THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

Three Rivers House
Northway
Rickmansworth
Herts WD3 1RL

Policy and Resources Committee
MINUTES

Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Monday, 12 September 2022 from 7.30 - 9.30 pm

Present: Councillor Sarah Nelmes (Chair)
Councillor Paul Rainbow,
Councillor Stephen Cox,
Councillor Chris Lloyd,
Councillor Reena Ranger OBE,
Councillor Andrew Scarth,
Councillor Roger Seabourne,
Councillor Phil Williams,
Councillor Philip Hearn,
Councillor Keith Martin,
Councillor Abbas Merali,
Councillor Ciaran Reed
Councillor Steve Drury (In place of Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst)

Officers in Attendance:

Marko Kalik, Head of Planning Policy and Conservation
Geof Muggeridge, Director of Community and Environmental Services
Kimberley Rowley, Head of Regulatory Services
Alison Scott, Shared Director of Finance
Joanne Wagstaffe, Chief Executive
Sarah Haythorpe, Principal Committee Manager
Lorna Attwood, Committee Manager

PR42 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst with the substitute being Councillor Steve Drury.

PR43 MINUTES

The minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 18 July 2022 and the Extraordinary Policy and Resources Committee meetings held on 18 August 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

PR44 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

Councillor Ciaran Reed proposed a motion to defer items 6, 7, 12 and 13 due to the contentious nature and the possible discussion in light of the mourning period the country was currently in. This was seconded by Councillor Phillip Hearn.

The Chair stated that some of the items were time critical and another Member agreed that business should continue as the meeting had gone ahead.

The Chair took the decision that business would continue as normal and that the agenda for the meeting would proceed as published.

PR45 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Phil Williams declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 9 as an owner of a local business and would leave the meeting for this item.

PR46 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2024/25 AND AMENDMENTS TO 2023/24 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

A Member asked if any provisional dates could be agreed for the Equalities sub-committee meetings, the cost for livestreaming meetings seemed to be fairly high and wondered if this could be explained.

The Principal Committee Manger advised that sub-committee meetings were normally organised when there was business to be discussed but could work with Heads of Service to see if any dates could be agreed. With regards to Livestreaming, the Council had used YouTube but during the meeting the livestream had been stopped. Livestreams and meeting recordings were available for one year online after the meeting and are achieved for 6 years as agreed by Council. When the Council had the livestreaming equipment installed there would no longer be a cost as it would be done in house.

Councillor Chris Lloyd moved, seconded by Councillor Paul Rainbow to recommend the Calendar of Meetings 2024/25 and amendments to 2023/24.

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

RECOMMEND:

That the attached draft Calendar of Meetings for 2024/25 be agreed with Members able to comment on the dates before ratification by Council on 18 October.

That the proposed changes in the scheduling of the Service Committees as detailed in Paragraph 2.5.3 be agreed for ratification by Full Council on 18 October for years 2023/24 and 2024/25.

RESOLVED:

That the details for the mandatory training modules for Planning, Licensing and Regulatory Services be provided to the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer for consultation with the Leader and Group Leaders for agreement and if agreed this replace the current mandatory training provided by outside consultants.

PR47 HOUSING DELIVERY TEST ACTION PLAN

The report consisted of the Housing Delivery Test result and corresponding action plan.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) required Councils to prepare an action plan where housing delivery had fallen below the housing requirement.

The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation presented the report. The Housing Delivery Test was brought in by Government in 2018 and measured the Council’s housing delivery

against the government's standard method calculating housing need. Prior to this the targets were measured against the current adopted Local Plan, the Council were able to achieve over this target. The standard method set a target the Local Plan was unable to meet.

A score of 46% was received in the Housing Delivery Test and in response to this, the council were required to produce an action plan, apply a 20% buffer to the 5 year housing land supply and apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

The targets were set out in paragraph 3.9 which were presented by the Head of Planning Policy and Conservation.

It was to be noted that the Council did not deliver the dwellings which were in the action plan. The Council could only plan for future growth and increase the number of planning applications approved.

