

## THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

**At a meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held virtually remotely on Monday, 8 March 2021 from 7.30 - 10.04 pm**

**Present:** Councillors Councillor Sarah Nelmes, Councillor Matthew Bedford,

Stephen Cox, Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Paula Hiscocks, Chris Lloyd, Reena Ranger, Andrew Scarth, Roger Seabourne, Phil Williams, Steve Drury, Alex Hayward and Alison Wall

**Also in Attendance:**

Councillors Alex Michaels, Debbie Morris and Jon Tankard

**Officers in Attendance:**

Joanne Wagstaffe  
James Baldwin  
Claire May  
Geof Mugeridge  
Alison Scott  
Rebecca Young  
Joanna Hewitson  
Jamie Russell  
Sarah Haythorpe

### **92 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received. Councillor Steve Drury was slightly late joining the meeting.

### **93 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 25 January 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair when it was possible to do so.

### **94 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chair ruled that the following items of business had not been circulated the required 5 working days before the meeting but were of sufficient urgency to be taken at the meeting for the following reason:

#### **Item 9 - Corporate Framework Action Plan and Finance Service Plan**

To ensure that the Council could apply the action plan and service plan.

### **95 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Alex Hayward declared a pecuniary interest in the Part II item on the Local Plan sub-committee recommendations and would leave the virtual meeting during the consideration of this report.

### **96 ADOPTION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION MODEL COUNCILLOR CODE OF CONDUCT 2020**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented the report to the Committee. The Local Government Association (LGA) had developed a Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020, in association with key partners and after extensive consultation with the sector. This was part of its work on supporting all tiers of local government to continue to aspire to high standards of leadership and performance. It was a template for Councils to adopt in whole and/or with local amendments. All Councils are required to have a local Councillor Code of Conduct. It was not mandatory for all Councils to have the same code.

Training had been booked for all Members, Officers and Parish Councils in respect of the Code but there had not been full take up. It was important that Members attended one of the three training sessions. The training was being presented by Paul Hoey who was the LGA chief consultant drafting the new code.

Councillor Chris Lloyd moved, seconded by Councillor Sarah Nelmes, that the code be recommended to Council and that the limit for registering gifts and hospitality remain unchanged at £25.

A Member requested that the Members that had not responded with a date to attend the training be reminded of the dates.

A Member asked if it would be good practise to include examples of bullying and harassment for both Members and Officers. The Chair advised that clarification could be given at the training.

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

#### RECOMMEND:

1. That the Council adopts the Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020 with effect from the Annual meeting in May 2021.
2. Recommends to Council to agree that the limit for registering gifts and hospitality remain unchanged at £25.
3. That all Members attend one of the 3 training sessions on the model LGA Councillor Code which Officers are proposing is essential training for all Members prior to adoption of the code.
4. That additional training be arranged after the 2021 elections on the model Councillor Code for any new Councillors and that they be required to attend.

## **97 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK AND NATIONAL MODEL DESIGN CODE - DRAFT RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION PROPOSALS**

The Senior Planning Officer said the report provided a summary of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Model Design Code with the Council's proposed draft response.

Following the Government's Planning for the Future White Paper the Building Better Beautiful Commission was set up to champion beauty in the built environment. The Commission made a number of recommendations that had resulted in the proposed amendments to the NPPF. There was now more onus on good design and beauty. The National Planning Model Design Code was proposed to be used to guide decisions on planning applications until local codes can be prepared. The expectation was that development that was not well designed should be refused and significant weight given to local design policies and Government guidance. There was also more focus on the importance of infrastructure provision and increased support for encouraging walking and cycling and for any new streets to be tree lined.

In addition to the response to the Building Better Buildings Beautiful Commission was the proposed changes to the NPPF and to consider statements of national policy in the plan making, such as written ministerial statements. There were also some clarifications in relation to Article 4 Directions and some amendments stressing the importance of access to high quality open spaces for health and wellbeing.

There was also some changes to flood risk in response to the Governments joint review with DEFRA of planning policy for flood risk. This included clarification that the policy applies to all flood risk sources and not just fluvial flooding and that local plans should manage flood risk by using opportunities from new development to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding.

