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, 10 March 2025 from 7.30 - 9.35 pm

Present: Councillors Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Sarah Nelmes, Steve Drury, Chris Lloyd, Louise Price, Andrew Scarth, Tom Smith, Jon Tankard, Oliver Cooper, Vicky Edwards, Andrea Fraser, Philip Hearn, Abbas Merali, Reena Ranger, Chris Mitchell, Narinder Sian and Stephen Cox

Officers in Attendance:

Alison Scott, Director of Finance
Kimberley Rowley, Head of Regulatory Services
Stephen Rix, Associate Director - Legal and Democratic
Kevin O'Brien, IT Service Delivery Manager
Leah Mickleborough, Interim Committee and elections Manager

External in Attendance:

4 members of the public

PR124 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Jonathon Solomons, who was substituted by Councillor Raj Khiroya, and Councillor Stephen King

PR224 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Andrea Fraser declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 7, the Batchworth Neighbourhood Plan Referendum, as the Chair of Batchworth Commuity Council

PR324 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair of the meeting when possible to do.

PR424 NOTICE OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

PR524 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT TO 31 JANUARY 2025

Alison Scott, Director of Finance, presented the report and outlined the movements in the council's financial position, most notably additional income from Penalty Charge Notices (PCN) due to the reallocation of civil enforcement officers, and additional recycling income.

Members considered the increased PCN income. It was recognised that the Council cannot seek to generate profit through parking schemes, and instead enforcement work should focus on changing behaviours to prevent future poor parking. The council had increased the budgets in this area to allocate more out of hours parking enforcement and introduced new parking schemes which partly accounted for the additional income. Members had been asked to put forward areas of problem parking for parking enforcement officers; it was agreed in principle that future parking reports could include information on how successful such initiatives had been in reducing parking issues in those areas.

Turning to recycling, an issue was raised regarding high street bins, which did not include separate recycling compartments, which could suppress recycling rates. On the other hand, if users did not correctly allocate their waste to the correct bin, this could result in increased contamination, and it was not possible to hand-sort the high street bins. It was noted that there was a review of trade waste planned to review declining income. The trade waste budget had been revised for the 2025/26 budget.

Queries were also raised relating to nameplate budgets, income on properties and aborted costs for development sites.

The recommendations in the report were agreed by assent.

PR624 UPDATE OF CIL (COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY) GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The Head of Regulatory Services, Kimberley Rowley, presented the report which proposed changes to the governance arrangements based on experience of previous application cycles. She noted that each application was different, and so some element of judgement as to whether to award CIL would always be required.

Inviting members to debate the proposals, the Chair reminded that this report is about the governance process, and not about specific applications.

A member identified that the current criteria may weigh against highways proposals, as these do not meet climate or sustainability criteria. It was noted that such applications may score higher in other areas and can include active travel elements to promote sustainable transport.

Councillor Oliver Cooper raised concern that when applications were presented to the Policy and Resources Committee for approval, limited information was provided about those applications that had not met the threshold for approval. He cited an example where he felt that the criteria may not have been correctly applied, and it was important Councillors had information to make an informed decision. With this in mind, he proposed an amendment to replace:

"Even if a bid complies with the CIL eligibility and meets the CIL scoring threshold, further consideration and a judgement will be applied by the Working Groups in terms of the priority of the project for the District"

With:

"All bids will be referred for scrutiny to the Policy & Resources Committee, including those recommended by refusal by the CIL Officer Working Party or CIL Moderation Group, including with its application form and its CIL scoring. Even if a bid complies with the CIL eligibility and meets the CIL scoring threshold, the Policy & Resources Committee is not required to recommend the bid"

This was seconded by Councillor Philip Hearn.

In response to this amendment, it was noted that applications can be lengthy and require detailed consideration, which might not be feasible to do in a committee setting or in the public domain. It was clarified by Councillor Cooper that it would be helpful for the Policy and Resources Committee to be provided with a copy of the key application information and scoring sheet. It was also suggested that if members wished to consider applications in more detail, any questions would need to be submitted in advance to aid quality of debate at the meeting.

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst reminded members that the Committee would be considering the next round of CIL applications at its meeting in June. He suggested that with those applications, officers could, in consultation with group leaders, include further information on those applications not recommended to be taken forwards. Following this, further revisions could be made to the governance process. On this basis, Councillor Cooper withdrew his amendment.

