

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES

THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held in the Penn Chamber, on Monday, 1 November 2021 from 7.30 - 8.20 pm

Present: Councillors

Dominic Sokalski (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Matthew Bedford, Stephen Cox, Alex Hayward, Paula Hiscocks, Chris Lloyd, Reena Ranger, Andrew Scarth, Roger Seabourne, Phil Williams, Debbie Morris, Steve Drury and Raj Khiroya

Officers in Attendance:

Geof Muggeridge
Alison Scott
Sarah Haythorpe

PR37/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Stephen Giles-Medhurst and Sarah Nelmes with the substitute Members being Councillors Steve Drury and Raj Khiroya.

PR38/21 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 13 September 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair subject to the following amendment:

Page 7 under Minute PR32/21 in line 2 “the word able to read unable”

PR39/21 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Vice Chair advised that a new item of business had been added to the agenda after it was published – item 8a with regard to an Exemption from Procurement Procedure Rules – Eastbury Outdoor Gym.

There was no decision to be made just to note the exemption but it was agreed by the Chair (Cllr Sarah Nelmes) to add the item to the agenda as an urgent item of business so that the exemption can be noted and the project can move forward by officers.

The taking of the item as urgent was agreed by the Committee by general assent.

PR40/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

PR41/21 HARDSHIP RATE RELIEF POLICY

The Shared Director of Finance introduced the item advising that there was a minor amendment required to the policy which was being brought to the Committee. The amendment was in response to an investigation by the Ombudsman that found in the Council's favour but noted that our policy was not clear on the process if someone objected or wanted to appeal a decision under the Hardship Rate Relief scheme. The policy had been amended at Section 1.9, Paragraph 1.9.1 to allow someone to object or appeal a decision within 30 days. This was the only amendment proposed.

A Member queried Paragraph 1.4.1 and one of the issues which needed to be considered "The potential amount of any relief may in some cases constitute state aid and therefore adherence to EU regulations must be followed" and thought this issue needed to be taken out of the policy now.

The Shared Director of Finance advised that there was still rules around state aid which still remained at present under transition rules but the rule would be revised once the UK rules came into force.

The Member also queried that as the relief was rewarded retrospectively what would happen if they could not pay and was why they were asking for relief.

The Shared Director of Finance advised that the Council would always work with people who apply for hardship relief and who approach us about payments and we could arrange a payment plan with them until the outcome of the relief was heard. This was available to anyone who approached us for help and was included in a wider policy which sat above this policy. Details on the policy were included on the website. It was highlighted to the Committee that the retail, hospitality and leisure relief had been extended for next year and could reduce the amount of requests received.

A Member said it would be helpful to have tracked changes highlighted in the policy when a revised policy was being presented to the Committee for agreement.

Councillor Chris Lloyd moved, seconded by Councillor Alex Hayward, that the changes to the policy be agreed.

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

RESOLVED:

Agreed the changes to the policy at Paragraph 1.9 Point 1.9.1

PR42/21 BUDGET MONITORING - QUARTER 2 (SEPTEMBER)

The Shared Director of Finance presented the budget monitoring report to the Committee advising of some changes to the Leisure area as detailed in the revenue summary which were around realigning the budgets. Other key changes were in terms of the Government Income Relief Scheme where more guidance had now been received around the income relief scheme and that we may only be able to claim for the first quarter of SLM management fee waiver although we had put in an application for the whole amount to see whether this would be paid. A more prudent assumption was that we would only get relief in relation to the first quarter.

Members raised the following points:

Some Members had held a briefing before the meeting raising some points on the budget but had not been provided with any responses to their enquiries. The Shared Director of Finance would look into this after the meeting.

Made reference to the budget changes in Leisure, particularly regarding playing fields and open spaces and the increase in £15k in the budget due to on-going repairs and maintenance in play areas and £5k to replace play equipment – could details be provided on which play areas this related to.

Could information be provided on what determines whether TRDC or a Parish/Community Council pay for maintenance and repairs in play areas?

