

# **LEISURE, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE**

## **MINUTES**

Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth on Wednesday 23 November 2022 between 7.30pm and 9.20pm.

Councillors present:

Chris Lloyd (Lead Member for Leisure)  
Stephen King  
David Major  
Chris Mitchell  
Debbie Morris  
Paul Rainbow (for Cllr Roger Seabourne)

Phil Williams (Lead Member for  
Environmental Services, Climate Change  
and Sustainability)  
Ciarán Reed  
Jon Tankard  
Anne Winter  
Andrea Fraser (for Cllr Rue Grewal)

---

Officers present:

Ray Figg, Head of Community Services  
Emma Sheridan, Interim Head of Community Partnerships  
Sally Riley, Finance Business Partner  
Charlotte Gomes, Landscape and Leisure Development Manager  
Kelly Barnard, Leisure Contracts and Landscapes Project Officer  
Joanna Hewitson, Climate Change and Sustainability Officer  
Jess Hodges, Community Biodiversity Officer  
Sarah Haythorpe, Principal Committee Manger  
Ryan Watson, Sports Development Officer

**Councillor Phil Williams in the Chair**

### **LEC 10/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence received from Councillors Rue Grewal and Roger Seabourne with the substitutes being Councillors Andrea Fraser and Paul Rainbow.

### **LEC 11/22 MINUTES**

The minutes of the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee meeting held on 12 October 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair of the meeting.

### **LEC 12/22 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Agenda item 11A (Climate Emergency and Sustainability Action Plan Update) had been added to the agenda after the agenda was published and had not been available the 5 clear working days before the meeting.

The Chair had ruled that the item was urgent to be taken at the meeting so that officers could continue to progress the action plan and the Strategy.

**LEC 13/22 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

None received.

**LEC 14/22 BUDGET MONITORING – PERIOD 6**

This report covered this Committees financial position over the medium term (2022 – 2025) as at Period 6 (end of September)

The Period 6 comprehensive Budget Management report has already been presented to the Policy & Resources Committee at its meeting on 7 November 2022 which sought approval to a change in the Council’s 2022 - 2025 medium-term financial plan.

The Finance Business Partner went through the variances relevant to this Committee which were:

On capital – the Barton Way MUGA – we had implemented the budget which was approved for CIL spend at P&R Committee in June;

On revenue – there was a net positive variance at Watersmeet with details on explained in the comments of the report. On Sports Development activities we had increased activities which had provided increased income. On Playing Fields and Open Spaces some money had been transferred from Kerbside recycling. On Kerbside recycling itself we had received increased income due to the sale of our recycling and were transferring some of the budget to other areas in Environmental Protection primarily to pay for the increased cost in the transport contract. All the details on the transfers were provided in the report.

In response to a Member question on job vacancies and why the roles had not been filled. The Head of Community Services responded that with regard to the HGV and Loader vacancies a year ago we had around 7/8 vacancies and was not able to fill the posts. That was the primary why the Council had introduced a market supplement for this financial year and the following 2 financial years. In context with the rest of the County we are probably the best performing Council in terms of the lack of vacancies. The Finance Business Partner was able to advise that as at 1 November we had one HGV driver vacancy and one loader vacancy.

RESOLVED:  
Noted the contents of the report.

**LEC 15/22 STRATEGIC CORPORATE AND SERVICE PLANNING 2023-2026**

The Interim Head of Community Partnerships advised that this was a traditional report at this time of the year following the presentation of the draft

Corporate Framework to P&R Committee earlier this month. This report enabled the Committee to comment on the emerging draft Service Plans of those Council Services which report into this Committee and the draft Corporate Framework. More complete documents would come back to the Committee post-Christmas for agreement by Council as part of the budget setting process in February/March. Following this all the other strategies which feed in would be reviewed so that there is a golden thread. The Corporate Framework provided the overall strategic directives for the Council and the strategies which sit underneath are the way we will deliver the wider framework.

