
Policy and Resources Committee MINUTES

**Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on
Monday, 18 July 2022 from 7.30 - 8.40 pm**

Present: Councillor Sarah Nelmes (Chair) ,
Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst (Vice-Chair),
Councillor Paul Rainbow,
Councillor Stephen Cox,
Councillor Chris Lloyd,
Councillor Reena Ranger OBE,
Councillor Roger Seabourne,
Councillor Phil Williams,
Councillor Philip Hearn,
Councillor Keith Martin,
Councillor Ciaran Reed,
Councillor Steve Drury
Councillor Rue Grewal

Officers in Attendance:

Hannah Doney, Head of Finance
Kimberley Grout, Executive Head of Service
Geof Muggerridge, Director of Community and Environmental Services
Emma Sheridan, Interim Head of Community Partnerships
Joanne Wagstaffe, Chief Executive
Justin Wingfield, Head of Property
Sarah Haythorpe, Principal Committee Manager

PR28 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andrew Scarth and Abbas Merali with the substitutes being Councillors Steve Drury and Rue Grewal.

PR29 MINUTES

The minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 13 June 2022 and the Special Policy and Resources Committee meetings held on 12 July 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

PR30 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair advised that agenda item 8 was not published 5 clear working days before the meeting but had agreed that the report was of sufficient urgency to be taken at the meeting the reason for urgency being as follows:

Item 8 – Impact of Inflation on the Council - so that the Committee can understand the impact on the Council at this time and make comments before further reports come forward.

The Chair advised that the Part II item (No.1) had been added to the agenda since the publication but they had agreed to take as an urgent item so that the consideration of the title lease could be made by the Committee and a determination made as it could not wait until September.

PR31 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

PR32 MEMBER TRAINING

The purpose of the report is to:

- o Recommend a framework for Member Training for 2022/23 to the P&R Committee.
- o To determine that the Council do not sign up to the Member Charter but look to work towards achieving its standards.
- o To agree to add the Equalities on line training module to the other 3 mandatory training modules (Safeguarding Children, Safeguarding Adults and Prevent)
- o To consider whether training on specialised areas set out in Paragraphs 5.1 and 5.2 of the report should be considered for all Members.

Members raised the following points:

- Concern that the recent mandatory licensing and regulatory services training had seen some Members not able to attend which reduced the number of Councillors who sit on the Committee and who could be on a sub-committee. They felt that a better way of organising the mandatory training dates was to set them out in advance in the calendar of meetings. If not able to attend the training they should not sit on the Committee.
- It was not always quite as simple as saying if you don't attend the training you are not able to sit on the Committee as there may be exceptional circumstances which prevent you from attending.
- It would be good to cover all levels of knowledge and backgrounds in the training as at the recent mandatory training there was a split in knowledge levels.
- To look to provide the training in house and be organised online and look at virtual training modules. Will need to look at the costs to execute this.
- 3 hours training is too long and having the training during the daytime is very difficult for some Members to attend.
- Move more of the training to online training modules including the mandatory training and then organise a Member catch up to reflect and make comments on the training.
- Raised concern that Members were being asked to complete mandatory online equalities training and that this should be non mandatory.
- Concerned that the number of mandatory training courses for Councillors was increasing all the time and that it was too detailed and felt like they were back at work. They would be happy to do the online training if it could be tailored to Councillors requirements.

- A lot of the content provided in the online mandatory training modules was very relevant to the role of a Councillor and referred to the last two national serious case reviews.
- If the training modules were mandatory for staff they should be for Councillors.
- Raised concern about accessing ilearn as it was a complex system and asked if the system could be simplified.
- Highlighted constitution, finance and budget setting as being specialised areas of training Members would like to receive.

Officers responded that:

We are always happy to receive feedback on the training particularly immediately after it had been provided.

The online equalities training module was mandatory for officers and could be provided to Members at minimal cost. The content of the training module would be apparent when the module was being completed.

Noted that the ilearn system was brought in from the County Council but the feedback would be passed onto them.

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst moved, seconded by Councillor Sarah Nelmes the recommendations as set out in the report and to include that a module on equalities training be added for all Members to the other 3 mandatory training modules.

On being put to the Committee the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being 11 For, 2 Against and 0 Abstentions.