In addition, there was amendments supporting the improvements of biodiversity in and around other developments if measurable net gains can be secured. This could potentially look beyond site boundaries to try and achieve a net gain in biodiversity. The National Model Design Code would be a toolkit to provide guidance to help LAs in producing local design guides and set a baseline standard with an emphasis on the importance of identifying area type (character areas). Appearance will become a key factor in what was considered good design. The deadline for the consultation response was 27 March and Officers would be happy to receive any comments on the proposed draft response by close of business on Friday 19 March.

A Member asked if the good points raised within the consultation could be included in our local plan. The Senior Planning Officer advised that it would not be included into our local plan at this stage but potentially if the Government do update national policy following the consultation it may be possible at a later stage in the local plan process, for instance in the Regulation 19 consultation, to include these points.

The Lead Member for Infrastructure and Planning Policy had some minor points to make but would email them to the Senior Planning Officer. The Councillor felt it was a good report and the responses were good. On the questions where there was no comment it would be helpful to make some comment and would provide some words for consideration.

A Member referred to the comment that all new streets should be tree lined which was to be encouraged but advised this would require the footways to be of a sufficient width. Also on the equality impact question, where there was no comments, we often get developments that come along where there was no drop crossings for people who might require to use them and the developer should make sure any development was accessible for everyone. The Senior Planning Officer agreed that details would be added to the consultation response.

The motion on being put to the Committee was declared CARRIED by the Chair of the Committee the voting being by general assent.

RESOLVED:

1. Noted the contents of this report and the Government's consultation;
2. Provided comments as detailed in the minute above to be included in the final response and that any further comments be sent to the Senior Planning Officer by 19 March 2021; and
3. That delegated authority be granted to the Head of Planning Policy & Projects and the Director of Communities and Environmental Services in consultation with the Lead Member for the Local Plan to update the final response to the consultation.

## **98 CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY 2021-2026**

The Acting Head of Community Partnerships presented the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy 2021-2026 to the Committee. The consultation had provided a great

insight into the emergency of the strategy and what we can do to achieve our objectives for Three Rivers.

A presentation was provided to the Committee which would be published as an appendix to the minutes. The presentation highlighted the suggested changes to be made to the strategy as a result of the consultation.

A Member asked questions on a procedural matter on why the policy was coming to P&R Committee first and not the Leisure Committee then to P&R Committee to adopt. The Principal Committee Manager advised that it was only the Policy and Resources Committee who could agree any new policy or strategy and the procedure was that it always had to come to this Committee first before going to the relevant Service Committee. Once the strategy was adopted all the details/action plan could then be presented to the Leisure Committee and would not need to come back to this Committee. It was only because it was a new Policy/Strategy that it was coming to this Committee.

The Lead Member for Environmental Services and Sustainability thanked Joanna Hewitson, Elen Roberts and Ellie Nathan for all their hard work on the strategy and for getting the strategy prepared so quickly which had been a very hard task and they should all be commended. This was endorsed by all the Committee Members.

A Member made the following comments:

- Could the strategy include a review to re-wild verges on Three Rivers land which could be immediately actioned and could set a tangible target to achieve?
- To introduce no idling zones outside schools as they believed the Lead Member was looking into this which could then be enforced by the parking enforcement team.
- Put in a presumption that front driveways should not be 100% hardstanding although appreciated this would not be appropriate in all circumstances.
- Proactively remedy water logging which was happening on our own land with some areas waterlogged and referred to Rickmansworth Golf Course.
- A motion was passed at full Council regarding the planting of trees but was not included in the strategy.
- Could the new tree strategy coming forward be included?
- Can we include planning conditions to ensure we have hedgehog friendly boundary treatments?
- Alternative methods of travel - we don't always have a genuine choice of transport modes in Three Rivers and we need to look at our parking standards to ensure that all dwellings have their own electric charging point.
- Look at sustainably and generating our own energy from our land.

The Councillor agreed to forward all the points to the Lead Member.

The Climate Change Officer responded:

- A review to re-wild our verges was happening at the moment with a biodiversity audit coming up in early summer, an opportunities audit and a pilot project covering a number of areas this spring.
- No idling zones – would discuss with the relevant officers.
- Front driveways not being all hardstanding – details would be provided in the action plan if something more can be done on this.

The Lead Member advised that the Youth Council were going to be discussing no idling zones outside schools. Officers would review the comments made about hedgehog friendly boundaries as part of the local plan. On Transport modes the cycling strategy had gone out for consultation and we are working on the electric charging points. The Council were one of the leading authorities on climate change in England and having this strategy would move us further up the list of green Councils.

