
LEISURE, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth on Wednesday 24 November 2021 between 7.30pm and 9.11pm.

Councillors present:

Roger Seabourne (Chair of the meeting and Lead Member for Community Safety and Partnerships)	Phil Williams (Lead Member Environmental Services and Sustainability)
Chris Lloyd (Lead Member for Leisure)	Lisa Hudson
Paula Hiscocks	Alison Scarth
Stephen King	Jon Tankard
David Major	Alison Wall (for Cllr Debbie Morris)
Alex Michaels	

Councillors also in attendance Councillor
Joanna Clemens

Also in attendance:

Ray Figg – Head of Community Services
Rebecca Young – Head of Community Partnerships
Sally Riley – Finance Manager
Josh Sills – Watersmeet Venue Manager
Alex Laurie – Principal Tree and Landscape Officer
Charlotte Gomes – Landscape and Leisure Development Manager
Malcolm Clarke, Waste and Environment Manager
Debra Sandling, Animal Welfare and Licensing Inspector
Sarah Haythorpe - Principal Committee Manager

Councillor Roger Seabourne in the Chair

LEC 18/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Debbie Morris with Councillor Alison Wall attending as a substitute Member.

LEC 19/21 MINUTES

An amendment to the minutes was put forward by Councillor Alex Michaels to state the reason why the Councillor had left the meeting early at the last meeting

and to include the words “Councillor Alex Michaels left the meeting early due to child care.”

The Chair of the meeting in October, Councillor Chris Lloyd, advised that this level of detail was not normally included in the minutes and would set a precedent.

On being put to the Committee the minutes as presented to the Committee without the amendment were declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being 8 For, 1 Against and 2 Abstentions.

The minutes of the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee meeting held on Wednesday 13 October were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair of the meeting.

LEC 20/21 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

An update on the Wildwood Den would be provided in the November Members' Information Bulletin for all Members.

The Chair advised that they had agreed to change the order of the agenda and would take the item on the Grass Cutting motion after item 5 (Budget Monitoring). This was agreed by the Committee.

A request had been received from a Member for an urgent item of business to be added to the agenda on lease agreements but it had been advised that this was not within the remit of the Committee. The item would be referred to the Committee whose remit included lease agreements.

LEC 21/21 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest received.

LEC 22/21 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT (PERIOD 6)

This report covered the Committees financial position over the medium term (2021 – 2024) as at period 6 (end of September) The Period 6 comprehensive Budget Management report had already been presented to the Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 1 November 2021 which sought approval to a change in the Council's 2021 - 2024 medium-term financial plan.

The Finance Manager provided details on the variances within this Committee which showed an unfavourable revenue variance of £111k which had been broken down in the report and included the following:

Community Safety and Partnerships of £34k which was licenses for private hire vehicles and drivers

On Leisure it was £77k which when broken down was as follows:

All Budgets Moved from Environmental Initialtives to Trees and Landscapes following realignment of service	47,470
Budget moved from Trees and Landscapes to Development Management to pay for Ecology Study fees (planning)	(16,000)
Active Community Development Fund - Tea Dance project no longer running.	300
Playing Fields & Open Spaces - budget increase required due to remedial works to ensure that Pavilions comply with statutory requirement ACOPL8 - Legionella	6,000
Playing Fields & Open Spaces - Increased costs which exceed current budget - Contract to be reviewed	600
Playing Fields & Open Spaces - increase required due to on-going repairs and maintenance in play areas	5,000
Playing Fields & Open Spaces - increase required due to on-going repairs and maintenance	10,000
Playing Fields & Open Spaces - increase required as budget already spent half way through the year need to accommodate further purchases	4,000
Playing Fields & Open Spaces - estimated costs of £15,000 to clear sewer tank at the aquadrome and carry out repairs to pumps	15,000
Croxley Green Skateboard Park - No income expected as post is vacant	3,500
Grounds Maintenance - 2.4% annual uplift in vehicle maintenance contract	1,145
	77,015

On capital it was a transfer from Community Partnerships to Leisure of £20k to pay for the outdoor fitness zone and to ensure it was not double accounted.

On income the variance was with regard to licenses for private hire vehicles and drivers. The other areas were positive with extra money coming in for Watersmeet of £4,200 and for Garden Waste of £10,000.

RESOLVED:

Members noted the contents of the report.

LEC 23/21 COUNCIL MOTION ON GRASS CUTTING

The motion on grass cutting had been referred to the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee under Rule 11(6) of the Council Constitution.