On Paragraph 5.2 with regard to debtors it would be useful if comparative data could be provided to check against.

With regard to not getting the full Government grant for SLM had we good provision to fund this? The Member was aware they were paying the amount back over 20 years. How would this work.

On staff vacancies there were quite a few but a lot of them stated in the appendices that they are not currently advertised.

On Three Rivers House transformation it stated there were no set plans this year but work had clearly been undertaken, particularly in the reception area, so did not understand how there are no set plans but work had already been done. Could officers confirm how much the costs incurred so far were?

On CCTV the budget had increased from £6k to £12k. On the basis it was a demand led service the Member assumed more CCTV cameras had been brought but where were they brought for?

On outdoor fitness zones where were these and were TRDC covering the total cost.

Did we waive the first quarter's fee for SLM, how much are they behind and how much effectively do they owe the Council? Are we proposing to raise the management fee to recoup the money if the Government don't pay?

Car parking bays there was an £110k underspend which had been re-phased into the work programme for next year. Where there is a need in South Oxhey for parking bays why had there been an underspend?

On the Apprenticeships there were 3 vacancies and the Member wondered if we were going to colleges and higher education places to advertise the roles as we had received Government grants for this.

Asked for clarification on the pay award as detailed in Paragraph 3.1 and what is being asked for and what happens if we don't achieve what is being asked for.

SLM contract - are SLM in charge of the building or the actual provision of the leisure facility or all that plus the ground that it is on as the extreme weather was impacting on the Golf course. Whose responsibility is it?

As CCTV was demand led – can it demanded and can we get it – it seemed this subject was across two Committees and wondered if it could be just at one.

On the TRDC footpaths, alleyways and the planned works budget this included the two rainbow crossings but when we voted for them we were told they would cost £1k each.

Croxley Green Skate Park – no income expected as post is vacant how do we get an income on a skate park?

Sharing ASB casework management systems so will not need to put someone in post that is new – can this be explained.

Play equipment damages and cost of repairs how was this covered – is it included in our Insurance or are they not insured.

Member quoted from an email that the insurance does not cover play areas or outdoor gyms was this correct?

Responses to the Member questions were provided as follows:

The remedial work was around Pavilions and where we had to replace some play equipment at the Barton Way play area. The Lead Member advised that if some damage was done we had to make the play equipment safe.

The Director of Community and Environmental Services said in terms of who pays for repairs it would depend on how the project was funded in the first place. If TRDC paid for the equipment then we take on the repairs and maintenance but if it was a project through one of the Parish Councils/Community Council then they would fund the repairs and maintenance. If it was a mixture of both then both parties would fund the repairs and maintenance depending on how much funding they put forward for the project. Any specific details on each project can be provided to Members.

On Debtors comparative data the Shared Director of Finance would provide this for the next budget report. In terms of the debtors the details provided in Section 5 showed we were slightly below our target. We had set ourselves a target of 98% and we were 0.5% below our target but would include the targets in the future.

To provide Members with a better understanding of the variances to the Leisure budget – written response to be provided.

The Director of Community and Environmental Services pointed out at that if you take items 1, 4, 7 and 8 of the leisure and landscape variances they all balance out.

On SLM the Shared Director of Finance advised it would require a call on reserves, as it was uncertain on the recovery of that money, although it would depend on timescales. We would have a saving on management fees in future years and would take income that way.

The Shared Director of Finance said some of vacancies will be where services are looking at how they provide the service. In Finance it had been very difficult to recruit due to the current market place. There were 4 vacancies in finance at present but there were 3 interims working for us on a long term basis which allows us to look at how we want to structure the team before we go out to recruit. The Director of Community and Environmental Services said there were a number of vacancies but made reference to having to advertise 3 or 4 times for some posts which costs the Council a significant amount of money in recruitment. It was difficult at this time to recruit due to the jobs market but the Council were exploring all opportunities.