A Member said on Page 6, the paragraph immediately above the bold bullet points it stated "Our High Streets need to be liveable, and to adapt to meet the changing needs and expectations of the communities they serve and we will support our traditional and emerging High Street businesses in their transformation and ongoing role as anchors of sustainable community resilience" to them that implied they need to have residential use as well which they did not think officers meant and wanted clarification. On Page 7 the paragraph immediately above the bold print in line 5 stated that "Three healthy hubs have been established in South Oxhey, Mill End and Abbots Langley, bringing services and health prevention into the heart of communities." Did officers mean health prevention? Should it be around the prevention of ill health? On Page 8 the first bullet point stated "Make further progress towards the management of a Net Carbon Zero Council estate" most people would understand the word Council estate being a collection of homes which are social housing and thought this wording was confusing.

The Interim Head of Community Partnerships thought it was possibly not the right word if it was causing confusion on Page 6 and would consider rewording. The word "Liveable" had been used in terms of the way we live and the way we use our local communities. This had changed post covid and the high street itself is changing from what was predominantly retail based to more service driven and needed to be liveable in that it needs to serve our communities in the way they want to live now. On page 7 the wording was around the prevention of health conditions but officers would look at the wording and also the wording on the bullet point on Page 8.

The Member understood details would come back following the consultation but was concerned the word democracy was not included under local leadership and the word families for sustainable communities. A Member responded that we don't just care about families we care for all the communities and for everyone.

A Member asked in relation to the service plans and the service projects, on the Eastbury recreation playground they had been told this was due an upgrade in 2024 year but it does not appear in the service plan or work programme.

The Leisure and Landscape Manager agreed the project could be added into the service plan as it was a project as part of the capital programme which had been agreed and would do this for all the years which are covered in the service plan.

RESOLVED:

Noted the report, draft corporate framework before going out for public consultation and the draft service plans and noted the comments made.

## **LEISURE**

### **LEC 16/22 DRAFT THREE RIVERS NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY**

The Community Biodiversity Officer advised that the purpose of the report was to summarise the content and implications of the draft Three Rivers Nature Recovery Strategy and recommend that the draft Strategy be released for a period of public consultation. Appendix A detailed the draft Nature Recovery Strategy. This would be a new document for the Council which would address the Council's approach to nature conservation, habitat management and enhancement. The draft Three Rivers Nature Recovery Strategy is not a local Nature Recovery Strategy as per the Environment Act of 2021 as these would be created at a larger scale than District level and would answer key points as part of the legislation.

The Council's strategy would be accompanied by a 5 year action plan which would identify and prioritise actions to be undertaken for the benefit of biodiversity and the local community both on Council owned land and when working in partnership with other organisations and landowners in the District. The costs of implementing the actions were yet to be fully assessed and would be dependent on both the outcome of the development work and also the success of external funding which may require the need to reassess the priorities. It was intended that the strategy would dovetail in with existing strategies (Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy) delivering co benefits for climate change mitigation and adaptation and also the Council's Tree Strategy which sets out the roles and responsibilities of the Council. The Nature Recovery Strategy would be able to support the Tree Strategy acknowledging that trees are a key component of biodiversity present in the District. The legislation section covers three pieces of legislation relating to the Natural World but is not exhaustive. The strategy would cover three main areas with details provided in the report on each area. Following presentation to the Policy and Resources Committee earlier this month two amendments had been made to the strategy which is firstly the adding of kilometres squared on Page 38 and a correction of the Withey Beds location from Croxley Green to Moor Park at Point 46. The recommendation was to go out for public consultation from December 2022 for a 6 week period.

Members raised the following points with the officers responses provided:

On Page 11, Paragraph 43 could the final two sentences be simplified on the canal as there seemed to be some replication? Also the grand union current course dated to be 1929 although it was built in 1790s. If Members were unclear should we consider taking out the date. It was agreed officers would discuss this with the Member and the Lead Member offline.

On Page 12 it mentioned in channel improvements what would those be? The Community Biodiversity officer advised that depending on those improvements within the District and the land we own it would be dependent on what the conditions are already. If the water flow was too fast we might be making the river channel wider with a few obstructions to slow it down or if the flow was too slow we might add in obstructions to increase the flow but it

would be dependent on the exact location but would benefit the biodiversity of the site. It would take into account if it was on a flood plain and the impact that would have. The Environment Agency would be consulted on any decisions.