The Action Plan analysed the reasons for the under-delivery of new homes and set out actions to improve housing delivery within the District.

The main action was to deliver the new Local Plan so that the Council could plan for the new levels of growth. In order to meet the level of delivery required the Council would need to consider some Green Belt release. Until such time as the Local Plan was adopted there would continue to be a failure of the Housing Delivery Test unless the Government made changes to the targets. Other actions were listed but none of these would make a significant difference until the Local Plan was in place. The recommendation was to agree the action plan and its publication.

The Director of Community and Environment made Councillors aware of information which had been released by the government the previous week. This stated that the Government would be undertaking a planning overhaul which would give Councils more powers over planning such as housing developments. Planning laws were set to be changed to end house building targets set by the Government and allow local Councils to set their own targets.

Members raised the following points:

- In 1.1 was the ratio 14:4 correct, and should this be 14:1? The Head of Planning Policy and Conservation believed it should read 14:1 and this was likely a typo but would take this away and confirm.
- If the 14:1 ration was correct, this would be completely unaffordable for this area and was causing young people to leave the area
- With regards to 3.31 in the report and how the 73% appeal statistic was calculated. It was advised that this was a summary of all the decisions.

Councillor Sarah Nelmes moved, seconded by Councillor Roger Seabourne the recommendation as detailed 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.

RESOLVED:

- Noted the Housing Delivery Test Result for 2021;
- Agreed the Action Plan and the series of actions that the Council would seek to implement;
- Agreed to the publication of the Action Plan on the Council's website.

PR48 ELECTIONS VOTER ID

The Head of Customer Experience presented the report and asked for the agreement of Members to implement Modern Polling which was a digital system used to register Voters ID and that the Elections Budget be increased to cover the additional costs.

The paper based option would mean that more polling staff would be required therefore there would be a cost difference of £17,000 more if the digital system were agreed. It was expected that New burdens funding would be received but the sum of which was not known at present.

The Council had a choice of either using a paper based solution or a digital one. The Modern Polling had been approved by the Government's digital services. The system would use iPad's to log Voters ID and would operate offline meaning that internet connection would not be required. If this could be implemented now it would give time to train staff and implement the system.

The Chair advised that Watford had already piloted the system and this was the only system on the market at present.

A Member asked why this option had been recommended over the other one. Given the uncertainty, with the guidance likely not being released until January, would it be preferable to go with the paper based option for year 1 and seek further clarity when the guidance was available. What would the justification be for spending the extra money at this time?

The Chief Executive advised that the digital option had been chosen because it was believed there were more risks with paper based option. There would be some requirements from government which the Council were already aware of which would be difficult to complete using the paper based system in a busy polling station. The system was capable of a lot of the recording using a QR code placed on the polling card and this would get the information back to the Government more quickly. There was some uncertainty but the company would be able to meet the criteria even if we did not have full guidance until January. The company had already been working with the Government. If the Council acquired the system early then it could be tested to ensure it was fully capable. If the Council waited until it was a requirement it may be more expensive.

A Member wondered if the £28,000 annual cost per election could be higher if more than one election was to take place. The Chief Executive advised this was an average figure but if elections were run on behalf of other parties such as Parish Council the costs would go back to the organisation.

A Member asked how the pilot at Watford Borough Council managed postal votes. The Head of Customer Experience said that postal voters were not required to provide ID as this was already confirmed during the registration process.

A Member expressed concerns about the system being complicated when it was a matter of checking ID. The Chief Executive said that certain information would be requested by the government and it was not a simple matter of checking ID as other statistics would be required.

A Member asked if a voter could still arrive at the polling station without their polling card in light of the new QR code being on the card. The Chief Executive advised that people could still turn up without a polling card and be able to vote.

Councillor Phil Williams voted to move the Officers recommendation this was seconded by Councillor Sarah Nelmes.

On being put to the Committee the recommendation was declared CARRIED by the

Chair the voting being unanimous.

RECOMMEND:

Recommends Option 1 the implementation of Modern Polling.