RESOLVED:

Agreed to continue with the framework for Member Training for 2022/23 as follows:

That the Chief Executive have delegated authority to:

1. Authorise attendance at LGA Leadership and other LGA courses in consultation with the relevant Group Leader.
2. Authorise attendance at other external training courses which are not free in consultation with the relevant Group Leader where there are exceptional circumstances.

Training on specialised areas put forward were on the constitution, budget setting and finance for all Members.

Agreed to add online Equalities training to the other 3 mandatory online training modules of Prevent, Safeguarding Adults and Safeguarding Children.

To not sign up to the Member Charter at a cost of £3,000.

PR33 EQUALITIES OBJECTIVES REVIEW

The public sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Act) came into force on 5 April 2011. The Equality Duty applies to Three Rivers District Council. It requires the Council to consider how different people will be affected by its activities, helping it to deliver policies and services which are efficient and effective; accessible to all; and which meet different people's needs. The

Equality Duty is supported by specific duties, set out in regulations which came into force on 10 September 2011. The specific duties require the Council to prepare and publish one or more specific and measurable equality objectives. We published our first set of objectives in March 2012.

This report recommends new objectives which will cover the period from 2022-2026 and includes highlights of work undertaken across the Council which contributed to the delivery of the previous objectives. Objectives must be published at least every four years.

This report includes, findings from a public consultation held on the proposed objectives.

Members raised the following points:

Referred to proposed Council objectives for 22-26 and the point "To celebrate diversity, promote inclusion and enhance community life in partnership with communities" and asked about the level of council tax payers money spent on these initiatives.

Referred to Paragraph 4.2.2 and the 80 participants who had completed the survey. They were concerned that digital surveys were excluding some people and with other changes since covid to how the public can contact the Council may have impacted on the people able to respond.

The Chair advised that the Council sponsored Herts Pride and referred Members to Section 3 of the report and the achievements made by the Council.

Details would be included as part of the Service Plan process and this would provide an opportunity for Members to feed in their points. The focus was rather on support in kind rather than any funding or financial cost. Once the objectives are agreed work would be undertaken to take forward as part of the Equalities policy.

The Interim Head of Community Partnerships advised that the survey was carried out both online and face to face. Details would be provided to Members on where the face to face consultations took place across the District. Support had been received across all areas for the objectives which were quite broad at this time.

Councillor Sarah Nelmes moved, seconded by Councillor Phil Williams the recommendation as detailed in the report.

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

RESOLVED:

Members reviewed and agreed the proposed Equality Objectives.

PR34 UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND 2022-25

In February 2022 HMG Levelling Up, White Paper was published, which sets out how opportunity will be spread more equally across the UK.

In order to support the ambitions of the Levelling Up Paper, the Government has allocated £2.6bn through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) over 3 years. Three Rivers District Council has been awarded £1m for 2022-25.

In order to access the 2022-25 allocation of funding, Three Rivers District Council is required to submit a Local Investment Plan, by 1 August 2022, outlining those local priorities that the Council wishes to focus on. The Investment Plan will include a high level outline of the

interventions and investments that the funding will prioritise, together with an overview of the expected outputs and outcomes.

This report makes recommendations for the allocation of the funding within Three Rivers which if agreed will then be used to develop the required Investment Plan.

The Interim Head of Community Partnerships provided details on the allocation of the funding to the Council over the 3 year period. Details were provided on how that funding should be allocated although it was noted that the guidance on how the funding could be used had been circulated late to the Council. The funding had been split as either revenue or capital. The investment plan once finalised would need to be submitted to the Government by the beginning of August for consideration before any release of the funding.

A Member raised concern on the allocation of the grant on Objective 1. A lot of businesses were struggling with the cost of living crisis and high wage demands. They felt that there were other schemes to fund and the funding should not be used for de-carbonisation projects and felt the proposals did not meet the targets.

It was advised that a number of projects had been able to support local businesses.

On the further £179 million funding this will be managed centrally by the Department of Education to improve adult numeracy through the 'Multiply' Programme which would be delivered at a national level.

A Member said the proposals put forward to the Committee were the best way to get the most out of the grant in the short timescales we had to submit the bid. A lot of the proposals were things officers were already working on but had no funding.

