected because it is contaminated and possibly could end up with something like this but I don't know the context of this.

Councillor Stephen King made a personal point of clarification under Rule 16(14) that the bins are marked mixed recycling but they are still emptying the big green bins

The Lead Member advised they could talk to the Member outside the meeting but advised that mixed recycling can get contaminated

Questions to Councillor Roger Seabourne, Lead Member for Community Safety and Partnerships, from Councillor Reena Ranger

11cc) *“What has the Council done following the passing of the following Motion in October 2021 which was proposed by myself and seconded by Cllr Hayward: This Council believes that every woman, and in fact every person, in Three Rivers has the right to walk in our District with freedom and confidence knowing*

that they are safe. The District Council is responsible for many car parks, green spaces and high streets. This Council resolves to undertake a review on any measures that may be needed to ensure we are doing all that we can to ensure the safety of all.”

Written response:

Following the passing of the October 2021 Motion, the Council in collaboration with members of the Community Safety Partnership have formed a Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) task group.

This group currently has representation from TRDC officers, Herts Fire and Rescue, Herts Police, Refuge, HCC & Services for Young People.

To date the task group has:

- Reviewed concerns highlighted through the Countywide survey published last year. Each location of concern that could be identified was attended by police and actions progressed to improve safety, e.g. provision of increased patrols.
- Created a local action plan
- Developed “feelings of safety” surveys on Echo & promoted these in local areas, on social media and through the partnership bulletin. These are open ended surveys and findings are reviewed regularly. Concerns have been raised about information not being specific, e.g., alleyway, but not which alleyway. Police and Echo team and working improve the information shared.
- The Councils newly appointed community engagement officer will be running engagement events with the police in areas where few/no survey responses have been received.
- Run 6 free self defence sessions for residents in Abbots Langley. This initial pilot was very well received and Herts Constabulary will be rolling this initiative out countywide.
- Increase awareness of the Hollieguard App – disseminating information amongst partnership staff to appropriately advise the public.
- Services for Young People have been discussing VAWG openly within their youth groups, and looking at appropriate behaviours & healthy relationships.

Supplementary question:

The motion asks for a review and measures which may be needed by bringing together all stakeholders including local Ward Councillors, Resident Associations and residents but one year on it seems this has not been done can you let me know why we have not done what the motion asked.

Response to supplementary question:

The written answer shows an awful lot has been done on this issue. All groups were consulted and no one excluded from this and I am confident the groups you represented were consulted. If you are not happy with the fact that it might of have not met to the letter the details of the motion and the spirit of the motion of what you wanted to achieve, although I don't think this is the case, I am happy to arrange a meeting with the Chief Officer and yourself to give some further explanation and go through all the responses and see where you think there still some gaps. Everything which was reported from the groups was followed up on.

Written response to the supplementary question

Councillor Reena Ranger requested to contact Councillor Roger Seabourne if they feel a meeting is required with the Chief Officer

Questions to Councillor Roger Seabourne, Lead Member for Community Safety and Partnerships, from Councillor Joan King

11dd) How many Hackney Carriage licences have been applied for between 1 December 2021 and 1 December 2022 and how many of those applications were granted/renewed and is it number applied for will increase/or decrease in the next 12 months?

Written response:

There are currently 12 licensed Hackney Carriage Drivers in TRDC. Between 1 December 2021 and 1 December 2022 there was 1 new Hackney Carriage Driver (HCDL) licence issued and 7 renewals. Licences are generally issued on a 3 year term.

Officers anticipate this number may decrease as some drivers have intimated they will be retiring and not renewing. There is also the impact of the pandemic on the trade to consider which has more generally resulted in reduced numbers of taxi drivers and vehicles in the District, and also previously the impact of Uber.

Supplementary question:

How many of the 12 licenses cover vehicles or drivers who operate from the rank at Carpenders Park station and is the Lead Member aware that they have raised the current rent for their very small office and toilet by £1,000 a year.

Response to supplementary question:

The Lead Member advised that they were not able to advise which taxis were located where but was fully aware of the issue of taxis. When the Licensing Committee last met with a request to increase the amount that they are allowed to charge we proposed a level above that. We are fully aware of the fact that a lot of people rely on taxis, particularly in South Oxhey, as it can be one of the only forms of transport available. We are also aware of the fact if they can't make a living there is going to be fewer and fewer of them providing a service to the community.

They would be happy to facilitate a meeting with the taxi drivers. Although we review the fares on an annual basis given inflation and petrol prices we would not necessarily wait the 12 months and were happy to review during the year

Written response to supplementary question:

The Lead Member for Community Safety and Partnerships/Head of Regulatory Services to facilitate a meeting.