Recommend to Council that the annual Elections budget is increased by £28,400 to cover the costs of Modern Polling.

PR49 ANTI FRAUD AND CORRUPTION STRATEGY

The Director of Finance presented the Strategy and asked if there were any questions.

A Member asked if the Fraud hotline could be amended slightly to be named the Fraud and Whistleblowing hotline. The Director of Finance agreed this could be considered.

Councillor Chris Lloyd moved, seconded by Councillor Keith Martin to move the Officers recommendation.

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

RESOLVED:

Agreed the revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy.

Councillor Phil Williams left the meeting.

PR50 COVID-19 ADDITIONAL RELIEF FUND (CARF) SCHEME

The Director of Finance presented the report and summarised that the relief for business rates was a temporary scheme to provide NNDR (Business Rates) relief for 2021/22. It was proposed to automatically apply this to businesses listed within the Government scheme. This would allow the Council to apply the relief swiftly and use the funding that had been given.

A Member was concerned about this providing Officers with additional work, it was confirmed that it would give some extra work to Officers but had the advantage of Officers not having to manually agree applications.

Councillor Sarah Nelmes moved to accept the Officers recommendation to approve the scheme. Councillor Chris Lloyd seconded this and thanked the Director of Finance and her team for preparing the report. A Member asked if a new Burdens grant would be received to assist with this. The Director of Finance said that it would but this had been used by the software provider as it required a change to software.

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

RESOLVED:

Approved for the Covid-19 additional relief fund scheme.

Councillor Phil Williams returned to the meeting.

PR51 STRATEGIC, SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING INCLUDING DEVELOPMENT OF CORPORATE FRAMEWORK 2023-2026

The Director of Finance presented the report. Setting out framework for determining budget and service plans. Of note, the consultation period would be delayed due to the Queen's funeral on Monday. Fees and charges increase had not yet been set due to inflation moving quickly. This was likely to go to Policy & Resources Committee due to volatility around inflation.

A Member wanted to know whether the opposition would have a chance to comment on the draft going to Committee in November. The Chair advised that the draft would be available to view and comment on prior to Committee. The Director of Finance agreed to do briefings on the draft to include Members feedback.

The Chief Executive advised that the process would produce a framework, objectives, a new Council vision and following this there would be service plans and the budget would be built. Previous versions would be similar.

Councillor Chris Lloyd moved the recommendation with the amendment to 10.2 to start the consultation following the mourning period seconded by Councillor Sarah Nelmes.

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

RESOLVED:

- That the assumptions to use in preparing the detailed budgets for the period shown in Appendix 1 be agreed.
- That the draft timetable at Appendix 2 be agreed with the amendment to start the consultation after the mourning period
- That the format of any budget consultation if agreed be approved by the Director of Finance in consultation with the Lead Member for Resources.

PR52 CIL SPENDING APPLICATIONS

The report considered an allocation of a total of £632,282 of CIL funding to local infrastructure projects to support growth in Three Rivers. This was presented and summarised by the Head of Regulatory Services. The two projects on EV charging points and the canal towpath had already been identified by internal departments. These reports were brought to the Committee to consider if it would be appropriate to spend CIL money on these specific projects.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 35 a member of the public spoke on the application on EV charging points.

A Member raised concerns about the location of one of the charging points. The Chair responded that the locations were not specific but in the area identified and the final decision about where they would be placed would be part of the project.

A Member wanted to ascertain if there had been public money available to support the project, was there a blanket ban from Hertfordshire County Council regarding on street EV charging points and would Sarratt be considered as an area to place a charging point.

The Chair advised that the project was a starting point so these were not the only areas that would have this facility. The Head of Regulatory Services further added that this project started originally as a Retail Parade Refurbishment project. With regards to Hertfordshire County Council a County-wide EV charging point Strategy was awaited specifically with regard to residential charging points but this specific TRDC project related to charging points aimed at visitors. The sites would be based in District car parks, all on TRDC owned land. There have been changes in the funding process.

Councils have historically provided EV charging points on a voluntary basis often using On-street Residential Chargepoint funding which is aimed at points in residential areas.