Page 13 - Trees and Woodlands it speaks about ancient woodlands and wetland woodlands but had tried to find mention of the two terms in the Tree Strategy but they were not mentioned and wondered what sites were being referred to. The Community Biodiversity Officer said the examples in the District which could be added into the strategy were the Rickmansworth Aquadrome which had some fantastic wet woodland and Bishops Wood which had some fantastic ancient woodland. The officer would add them in as some examples.

On Page 20 it speaks about hedgerows and wondered if it would be appropriate within the document to have more details on historic conservation and initially thought about the hedgerow in South Chorleywood that was on the old border between Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire. They also asked for clarification on cross department work on protecting the historic nature of hedgerows as well as the biodiversity impact of them. The Community Biodiversity Officer advised that the Hedgerows Regulations Act of 1991 stated that hedgerows are considered to be of importance for three factors: length, location and it's the importance so would include its heritage value. As we work on the strategy we will be able to investigate the value we have on hedgerows in the District.

Members welcomed the excellent report and the partnership working taking place.

A Member thought we needed a biodiversity baseline as we need to know where we are right now so that we can monitor the improvements. On the canal they would like to see climbing points coming out the water as at the moment it was a steep bank. This would allow water voles to get out of the water. The Council also need to ensure partners are involved particularly Parish Councils as local communities need to own this. They had seen a big increase in biodiversity but would like to see a map of the ancient hedges and ancient woodland so we can identify those. On hedgehogs they were working with the local plans team to have gravel boards as part of a planning application condition.

The Community Biodiversity Officer said on the biodiversity baseline, HCC as part of the Hertfordshire Climate Change Sustainability Partnership had recently produced a baseline which is County wide and at quite a high level so does not necessarily drill down into the specifics but was something we can use to build on. As Members will see from some of the actions we are keen to build on our GIS mapping and build a baseline as part of the strategy. The Rivers Trust will be looking into the climbing points more. Maps of woodlands would be looked at as part of the GIS mapping and the Council were keen to inform the public on this. Officers would look into the hedgehog gravel boards.

The Chair advised that we need to reach out of all community bodies as not all areas are Parished in the District. It was asked if schools could be included in the consultation. The Community Biodiversity Officer agreed and they would be added.

On being put to the Committee the Chair declared the strategy was agreed the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

Agreed the draft strategy as outlined in Appendix A subject to the comments made.

For the draft strategy to undertake a 6-week period of public consultation

For the final strategy to be presented at the 13 March 2023 Policy and Resources Committee and the 15 March 2023 Leisure, Environment and Community Committee.

**LEC 17/22 OXHEY WOODS MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022 - 2027**

The purpose of this report is to present the new Management Plan for Oxhey Woods, following public consultation and engagement with stakeholders and to recommend its adoption by the Council.

The Leisure Contracts and Landscape Officer reported that the current plan runs out this year and this was the new management plan for the next 5 years. We have management plans for all the large open spaces in Three Rivers with this one specifically for Oxhey Woods. The plan listed all the actions for the next 5 years although some of these will be aspirational and would be down to budgets. Each year officers meet with Countryside Management Service (CMS) and we plan out the actions which will take place that year. We also receive an element of granting funding from Countryside Stewardship which helps us to be able to produce some of the actions as well.

A Member raised the query regarding the inline pond adjacent to the easy access trail and whether the aims of any works were to make this look like a pond and could this work be a priority in the project if so.

The Leisure Contracts and Landscape Projects Officer advised they would check the exact action for the pond and when the works were due to be carried out, according to the action plan and advise this to the committee.

There is a typo word on Page 26 regarding the word crab apple.

On sculptures pleased to see officers were proposing 3 new ones with one being a rope swing. The Member asked if we had any idea what the other two sculptures would be and how are officers going to decide. The woods were popular with dog walkers and wondered if a dog sculpture could be considered. The sculptures were generally in good condition but the wood had weathered on some so could they be cleaned or restored.