Question to Councillor Keith Martin, Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services, from Councillor Sara Bedford

11ee) Why have the minutes of the last Council meeting held 35 days before the deadline for submission of questions not been published before the deadline? This of course makes it far more difficult to compose follow-up questions and also prevents members of the public checking what happened at the meeting. What is the delay in approval? Does the Lead Member agree that for transparency and openness with the public that these minutes should be available within ten days of the meeting?

Written response:

There was a delay in the drafting of the minutes due to holiday taken in the Committee Team after the Council meeting in October. The team has also had reduced resources since the beginning of July and have not been able to fill one of the Committee Manager roles having advertised it twice. A third advertisement

is currently live and it is hoped an appointment can be made in the New Year. An action sheet from Council is circulated to all Councillors 5 working days after the meeting and we will ensure this is published on the Council minute's page on the website while the full minutes are being drafted. The drafting of the minutes requires officers to listen to the recording of the meeting to ensure that we have captured all the details correctly particularly around where questions can be asked, as Members are meticulous about how these details are recorded. Once the full minutes are drafted they go through a reviewing and checking process, as do other minutes we produce. As the minutes are often quite a lengthy document (30-50) pages this can sometimes take a little time. Following the December meeting officers will endeavour to get the December Council minutes published by 23 December 2023 but by no later than Friday 6 January 2023. Going forward, and once we have full resources in the team, we will look to introduce a 10 working day deadline.

No supplementary question

Question to Councillor Keith Martin, Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services, from Councillor Chris Mitchell

11ff) I thank Josh Sills for the Sept and Oct statistics for the wait time on answering phone calls to TRDC. I am still getting complaints from residents who have waited for over 30 minutes and even 40 minutes for an answer. Do you consider that an average of 8 Minutes wait time with over 45 minutes recorded for the longest is good customer service? If not, and I hope you agree, will you support the proposed motion(s) that have been put forward in the 13 December Full council meeting. If you consider the wait times are acceptable, please can you justify this in a written answer?

Written response:

An average wait time of around 8 minutes is reasonable. During November 2022, 76.9% of calls answered in under 10 minutes, 97.6% of calls were answered in under 30 minutes and 99.8% of calls in under 40 minutes. The percentage of customers waiting over 30 minutes is small and the council is continuing to try to find ways to reduce the longest wait times, within available resources.

The council's current Customer Experience Strategy was agreed at 23 January 2020 Policy & Resources Committee and includes priorities to encourage channel shift to online and customer self-serve contact methods. The council has therefore been focused on encouraging customers who have access to and the ability to use online services to do so, by promoting the sign up on the customer portal for customers to make service requests and to subscribe to email notifications. This will allow the call centre to be able to spend time dealing with those customers who are unable to access or use online services. The more complicated issues that may require a phone call are likely to take longer to resolve and so the call time may be longer causing other callers to wait in a queue. The council is focused on resolving these issues which can often be from our most vulnerable residents.

Customers previously were not informed where they were in the call queue and when it became busy the system would not allow new callers to join the queue, and just advised that the lines were busy and to try again later. Having a call queue that tells customers where they are in the queue now gives them more choice to choose whether to wait, try again later or use online services if able to do so, which has improved the customer experience.

Supplementary question:

The Councillor did not accept that 8 minutes average is good and thought Customer Services should be one of our priorities. The Council gets a poor reputation in my view on this and I want to know how we can put this right. There should be targets which are measurable and reasonable which lead to good customer service. Do you accept that and if you do we can agree on targets at the P&R Committee.

Response to supplementary question:

Written response to be provided.

You have referred to two motions in your question which have budgetary implications which is why they are going to P&R Committee

Written response to supplementary question:

This is an ongoing piece of work that will be discussed at the next Policy and Resources Committee.

Question to Councillor Keith Martin, Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services, from Councillor Stephen Cox

11gg) If the up-to-date electoral registration statistics again have not been published prior to this meeting in the tabulated manner below, please will the Lead Member do so now and advise of this year's lame excuse for not having done so already?