On the Three Rivers House transformation the Shared Director of Finance said work which had been done was at very minimal cost as we had used staff working in the building and had less tasks to do as the building was closed. The costs had been for flooring or furniture. The rest of the budget was being retained for when we get a tenant or attract a tenant to the

ground floor offices so we can undertake the work at that point. Details on the costs incurred so far would be provided to Members.

On the CCTV the increased cost had been covered by additional COVID funding and not from Council funds.

On the outdoor fitness zones the Lead Member advised that the equipment had needed replacing in our parks and was covered at the Leisure Committee and was in the budget last year. The locations were Leavesden Country Park, Barton Way and in Rickmansworth Aquadrome near to the café area.

The Shared Director of Finance said Members would recall that an urgent decision was taken with all the Group Leaders as a result of Covid to waive the management fee for this year and to provide additional cost support of £790,000. The management fee is covered by the Government income guarantee for the first quarter but the Council are claiming for the whole year although we are not sure if we will receive that and may just receive the first quarter.

On car parking bays unfortunately the curb stones are very different to obtain due to Covid and in order to introduce the bays you have to change the curbs to make the space useable.

The Lead Member advised that work had been done at the Golf Club and Ward Cllrs had been notified – the Lead Member agreed to forward the email to be forward to Ward Cllrs

With regard to apprenticeships it was advised on 2 occasions officers had organised interviews at the job centre but nobody had turned up for the interviews.

On the pay award, 1.75% was the current offer. If it was to go above 2% that would impact on the reserves but the Council were waiting to see the outcome of the ballots. We do know the public sector pay freeze had been abandoned but understand there will be some Government funding but will see this when we get the settlement details in December.

The footpaths and alleyways budget was not just for the rainbow crossings they were included in the budget and this was a much wider programme. The Shared Director of Finance agreed to provide a fuller breakdown of the costs for the rainbow crossings to Members.

Written answer to be provided on income from the skate park by the Shared Director of Finance

The sharing of the ASB system provided the Council with the opportunity to share costs

We have blanket insurance to cover all of our equipment in our play areas. Would the insurance cover if there were any repairs required this would depend on whether it was wear and tear or vandalism. Details on the Council's insurance on play areas to be provided to BCC.

The motion on being put to the Committee was declared CARRIED by the Vice Chair the voting being 8 For, 1 Against and 4 Abstentions

RECOMMEND:

That the revenue and capital budget variations as shown in the table at paragraph 6.1 be approved and incorporated into the three-year medium-term financial plan

PR43/21 WORK PROGRAMME

The Principal Committee Manager presented the work programme to the Committee advising that the Business Rates Pooling report would be coming to the December meeting, an update had been provided with regard to Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and that a report on the

Community Interest Company had been taken off the work programme as this was not being progressed by the Council.

On the matter of CIL a Member asked if that was a review of the areas or just the rates. The Director of Community and Environmental Services said once the Local Plan was approved that process would follow with both the areas and rates reviewed.

A Member queried why Livestreaming/hybrid meetings was not included on the work programme. It was advised that the Council had received a grant for this and an urgent decision had been agreed by the four Group Leaders so that officers could move ahead and complete the project. A report would be presented to Council in December as required under Rule 11(6) but there was no financial support/budget required.

RESOLVED:

Noted the work programme.

**PR44/21 EXEMPTION FROM PROCUREMENT PROCEDURE RULES - EASTBURY
OUTDOOR GYM**

The Director of Community and Environmental Services presented the report to the Committee. The report advised that Batchworth Community Council had provided additional funds for the Eastbury outdoor gym area. This was a great piece of work between the Council and the Community Council.

A Member referred to the report a Paragraph 2.8 where it stated that any additional cost related to the equipment would be recharged to the Community Council which included items such as day to day maintenance, repairs, replacement items etc. Should the costs of this should be borne in proportion to contributions of each party but it seemed the Community Council were being asked to pay 100% of the costs.

The Director of Community and Environmental Services advised that was not the case they were only being asked for the costs related to the additional equipment and understood that had been advised to the Community Council but would clarify that with them outside the meeting.

The Member further referred to insurance of the equipment which was not featured or detailed in the costs to be borne by anyone and asked was that because the equipment was uninsured or would not be insured.