The Leisure Contracts and Landscape Officer said officers could certainly look at the restoration of the sculptures that are in place and believed that maintenance was done but would check. The maintenance and the 3 additional sculptures could be included as part of the project. In terms of the new sculptures we can see how we consult with people and whether that is done with schools or by consultation with the users of Oxhey Woods. There is no proposals at this time on what the new sculptures would be. We can ensure we consult the Ward Councillors and also the Moor Park and Eastbury Councillors.

On the footpaths and the London loop through South Oxhey playing field, they would like to work with officers and HCC to get it made a public right of way as it would benefit from money from the County Council if it was a public right of way. Stretches of the London loop were difficult to use although it was advertised by London Underground and you can access it from public transport. They acknowledged making it a public right way would take some time. Officers would work with the Lead Member on this.

With reference to the signage for car parking it seemed to a Member to be out dated information and asked if it could be removed. There was a lot of information around the amount of time you can park there but this did not need to be clarified numerous times. The Leisure Contracts and Landscape Officer advised that the source of the information was Regulatory Services and what was there they believed was correct but in order to make it easier for users they would see if any signage could be removed.

A Member referred to the large drainage inflow pictures and said it does flood when we get rain and the footpath at the back is not passable at times and residents were not able to use it. The drainage was deep with leaves. The residents had gateways from their gardens onto the footpath as it is a fire exit.

The Leisure Contract and Landscape Officer advised there would be an opportunity to look at the natural flood management as part of the plan.

On being put to the Committee the recommendation was declared CARRIED by the chair the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

Adopt the new 5 year Oxhey Woods Management Plan (2022 – 2027)

## **LEC 18/22    SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STRATEGY**

The Sports Development Officer advised that the purpose of this report was to provide an update to the Council's existing physical activity strategy which had now expired. The document provided a strategic overview of the Council's role in supporting the physical activity, the achievement of which we underpin with an action plan. In terms of the new strategy the vision and overall priority themes had been retained but there had been updates to the supporting statements to reflect the changes and updates from Sport England and Sports Partnership. Particular statements updated were around health and inequalities, targeting under represented groups, the Council's own ambitions around green spaces and sustainable travel and greater collaboration between organisations across the District. Whilst we did see some drops in physical activity during the pandemic Members would be pleased to see that this had recovered quite well and we were above the Hertfordshire and England averages. Whilst this was good to see we do know there are health inequalities in the District and the purpose of the strategy would be contributing to reduce those and increase levels of physical activity amongst our most inactive. The action plan would support the strategy and detail further the projects and programmes that we will be using to deliver these either run directly by TRDC or externally through Partner organisations and things that we support such as parkrun who can all play a key part in

delivering and influencing the outcomes. All the KPIs had been updated following the receipt of new information.

A Member said health was for the whole community and would like to see activities for everyone. There were walks in the morning provided but nothing in the afternoon or weekends for the people who are working. Could there also be activities such as women only walks as there are people in the community who are not able to go on mixed walks and also a one hour a week women only swimming session.

The Sports Development Officer said in terms of the TRDC programme we have a wide range of things both in the day and in the evening. We have been part of "This Girl Can Campaign" from Sport England with a festival held in South Oxhey providing women and girls activities. Details on all the activities are provided on the website at <https://www.threeriversleisure.co.uk/>

The Head of Community Services said the Council would link in with our leisure contractor regarding a women only swimming session. The Head of Community Services knew it was something that had been done previously but the numbers had declined but would make sure SLM at least undertake an expression of interest to see if people are generally interested in doing a women only swimming session.

The Lead Member said on the health walks they are organised by HCC and we help publicise them although they are generally all during the day Monday to Friday but it would be worth raising the question. They wanted to see people having the maximum opportunity to exercise and for those who don't want to run a park-run they are now actively encouraging people to walk.

A Member said there was no referral to clubs in the document and wondered if there was a space within the document to expand on how as a Council we could be co-operating with the excellent pre-existing sports clubs we have got in our District to help them increase membership and participation in team sports. The Sports Development Officer would incorporate this into the strategy. Officers were running a club forum next week at Watford Football Club for Clubs in Watford and Three Rivers as a joint initiative to promote issues around governance funding and opportunities available to them.

It was noted there was a new parkrun in Leavesden and a junior parkrun in Mill End which were free.