The Interim Head of Community Partnerships advised that de-carbonisation was part of the scheme and referred Members to the background papers and the interventions list for England which included de-carbonisation as a specific intervention under the theme of supporting local business. The 3 Local MPs had been consulted and were invited to the June LSP Board meeting but had not attended. Any feedback received from the MPs would be provided to Committee Members.

Post meeting note: No specific feedback had been received from the MPs.

Councillor Stephen Cox moved the recommendation at 10.1 and 10.2 of the report with an amendment to recommendation 10.1 that the £10k (£5k for 2023/24 and £5k in 2024/25) for Enhancement of long term hoardings to contribute positively to the built environment be added to the subsidised swimming lessons, seconded by Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst who advised that there seemed to be a typographical error in the figures in Appendix 1.

The Director of Community and Environmental Services advised that with regard to the Enhancement of long term hoardings to contribute positively to the built environment the total should be £10,000 and the total Investment in Play areas, Parks, Open Spaces and Woodlands should be £151,403.

The Interim Head of Community Partnerships advised the amendment could be made as both were revenue bids.

On being put to the Committee the motion with the amendment to recommendation 10.1 was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being 11 For, 1 Against and 1 Abstention.

On being put to the Committee the recommendation at 10.2 was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

The priority projects listed in Appendix 1 for inclusion in the Three Rivers, UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Local Investment Plan with the amendment that £10k (£5k for 2023/24 and £5k in 2024/25) for Enhancement of long term hoardings to contribute positively to the built environment be added to the subsidised swimming lessons.

That delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to take the necessary decisions and actions required to finalise and submit the required Investment Plan and accept the allocation of funds, and then to implement and administer the scheme and all related plans in accordance with the requirements and priorities of the prospectus and fund.

PR35 IMPACT OF INFLATION ON THE COUNCIL

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose by 9.1% in the 12 months to May 2022, up from 9.0% in April. This is the highest CPI 12-month inflation rate in the National Statistic series, which began in January 1997. Modelled estimates for the period prior to 1997 indicate that this is the highest rate since 1982.

The Council's annual budget setting process takes into account forecasts for inflation. However, where possible, the Council cash limits budgets and only applies inflation to supplies and services budgets where there is a contractual commitment so to do. This means that, for a significant proportion of the Council's budget, annual efficiencies equivalent to the rate of inflation are delivered as services manage increased costs within existing budgets. Over the last five years, annual inflationary pressures of between 1.5% (March 2021) and 9% (March 2022) have been absorbed within budgets.

The main exception to cash limited budgets is for the annual pay award where a contingency budget is created to fund a pay award based on available information regarding the pay settlement.

The Head of Finance advised that this report set out the latest assumptions regarding the impact of rising inflation on the Council's services and budgets for 2022/23.

Members thanked officers for providing the report and referred to Paragraph 2.2.4 and the high fuel costs which were impacting on the Council. They wished to thank officers for all the work on refuse and recycling and being successful in recruiting refuse vehicle drivers. It was noted it had been favourable to the Council to have the service in house which may of helped offset the additional costs.

The Head of Finance advised that at this time it was too early to advise if we would get any income from recyclables and too early to advise details on any pay award which may be agreed.

In response to a question on the bulk purchase of fuel, the Director of Community and Environmental Services advised that inflation was expected to fall and it was hoped prices would reduce. Officers were monitoring the situation.

Councillor Keith Martin moved, duly seconded the recommendation to note the report. Inflation was a big problem at this time and was why they had requested the report come to the Committee. Further reports will be provided at each meeting. With regard to risks and how these are monitored and controlled details were provided to the Audit Committee at each meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the content of the report be noted.

PR36 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received their work programme.

A Member referred to the date quoted with regard to CIL and it was agreed the date needed to be updated to 2025.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted and that the amendment be made.

PR37 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 motion on being put to the Committee was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

Agreed to move into Part II confidential business.

PR38 SOUTH OXHEY PROPERTY MATTER - RELEASE OF TITLE RESTRICTION

To determine the report and confirm approval to the release of a title restriction.

RESOLVED:

Agreed the decision and that public access to the decision and report be denied until issue resolved.

CHAIR