The Principal Committee Manager advised that following consultation with the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer it was proposed that the motion would be debated as if it were being presented at Full Council. The Proposer would be allowed up to 7 minutes to present the motion and up to 4 minutes to sum up, the Seconder allowed up to 4 minutes to speak and all Committee Members allowed also up to 4 minutes to speak but only able to speak once. As the motion had been referred to the Committee, members of the public would be able to speak both for and against the motion for up to 3 minutes. The recording of the minute on the motion would use the same practise followed at Full Council.

Councillor Alex Michaels, seconded by Councillor Joanna Clemens, moved an amended motion to that published in the agenda as follows:

Grassland is one of the most unique habitats for wildlife and pollinators in the UK. 97% of species rich grassland in Hertfordshire has been lost since the 1930's and 48% of species associated with it have noticeably declined since 1970

(1) Hertfordshire has predominately chalk bedrock

(2) which often leads to conditions which support chalk meadows which have been called 'the UK's equivalent of rainforest'

(3) Of the total publicly owned land in the District TRDC owns circa 30%.

LEC Committee recognises the time officers have spent developing various strategies to improve the natural environment in the District and the passion and contribution Councillors have shown in this area. TRDC resolves to look for opportunities to cease mowing up to 50% of the grassland it owns and manages and replace this with hay meadow management (cutting and clearing at least once a year) This will exclude unsuitable areas such as football pitches, areas used for playgrounds (etc.) and include verges, areas in parks and all other areas which are mown and do not need to be mown for a specific recreational reason (e.g. football pitch, playground). This motion will aim to decrease grass cutting by up to 50% of TRDC owned land and achieve concurrent gains in biodiversity. Costs for the cut and lift will likely fall into two areas. Firstly new equipment which may be paid for by cost savings, reduced mowing where possible, existing budgets or a request to P&R. Secondly disposal costs which should be mitigated by creating sacrifice areas wherever possible, or by sale to a biodigester (e.g. the plant at South Mims which the council currently use already). Officers will revert to LEC prior to April 2022, which will take into consideration biodiversity any data gathered

in District wide Biodiversity Audit carried out in over the summer and due in March 2022. TRDC will review relevant officers job descriptions within the Leisure department and ensure sustainability is incorporated to re-enforce this shifting outlook.

Under Council Procedure Rule 35(b) a Member of the public spoke in support of the motion.

The proposer of the motion wished to move a further amendment of the motion when summing up which the Chair advised that as the debate on the motion had been completed they would not accept the amendment at this time.

On being put to the Committee the Chair declared the motion CARRIED the voting being unanimous

RECOMMEND:

Grassland is one of the most unique habitats for wildlife and pollinators in the UK. 97% of species rich grassland in Hertfordshire has been lost since the 1930's and 48% of species associated with it have noticeably declined since 1970

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LEC 24/21 WATERSMEET PRESENTATION

The Watersmeet Venue Manager provided a presentation to the Committee.

Members raised the following questions and points on the presentation:

- What an amazing job the Manager and the team were doing at Watersmeet and what a fantastic presentation.
- Happy we had received the grants from the Government but acknowledged the work put into submitting the applications.
- On the film strategy could it be clarified that Watersmeet would still be showing the popular films and not the advent garde films as it was the popular films people wanted to see.
- On the live theatre we had got some amazing acts up until April but wondered if this was because of the Government grant and would we be able to fund this after April.
- Asked about the opportunities on hosting arts on prescription and exercise on prescription and whether there were ways to increase the number of people going via that route as the take up had been quite low.
- Wished to pass on thanks to all the staff at Watersmeet for what they did and the support they gave to other teams during Covid. This had been the most challenging time for the Council.
- Thanked the Watersmeet Venue Manager for their leadership and the teams work. Now that Watersmeet was open to pass on thanks to the 81 volunteers and to Friends of Watersmeet and the Friends of Watersmeet Film Society for the funding for the disabled toilet which was excellent news.
- Acknowledged that the older age group were still less willing to come to an event at Watersmeet.
- Grateful the venue was still functioning and all the hard work that had been done to receive the grants.