WARD	No. of Properties responding	No. of non- properties	Response Rate
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Abbots Langley &
Bedmond

Carpenders Park

Chorleywood North
& Sarratt

Chorleywood
South & Maple
Cross

Dickinsons

Durrants

Gade Valley

Leavesden

Moor Park &
Eastbury

Oxhey Hall &
Hayling

Penn & Mill End

Rickmansworth
Town

South Oxhey

Overall District
Totals

Written response:

WARD	No. of Properties	No. of non- responding properties	Response Rate %
Abbots Langley & Bedmond	2884	90	96.88
Carpenders Park	2930	74	97.47
Chorleywood North & Sarratt	2924	64	97.81
Chorleywood South & Maple Cross	3145	87	97.23
Dickinsons	2832	122	95.69
Durrants	2544	33	98.70
Gade Valley	3031	224	92.61
Leavesden	3352	84	97.49
Moor Park & Eastbury	2268	172	92.42
Oxhey Hall & Hayling	2853	135	95.27

Penn & Mill End	2969	143	95.18
Rickmansworth Town	3664	336	90.83
South Oxhey	3440	340	90.12
Overall District Totals	38836	1904	95.1

Supplementary question:

What action was or will be taken in respect of the fact that neither Rickmansworth Town Ward or South Oxhey Ward hit the 92% target and does the Lead Member think that 340 non responding properties is too many in South Oxhey Ward. What commitment will the Lead Member give that this will be addressed by officers or will I have go around the streets of South Oxhey to drum up support?

Written response to supplementary question:

It is regrettable that the performance indicator target for Rickmansworth Town and South Oxhey Wards was not met. The Council does follow Electoral Commission guidance for completing the annual canvass, this includes three contact attempts to properties that have not been data matched by DWP. One of those contacts is a personal visit. We will continue to review the different stages in the process to see if any improvements can be made.

Urgent questions accepted under Rule 14(3) to Councillor Keith Martin, Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services from Councillor Sara Bedford

11hh) After parliamentary work from Daisy Cooper MP, those households who do not have a domestic energy supply and have not received support through the main Energy Bills Support Scheme will now be able to access the same £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme available to the overwhelming majority of households. These households living in park homes and supported living are some of the most vulnerable in our community. What information has the Council received from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy about how eligible households should be identified?

Written response:

The Energy Bill Support Scheme Alternative Funding scheme was included in the updated policy paper from BEIS on 21 October. The scheme will give £400 of support for households across the UK that would otherwise miss out on the Energy Bills Support Scheme was included in the announcement. The Bill will provide powers to deliver the funding through designated bodies which we understand to be local authorities. BEIS have yet to publish detailed guidance on the scheme.

Supplementary question:

The mechanism for claims and payments were not in the communication of 21 October and was chased up by the MP on numerous occasions. There was a ministerial answer given on 26 November after the deadline for questions. Bearing in mind the Minister expects this money to be paid out in January has the Council still not received information from BEIS in order to know how this will be progressed?

Written response to supplementary question:

Detailed guidance is still awaited, details of the scheme will be circulated once guidance has been received and considered.

11ii) What processes will the Council use to ensure residents can claim and receive payment within a few days once the scheme commences?

Written response:

The Energy Bill Support Scheme Alternative Funding scheme was included in the updated policy paper from BEIS on 21 October. The scheme will give £400 of support for households across the UK that would otherwise miss out on the Energy Bills Support Scheme was included in the announcement. The Bill will provide powers to deliver the funding through designated bodies which we understand to be local authorities. BEIS have yet to publish detailed guidance on the scheme.

Supplementary question:

The answer to my second question seems to be the same as the question 11hh. If the Council has not received any information from the Ministry has it not thought itself what processes it might use to identify these people bearing in mind the short timescales and the disadvantage of the people involved?

Written response to supplementary question:

The Council needs to design a scheme within the guidance which is still awaited. It would be inappropriate to design a scheme without the guidance.

Urgent questions accepted under Rule 14(3) to Councillor Steve Drury, Chair of the Planning Committee from Councillor Sara Bedford

11jj) What effect on development control recommendations and decisions does the Chair believe will result from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities' letter announcing likely changes to the Levelling Up Bill in respect of planning policy and housing numbers?

Written response:

There is unlikely to be any immediate impact as the announcements from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities have limited weight until such time as the changes to legislation progress through the formal stages to become an Act with related regulations. This will take some time and whilst the announcements are welcome, in removing nationally imposed housing targets, until the Act is passed the current requirements for 5 years housing land supply remain. We will keep a close eye on the Planning Inspectorate decisions in the meantime and continue to progress our own Plan.

No supplementary question.

12. LEADER AND LEAD MEMBER REPORTS AND TO RECEIVE ANY QUESTIONS

These reports were taken as read but were not considered or questions raised as there was not sufficient time.

13. MOTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 11

All motions that were due to be debated 1, 2 and 4 fell under Rule 11(4)

CHAIR OF COUNCIL