A Member advised they had been invited to the "This Girl Can" day at South Oxhey Leisure Centre and it seemed there was a women only swimming session. The Head of Community Services would double check on that and if not look into a consultation to see if there is demand for this. A Member thought there was a women's only swimming session taking place now in South Oxhey and this was confirmed at the meeting.

A Member asked about off peak prices at the leisure centres and could there be off-off peak prices which would be even cheaper. The Head of Community Services said the policy was that the contractor had the ability to determine peak and off peak prices. SLM put on a range of activities during both off peak and peak times. The membership option if used frequently is cheaper than the play and pay activity option. They also put on specific



activities such as people needing rehab which are often run at off peak times.

On being put to the Committee the Chair declared the recommendation CARRIED the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

Agreed and adopted the new strategy.

#### **LEC 19/22 WORK PROGRAMME**

To review and make necessary changes to the Committee's work programme. A Member asked about a report coming forward on litter. Officers would look into this and come back with an update at the next meeting.

An update on the play grounds in the District to be added to the work programme. The Landscapes and Leisure Development Manager would review this should it be necessary to bring an update to the committee. The current capital programme has previously been agreed until 2032/33.

RESOLVED:

That the comments and work programme be noted with the addition of an update on playgrounds to be added.

#### **LEC 20/22 CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN UPDATE**

This report provided an update on the progress of the wide range of initiatives within the Council's Climate Emergency and Sustainability Action Plan. Updates had been provided by officers and heads of service where appropriate and reflect the work undertaken over the last year.

The Climate and Sustainability Officer provided a presentation to the Committee on what the Council had been working on and what had been achieved which included:

Greener Living e-newsletter is being used to update residents and businesses on campaigns, projects and grants the Council is involved in, and share topical information on how people can live more sustainably. 14 editions of the newsletter had been published with a total of 21,844 newsletters delivered and 2,611 subscribers as well as shared on social media. The newsletter had achieved a 57.5% opening rate average and 6.9% click rate.

Provided talks to numerous schools, attended various parish events and organising special events such as the food waste campaign and the recent fast fashion conference

Utilised ARG funding to engage with businesses and provide grants and delivered sustainability grants to local charities

On the solar together initiative campaign over 1,200 people registered an interest in the scheme 158 residents had agreed to go ahead which is a major

step forward on the amount of renewable energy we will have on our roofs in the District.

We are in the final stages of putting together an initiative to embed environmental consideration into the workings and governance of the Council, a Staff Environmental Charter has been adopted, a sustainable procurement strategy is in development, and a Climate and Sustainability Impact Assessment tool to be used for decision making on projects, policies and procurements has been produced and is being reviewed by senior leadership.

Working on improving the efficiency of existing buildings with a big focus on retrofit. 130 homes this year have received some form of retrofit measure saving on average around 1.5 tonnes of carbon.

TRDC had been leading on Wave 1 of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, alongside Watford Borough Council. The project aimed to improve over 130 social homes owned by Thrive and Watford Community Housing with external wall insulation.

Government had approved the new phase of ECO funding – ECO4 had opened in November '22. The scheme is expected to enable eligible homes in target areas to receive multiple, fully funded, energy efficiency measures which will improve properties by at least two EPC bands, achieving “deep retrofit”.

We are running a targeted scheme in South Oxhey with E.ON to optimise uptake. Low income residents in the rest of the District can access the scheme through the Home Energy Support Service. For more information <https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/energy-company-obligation-eco-funding>

On Waste we had been very active on our campaigns with details on what had been achieved provided within the report.

New grassland management strategy implemented this year and has been reviewed with details in the Members' Bulletin.

Fantastic response to the free tree initiative. You will be able to collect the trees on 3 December. Over 700 trees to be planted for the Queens Green Canopy which will see a huge amount of potential planting in the District over the next few weeks. The free tree initiative will continue over the next few years.

Water partnership set up 2 years ago had enabled a proactive response to issues which take place when they arise. Affinity water had just launched their water resources management plan which sets out details on water for the next 50 years. The Water Partnership is hosting an event online on 6 December to explain what that means for TRDC and to help us all get involved in the consultation.