The Watersmeet Venue Manager responded that the approach at the moment was to focus on the things which appeal to a wider audience like the blockbuster films. Films aimed at a younger audiences such as the marvel films, although were shown occasionally, had over the last 5 years tended to be less popular. Watersmeet would be showing the Bond film tonight and tomorrow and the House of Gucci film in January. They continue to put on different genres of films to test whether these would be popular and get an indication of what the audiences wanted to see as part of the programming approach. The core focus was still to look at putting on events which were popular. On live theatre, the Council were provided some funding as part of the Culture Recovery Fund to support the live theatre programme in order to get the programme restarted and to build momentum. This was still an option whilst we had the grant money to use and had formed part of the application for funding. Watersmeet would continue to offer the live theatre and the funding gave flexibility in the types of deals that could be agreed although if things stayed as they were it would probably not be required.

The Watersmeet Venue Manager advised that the arts on prescription was run by the Arts Development Officer with a programme of workshops recently held at Watersmeet.

The Landscape and Leisure Development Manager advised that a number of arts prescription courses were run throughout the year across the District with the most recent one held at Watersmeet and one at Leavesden Country Park. The Community Arts Development Officer took referrals from professionals (such as Doctors surgeries) or anyone working with someone who they had identified as having a mental health need. The take up can be low sometimes, for example, we may have 10 people referred to the programme, which over the

course of the programme may reduce as participants sometimes find it a struggle to attend or continue on the programme. The project was included in the service plan and would continue to be delivered.

RESOLVED:

Noted the content of the presentation.

Councillor Alex Michaels left the meeting.

LEC 25/21 THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL PLAY AREA – CAPITAL UPGRADING PROGRAMME 2024 – 2033

The purpose of this report was to provide Members with proposals for the future priority order for upgrading and refurbishing play areas in the District.

The Landscape and Leisure Manager advised that the first part of the report outlined what had previously been agreed in terms of the capital programme for our outdoor leisure facilities. At point 2.9 it talked about the proposals from 2024/25 all the way up until 2032/33. The proposals put forward were based on the outcomes from the annual inspections which were delivered by an external company as well as by Environmental Protection via their management of the play areas and looking at when they were previously upgraded. In addition to the Council's capital budgets outlined in the report, officers would look to work with any Parish/Community Councils where appropriate and would look to secure any additional funding from other sources which may be available at the time.

Members raised the following points:

- Q - With regard to the Denham Way play area the report advised that an application was due to be submitted to HS2 and we were looking at identifying more funding pots. Had officers put the application forward and had we heard anything back.
- A - The application had not been submitted as officers were working on the funding proposal. There were two different pots of money which could be applied for. Officers were looking at the strategic one as this was a more detailed project than had been done previously with a number of different facilities. It would take a little while to put the application together.
- Q - Was pleased to see the £100k to go towards the South Oxhey playing field. Going forward to 2030 the report stated that Hayling Road play area would come forward in 2028/29 so would that not be covered with the £100k. Would the tennis courts, which are part of the MUGA, be refurbished?
- A - With regards to Hayling Road that play area was included as part of a general upgrading but not the entire area. The main area officers were looking at for South Oxhey was around the tennis courts and the basketball area. Officers would also be looking to Sports England for some additional funding. There would also be a public consultation undertaken on the work. The tennis courts are part of the MUGA and could be included but this would depend on the public consultation and what people wanted for the area.
- Q - With regard to the track at the Swillett the Member believed that not all the money was spent and some money remained and wondered where the rest of the money was spent. Also why was the Eastbury outdoor gym

equipment more expensive than the other outdoor equipment? It had cost £25k plus £8k whereas the Aquadrome and Leavesden were £27k. It was great the adult equipment was being moved out of the children's play area in Ebury Road but this would leave a space. That play area was one of the busiest in the District and wondered if there was some money to put some new equipment into that space.

- A - The funding for the Swillet would go towards the general upgrading programme and would support other play areas. Eastbury outdoor gym was higher because Batchworth Community Council had put more funding into that scheme so increased what would be delivered on the site. The Ebury play area was in the budget for 2024/25 as part of the capital programme. The budget would be used to install equipment into the area vacated by the outdoor gym.
- Q - The programme ran over a long period and wondered if it was index linked as costs would increase over the years and in 2033 the amounts included may not be sufficient.
- A - It was advised that it was something officers were looking into with the Lead Member. Over the last 5/6 years the amounts had not increased and was something being looked at as to whether to index link the amounts.

The Lead Member advised that it was important to include the general repairs as it was important to ensure that the equipment we have looks fresh.

Councillor Chris Lloyd moved, duly seconded by Councillor Paula Hiscocks the recommendation as set out in the report but with an amendment to the point being at 2.9 not 2.10.

On being put to the Committee the recommendations as set out in the report were declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting unanimous.