The Shared Director of Finance advised that the Council have a blanket insurance policy to cover all our play areas.

The Director of Community and Environmental Services said it would depend on the nature of the damage and whether it was wear and tear or vandalism and whether it was covered by the insurance, and if it was, there would be no additional costs.

On being put to the Committee the recommendation to note the exemption was declared CARRIED by the Vice-Chair the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

Noted the exemption taken.

CHAIRMAN

Addendum to minutes agreed at 21 12 06 Policy and Resources Committee Meeting

PR46/21 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 1 November 2021 were agreed and signed by the Chair subject to the following amendments:

Add Councillor Alex Hayward to the Members present

Minute PR42/21 – Page 3 paragraph 2 which starts “Car parking bays there was an £110k underspend.... To add an extra sentence to read: “Which could have been spent on sorting out the residents who contacted the Councillor pleading for verge hardening (parking bays) and enquired why the money had not been spent”

To add the following post meeting note to the addendum to the minutes:

“A report went to IHED in January 2021 which confirmed the current programme (Barnhurst Path, South Way and School Mead) along with the three highest-scoring schemes set out in Appendix A to the report and which would be included on the proposed work programme. These 3 schemes included Mullion Walk and Falkirk Gardens in South Oxhey. The South Oxhey schemes are due for completion this financial year.

With regard to the re-phasing of monies recently detailed the Programme is a 2 year Working Programme against an annual budget. We have schemes from previous years still to be implemented (South Way and School Mead) but are still awaiting relevant consents. We also have a staffing capacity to consider around scheme implementation under this Programme and other work priorities.”

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Addendum to the Minutes

To provide Members with a better understanding of the variances to the Leisure budget

The budget movements within the Leisure and Landscape have been requested to enable more effective budget management as they bring budgets in line with current service management arrangements. They do not reflect a change in activity or service delivery. A breakdown of the variances of £77k within leisure is provided at the end of the addendum

- Three Rivers House - to provide details on the costs incurred so far to Members

TRH Transformation budget – Total spend and committed expenditure relates to the works to the foyer at Three Rivers House. Value £41,039 to include new flooring, electrical works, upgrade to CCTV, IT infrastructure, Furniture and signage. The budget was created to not only transform the building but to support the customer experience strategy. This is an on-going project so the carry forward was requested to support this in the future. Much of the work would have been required due to the need to improve electrical work, IT and CCTV regardless of the transformation project.

- Urgent decision taken with all the Group Leaders as a result of Covid to waive the management fee for this year to SLM and to provide additional cost support of £790,000. – *provided to the Councillor*
- Footpaths and Alleyways budget – to provide a fuller breakdown of the costs for the Rainbow crossings to Members

The installation cost was £1800, the additional costs were for the design and off site manufacture not included for the original rainbow design as the requirement was revised to the specific design

- Written answer to be provided on income from the skate park by the Shared Director of Finance

The income we receive is in relation to skate camps we run, where participants are charged a fee. We pay a provider to deliver the skate camps. The provider collects and retains the income and charges a net fee. The expenditure budget is shown net of the income.

- Details on the Council's insurance on play areas to be provided to BCC

The Council carries a blanket Public Liability cover that is not site specific. In terms of play equipment and other outdoor leisure facilities, we do not insure for damage or vandalism as the cost is prohibitive.

- On Community CCTV the budget had increased from £6k to £12k. On the basis it was a demand led service the Member assumed more CCTV cameras had been brought but where were they brought for?

The Community CCTV Capital budget has been rephased from 2020/21 to 2021/22 as it was not spent in 2020/2021 in part due to the need not to replace any cameras and ongoing difficulties with the contractor. We have recently entered a new contract with a different provider Herts CCTV Partnership. The

capital CCTV budget is only to replace existing cameras when the lifetime of the camera comes to an end or when they are broken or damaged and need replacing. No new cameras have or are being purchased. This funding remains in the budget this year to ensure we can fix or replace any cameras if necessary.

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

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