The need to adapt our services to the risks of climate change had never been greater and this summer was a testament to what is going to happen over the next decades. As a Council we are looking at our risk registers to incorporate those risks and think about the adaptations and resilience

measures that we need to put in and the actions from that will go into the service plans.

The Chair thanked the officer for the update.

A Member thought it was a very good start but was a lot more to be done. They had written 10 pages of questions but would narrow down to 5 specific questions around matters such as biodiversity, community orchards, green planning document, chalk river beds and water flooding. On our chalk river beds would we be able to put them into a high or low category so that they are protected. The Climate Change and Sustainability Officer said our chalk streams are managed by different people. At Chorleywood House they are partially under our control but we are working closely with all the partners to learn how we can protect our chalk streams. The Community Biodiversity Officer said Chalk streams will become high on our priority list and are mentioned a lot in the Nature Recovery Strategy and some of the actions relate to some of the rivers in the District. We are fortunate to have three chalk streams in the District the Gade, Colne and the Chess but we don't own massive sections. A lot of how we work on rivers is on a catchment basis so it may have a benefit downstream but it is our responsibility to try and protect them as we hope others upstream do the same. There is also the Smarter Water Catchments projects where the Chess is a pilot of the Thames funded project. We are working on the river corridors which we own or have influence over at Chorleywood House Estate and Scotsbridge. There is also mention in the Aquadrome Management Plan.

The town ditch which is an ancient waterway in the Bury in Rickmansworth, could we include this in the list. The Climate Change and Sustainability Officer advised that the town ditch had come up at the Environment Forum as there is a concern that it is meant to alleviate flooding but some of it needs attention. Property Services are visiting the ditch next week with a Councillor to point out the areas of concern. We don't know who owns it so hence the visit.

Water and flooding in Harefield Road and the sewerage what would be the next steps was raised as a concern. The Climate Change and Sustainability Officer had struggled to extract information/action from Thames Water but following a restructure we have a new contact, who is also a Sarratt Parish Councillor, and is now managing our area and trying to establish all the local issues. On a further question on water pollution and how much we can expect to change, the Chess and Colne are in very different places. Chesham Sewerage Treatment Works used to report its progress in regular meetings. These have ceased and the officer is working with Thames to obtain the information which used to be provided. Therefore it is unclear how the STW has coped since infrastructure improvements have been made. Thames Water Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan consultation recently undertaken provided very little detail on the investment plans for the next 50 years. Our contact at Thames Water has been asked to find this information and provide to the Water Partnership in the first instance. It is the responsibility of the Environment Agency to monitor water quality however the Chess Smarter Water Catchment project had undertaken an extensive citizen science project to fully understand the causes of pollution. These results have not been provided yet.

The Chair advised that the answers to the questions received prior to the meeting from Committee Members would be circulated to the whole Committee with responses.

A Member said their concern was whether we are moving fast enough, and had we enough resources to take this climate change agenda forward. They welcomed the work done so far. Headlines of information sent into officers were that the communications had gone well, would like to see the next newsletter contain a summary of the General Secretary of the UN warnings on the climate. The Member noted the energy section is biggest single area on climate and carbon reduction and the route to net zero needs a commitment and a plan, as there is only 28 years to 2050. They identified efficiency of existing buildings; water and flooding, sustainable travel, air quality, tree planting (where are they being planted), adaptation, biodiversity and the requirement for high risk flood study are all required in the plan.

The Climate Change and Sustainability Officer said on the Route to zero we have had reports provided following the survey of our buildings and these would be financially modelled over the next year.

A Member said none of what we were doing was enforceable and we could only make suggestions. There was no way around the planning laws and construction costs had increased significantly. Would like to see more tree lined streets as part of our future modelling but noted this was the responsibility of HCC.

Councillor Chris Lloyd said to make big changes we need to all work together but was happy to move the recommendation, seconded by Councillor Chris Mitchell.

Members wished to thank officers for all their work.

RESOLVED:

Agreed that officers continue with the programmed implementation of the Climate and Sustainability Action Plan and where necessary advise officers of any additions needed to the action plan.

**CHAIR**