The Acting Head of Community Partnerships advised that more detailed answers could be provided following consultation with other departments as the strategy did not just sit within Community Partnerships.

A Member raised concern that the Youth Council would lead on the no idling zones outside school. This should be a Member led piece of work.

A Member raised concern that we are asking businesses and residents to achieve the target of net-zero for the District's emissions by 2045 at the latest. This would require a lot of support, encouragement and help especially coming out of the pandemic as businesses will just be trying to survive. The Climate Change Officer advised that we will work with the Economic Development Team to raise awareness of the strategy and encourage businesses to be more sustainable.

Members welcomed the engagement by Officers of the Environmental Forum and Local Area Forums on the strategy and the other many different ways they had engaged with everyone on the strategy. It was noted that the strategy was not the detailed action plan, was not set in stone and would need to be changed as national legislation changes.

Councillor Matthew Bedford said the Committee should not agree any significant changes to the strategy at this time and that it would be sensible that Officers over the next few days obtain extra information for LEC and that the recommendation to Council could be amended by LEC subject to the information provided. This would mean that any areas where we could stop cutting the grass could be considered so that we do not wait another whole year.

A Member said the Council had already re-wilded some areas across the District (Horses field being one) but the areas have to be properly managed, surveyed in advance and have a clear maintenance plan. Members need to understand what land is in our ownership and what areas are suitable. There are various different land owners across Three Rivers and Members should wait for further details from Officers and discuss at LEC on Wednesday evening. The Council not only have the best recycling rates in the country but we are the only local authority with solar powered street lights in Leavesden County Park. There are other measures which can be introduced and HCC are undertaking work on a strategy from Central Government on electrical charging points but required the infrastructure to be installed and needed to be a national planning policy. HCC are looking at active travel and having no idling zones at schools as part of the sustainability agenda as they have responsibility for the roads in Hertfordshire. We must work in tandem with them and our neighbours and not solely within Three Rivers. Members need to understand that there will be additional costs to do all this work.

A Councillor outside the Committee welcomed the work already completed by the Council but wished to focus on biodiversity. 97% of our semi natural grassland across Hertfordshire had been lost according to the Herts Wildlife Trust - State of Nature report and was Hertfordshire's most threatened habitat. Members need to consider increasing our biodiversity on our own land and to stop cutting grass before the season starts. It will allow for our wildlife/insects to come back and next year we will hopefully see an increase. We can also save money by not cutting the grass and it would provide a substantial amount of benefits for the Council and the residents.

Another Member outside the Committee welcomed the strategy but one area of concern remained around biodiversity and to re-wild of verges and amenity spaces which had not been taken forward and did not wish to see this delayed and suggested a 30% reduction grass cutting of all amenity spaces this year.

Councillor Phil Williams moved, seconded by Chris Lloyd, that the Committee recommend the strategy to Council subject to any comments by the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee.

Councillor Matthew Bedford moved an amendment, duly seconded, that LEC address the points made around rewilding and the pieces of land which may be suitable following advice from Officers so they have a precise understanding and can then agree some wording which could be included in the recommendation on the strategy to Council. The amendment was agreed by Councillor Phil Williams the proposer of the motion.

The Lead Member for Environmental Services and Sustainability summed up by saying we already have the Millennium Woods in Chorleywood (15 hectares), the Withey Beds in Tolpits Lane (another 15 hectares), grazing on the Moor and at Chorleywood House, Horses Field in Abbots Langley/Leavesden, The Bury grounds and the Orchard. We need to take this baton and move forward and work with our partners in Hertfordshire to be carbon neutral.

On being put to the Committee the motion with the amendment was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being by general assent.

#### RECOMMEND:

The proposed Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy to Council for adoption subject to any comments made by the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee.

That LEC address the points made around rewilding and the pieces of land which may be suitable following advice from Officers so they have a precise understanding and can then agree some wording which could be included in the recommendation on the strategy to Council.

## **99 GREATER LONDON BOUNDARY CHARGE**

The Chair advised that the report recommendation suggested that we consider if we wish to support the residents of the District by writing to the Mayor of London, and express it's concern with regards to the implementation of the Greater London Boundary Charge with the drafting of the letter to be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

The Chair proposed an amendment to the recommendation that the letter include concern regarding other transport changes suggested which would be to the detriment of many of our residents. The Chair was really concerned that every time a resident needed to cross the boundary into London they would need to pay a charge when there is no public transport to enable residents to get there.