RESOLVED:

That the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee agree the proposals for the 2024 – 2033 play area upgrading programme as detailed at point 2.9.

LEC 26/21

PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER WITH RESTRICTIONS FOR DOGS EXTENSION

The report requested Members agree to go out to public consultation in order to extend the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) with restrictions for dogs currently in place throughout the District for a further 3 years but with no changes.

The Animal Welfare and Licensing Inspector advised that the current order was due to expire on 1 April 2022. The order could be extended but to do this the Council were required to complete a public consultation.

Councillor Chris Lloyd thanked the officer for all their work and was happy to move the recommendation in the report to go out to public consultation to extend the PSPO with no changes for a further 3 years. It was a legal requirement to review the PSPO every 3 years. Councillor Phil Williams seconded the motion.

A Member had found that a lot of the dog bins were overflowing with general waste bins also being used and wondered if the number of bins could be increased or emptied more frequently.

The Waste and Environment Manager advised that a number of the bins were not the responsibility of the Council as they belonged to the Parishes. All the Council's bins had numbers on them. If Members see any bins full they should advise the Environmental Protection (EP) team. A review of the dog bins was currently being undertaken and Members were welcome to submit any suggested locations for a dog bin.

A Member raised concern about the enforcement of the PSPO and the lack of people to enforce it. The Animal Welfare and Licensing Inspector replied that the Police can enforce it through the legislation and Police Community Support Officers. Fixed penalty notices were supplied to them but we were not aware if they had been used. The matter had been taken up with the Community Safety Partnership and the officer would be discussing a way forward on this. The Parish Councils were also given fixed penalty notices and were provided with training when the order was approved in 2016 but they had withdrawn their workforce from the scheme for fear of retribution. At the moment the only people giving out notices was the Animal Welfare and Licensing Inspector and a few EP officers.

The Chair said the Parish Councils response to this was disappointing.

A Member said it may be worth emailing the Police and Crime Commissioner who could contact all the Sergeants across the District to ask them to enforce this.

On being put to the Committee the recommendations as set out in the report were declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

That approval is given for a public consultation to extend the current PSPO relating to dog control for a further 3 years and;

That the restrictions in the current PSPO are maintained.

LEC 26/21 STRATEGIC, SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING 2022-2025

This report enabled the Committee to comment on the Committee's draft service plans.

The Head of Community Partnerships advised that the service plan template had been updated and now gave a clearer overview and context of what the service is and what they do. The service plans also provided details on all the projects which were included in the wider projects register managed by the internal Project Board. Each service plan showed how they contributed to the Corporate Plan and the themes within that. Officers were reviewing the performance indicators and a final set of indicators would be included in the final service plans in March. A separate report on these would be going to the P&R Committee in January.

Leisure and Landscapes

A Member raised a question on the washroom services with a costing of £3.5k and wondered what this included. The Watersmeet Venue Manager advised that the service was provided by an external company and included cleaning tablets for the toilets etc. and air fresheners and was separate to the cleaning contract. The

cleaning contract included polishing the floors, cleaning the carpets and cleaning the surfaces.

On aims and objectives it talked about maintaining the green flag sites whereas the Community Partnerships service plan talked about increasing green flag accredited sites. The Head of Community Services advised that it should be to maintain and the service plans would be updated accordingly.

Community Partnerships – to amend the aims and objectives on green flag sites

Environmental Protection – no comments made.

Regulatory Services (items relating to Licensing)

Land registry charges – ongoing data cleansing preparation – a Member asked what data we were we cleansing. The Head of Community Partnerships advised that the project was something which was going on nationally where all the data was being transferred over to an online system. In terms of being cleansed it was about checking all the data before being transferred. A more detailed answer would be obtained from the Head of Service.

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

RESOLVED:

That the Committee comment on the draft service plans attached at Appendix 1 and receive the final service plans in March 2022 for recommendation to Council.

LEC 28/21 WORK PROGRAMME

In response to a question on the Tree Strategy report going to P&R |Committee first and why it was not coming to the LEC committee first the Principal Committee Manager advised that the Council Constitution required the P&R committee to adopt any new policy first. A report would then come to LEC to review and monitor. It was noted that sometimes some policies were required by law to be adopted by full Council as set out in the Constitution (Local Plan, Corporate Plan and Anti-Social Behaviour being examples).

It was advised that Leavesden Country Park had won the most improved open space in the 25th anniversary Green Flag awards, which was a national award. The Committee were very happy with the achievement and agreed it was excellent news.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be agreed.

CHAIR