In 2020 the Government set timescales for all new vehicles to be non-fossil fuelled by 2035 and as of 2023/24, it would provide national grant funding for rapid points, following a pilot that started this year, for which this project could be eligible. The reason the CIL funding was requested was to progress the project at an earlier date to ensure a speedy delivery of rapid charge points in District shopping centres to support the local economy as it recovered from the pandemic. Six main centres would be initial sites and could be expanded in the future. The sites needed to be investigated in more detail, the agreement would allow the Council to get a supplier on board to carry out the detailed investigation and now included lamppost column charging in car parks.

A Member pointed out that there would need to be criteria for approving the EV charging points as there were likely to be more applications than funding to cover them all. The Member also asked regarding the Grand Union canal and the section between the canal centre and the Aquadrome that required enhancement. The Head of Regulatory Services advised that a feasibility study had already been carried out on this area of the GUC.

A Member wanted to know if there was external funding available for EV charging on street or off street. The Chair advised that if there was funding available we would apply for it.

With regards to the tow path project a Member wanted to know what the Council's responsibility was to the tow path system in this country. The Chair advised that the Council held no responsibility for this.

These projects were taken as two separate votes:

On being put to the Committee the EV Charging Points project was declared CARRIED with the vote being unanimous.

On being put to the Committee the Grand Union Towpath upgrade was declared CARRIED with the vote being unanimous.

RECOMMEND:

CIL funding for the following schemes detailed in Table 1 of this report and summarised in the table below for 2022/2023:

Applicant & Project Name	**Infrastructure**	**CIL Amount**
Transport & Parking Projects, Regulatory Services TRDC Electric Vehicle Charging Points Installation	Installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Points in District Council car parks to be determined, but located in or near six retail centres at: • Abbots Langley High Street • Chorleywood village centre • Croxley Green • Rickmansworth High Street • Rickmansworth neighbourhood centres (indicative Moneyhill Parade) • South Oxhey centre	£460,000.00
Grand Union Towpath Upgrade (Phase 6, Kings Langley Lakes to Red Lion Lane)	Canal Towpath Upgrade (costs to be paid exclude consultancy costs)	£172,282.00

Any request for additional monies for these specific projects is delegated to the Director of Community and Environmental Services, in consultation with the Lead Member, to determine having regard to the economic context and timescales for implementation.

PR53 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT TO 31 JULY 2022

The report was presented by the Director of Finance and covered budget monitoring for the first quarter of the year. The variances this period were 0.5 million. The key change was due to the change in the SLM Leisure contract. There was additional income from kerbside recycling. The 2021/22 pay award came after 22/23 budget therefore would be an additional cost. The 2022/23 pay award was yet to be agreed. If the employer's offer was agreed this would add 0.6 million to the budget for this year. Inflation remained a concern but this was currently being managed within the budget. The fuel cost may also increase but with recent announcements this was not clear. The main concern at present was the pay award.

Officers were currently looking at efficiencies for next year. A Member asked if the significant number of vacancies at the Council would be considered as part of efficiency savings. The Director of Finance advised that vacancies were always carefully considered and only posts that were necessary were filled.

Councillor Nelmes moved the recommendation to approve the Officers recommendation of the budget report. This was seconded by Councillor Keith Martin.

On being put to the Committee the motion was declared CARRIED with the voting being 9 For, 0 Against and 4 Abstain.

RECOMMEND:

To Council:

That the revenue and capital budget variations as shown in the table a paragraph 5.1 be approved and incorporated into the three-year medium-term financial plan.

PR54 EXEMPTION FROM PROCUREMENT PROCEDURE - MODERN POLLING

This item was regarding the Modern Polling system and the exemption to the Procurement process was approved by the chief Executive by the Exceptional Circumstances exemption as permitted by the Council's Constitution.

Councillor Sarah Nelmes moved the recommendation, seconded by Councillor Andrew Scarth.

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

RESOLVED:

Note the action taken.

PR55 WORK PROGRAMME

To receive the Committee's work programme.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be agreed.

CHAIR