A Member had serious concerns on how this would impact on residents and the impact of a daily charge for many residents who need to cross the border into London. It would mean gridlock and congestion in Three Rivers.

A Member said the boundary charge was not being implemented or proposed at this time it was just a suggestion. The met line extension to Croxley would have assisted our residents but was pulled by the Mayor of London. The introduction of any such charge would be to the detriment of our residents getting into and out of London. A reduction of bus services outside of greater London was also being considered which would also penalise our residents.

Both Councillors Stephen Giles-Medhurst and Alex Hayward support the Chair's motion and amendment.

A Member wished to state that the boundary charge would be required to be paid daily not every time the boundary was crossed.

A Councillor outside the Committee said residents in Moor Park and Eastbury had received a letter from the Mayor about the proposed boundary charge stating it was only being investigated. Every car owning resident in Moor Park and Eastbury had major concerns and

how it would impact on their daily lives. Five roads in the District were partly located in Hillingdon and partly in Three Rivers and one road's boundary was in the middle of the road.

The motion on being put to the Committee with the amendment was declared carried the voting being by general assent.

RESOLVED:

1. Wish to support the residents of the District by writing to the Mayor of London, and express it's' concern with regards to the implementation of the Greater London Boundary Charge and to include concern regarding other transport changes suggested which would be to the detriment of many of our residents; and
2. The drafting of the letter be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council

## **100 CORPORATE FRAMEWORK AND FINAL SERVICE PLANS 2021-2024**

The Acting Head of Community Partnerships presented the Corporate Action Plan to the Committee. It was noted that the Corporate Framework for 2020-2023 had been agreed in 2020 but this report was presented every year to agree the action plan and adopt the objectives for the year. The action plan highlights the key actions and projects over the next year to be achieved and the overarching objectives which are included in service plans. Two small changes were proposed to the objectives to take out third objective under Housing and Thriving communities as the project was completed and on the second page key action reordering request on the priorities.

The Committee noted that all the draft service plans had been presented at the December meeting and had just been updated with all the budget details after the Council meeting on 23/2.

It was noted that Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst had left the meeting and was not able to vote on the recommendation.

The motion on being put to the Committee to approve the Corporate Framework action plan and the service plans with the amendments to the action plan was agreed by general assent by the Members in the virtual meeting room.

RECOMMEND:

The Committee approves the current Corporate Framework Action Plan and objectives for the next two years with the amendments, attached as Appendix 1 and recommends to Council.

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst re-joined the meeting.

## **101 BUDGET MONITORING - MONTH 10 (JANUARY)**

The budget monitoring report is a key tool in scrutinising the Council's financial performance. It is designed to provide an overview to all relevant stakeholders. It is essential that the council monitors its budgets throughout the year to ensure that it is meeting its strategic objectives and that corrective action is taken where necessary.

This report seeks approval to a change in the Committee's 2020 - 2024 medium-term revenue financial plan. The report shows the Council's overall consolidated medium term financial plan for both revenue and capital.

Councillor Matthew Bedford moved, duly seconded, the recommendation in the report.

On being put to the Committee the motion was declared carried by the chair the voting being 9 for, 0 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.

## **102 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received their work programme. A Member asked if the timeframe for the tree and landscaping strategy be included in the work programme. The Committee Team would ensure this was included.

RESOLVED

That the work programme be noted.

## **103 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Chair moved, duly seconded, the following motion:  
“that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items 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.”

The Committee agreed the motion by general assent.

## **104 IT SERVICES CONTRACT AWARD**

The Committee received a report.

On being put to the Committee the Chair declared the recommendation CARRIED having been agreed by general assent.

RESOLVED:

That public access to the report and decision be denied until 15 March 2021.

## **105 LOCAL PLAN SUB COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Councillor Alex Hayward left the meeting.

The Committee received a report.

On being put to the Committee the Chair declared the recommendations CARRIED having been agreed unanimously by the 12 Members present at the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That public access to the report be denied until the Council Agenda publication.

That public access to the decision be denied until the Council Agenda publication.

**CHAIRMAN**