A further query was raised as to whether the Council's approach of payment in arrears could disadvantage those groups who could not afford to pay for capital work in advance. It was confirmed that for voluntary and community groups, the Council could agree specific arrangements, and Parish Councils can obtain loans in order to finance investment.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Giles-Medhurst, seconded by Councillor Sarah Nelmes, and agreed by General Assent.

PR724 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS REFERENDUM

The Chair, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst, asked Councillor Andrea Fraser whether she could approach the matter with an open mind, which Councillor Fraser did.

It was confirmed that if agreed, it was the Council's duty to promote that a Neighbourhood Plan Referendum would take place, and, for example, poll cards would be issued.

In response to a query on processes for neighbourhood plans, the Chair reminded members that the meeting was to consider the Neighbourhood Plan referendum for Batchworth, and not general principles of neighbourhood planning.

The proposal was moved by Councillor Giles-Medhurst, seconded by Councillor Chris Lloyd, and agreed by general assent.

PR824 PSPO - DOGS RENEWAL

The Chair, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst, confirmed that this item had been withdrawn and would be considered through the urgent decision procedure.

PR924 CONSTITUTION AMENDMENTS: CODE OF CONDUCT AND DEBT WRITE-OFFS

The Associate Director – Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer, Stephen Rix, presented the report, confirming the proposal to adopt the latest version of the Local Government Association's Code of Conduct, and providing the Director of Finance with the authority to write-off irrecoverable debts.

The Director of Finance confirmed that the delegation for write-offs would only cover those debts where they were genuinely irrecoverable, where the Council had no recourse to recover as a result of liquidation or bankruptcy.

It was suggested that where more substantial amounts were written off, this should be reported to the Policy and Resources Committee. The Director of Finance agreed that in future, any amounts written off above the current delegation of £3k would be reported to the Committee through the regular budget reports.

The recommendations in the report were agreed by assent

PR1024 LOCAL AREA FORUM BOUNDARIES

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst and the Interim Committee and Elections Manager, Leah Mickleborough, presented the report which reviewed the current local area forum boundaries and whether these should be amended.

The report concluded that the current boundaries should be unchanged, except to include the small unparished area between Rickmansworth, Croxley Green, Sarratt and Chorleywood within the Chorleywood Area Forum.

Members debated the proposal regarding the unparished area. It was felt that the area sat more naturally, and looked towards Rickmansworth, rather than Chorleywood. Each unparished area needed to be considered in its own merits; for example, Heronsgate was more linked to Chorleywood, whilst Mill End was linked to Rickmanworth.

A member noted that the origin of the current area forum boundaries were not clear, and given forthcoming local government reorganisation, retaining the current situation, allowing councillors to attend meetings based on the community they represented, would be sensible.

It was resolved by assent to leave the local area forum boundaries unchanged and confirm that the small unparished area within the Chorleywood North district ward was included in the Rickmansworth Area Forum.

PR1124 MOTION: CROXLEY GREEN COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Prior to inviting Councillor Chris Mitchell to present the motion, the Chair confirmed that he had spoken to the Chair of Sarratt Parish Council regarding the proposal for a Community Governance Review. He had confirmed the Council had not determined to undertake a review, and that if the motion was supported, it would enable the Council to consider whether to move forwards with the review.

Councillor Mitchell proposed his motion, and in doing so apologised that discussion had not taken place between Croxley Green Parish Council and Sarratt Parish Council, as he had understood that would take place.

The purpose of the motion was to start the process for a review, and if agreed, to bring forward terms of reference and the consultation process to the next meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee.

Councillor Steve Drury seconded the motion, noting that with forthcoming planning applications near the boundary there was an ideal opportunity to undertake the review at this stage.

Given the position regarding Sarratt Parish Council was unclear, members debated whether to take forward the review at this stage. Community governance reviews can take time, and it is critical that all parties are engaged within it. Members noted that the principle of a review is worthwhile, but there would be matters to resolve in the long term if it was taken forward.
It was clarified that the formal review processes commences when the Council agrees terms of reference.

Following the discussion, Councillor Mitchell and Drury agreed to amend the motion to remove the first recommendation; to clarify that if agreed, terms of reference would initiate the review, and to place more emphasis on the importance of consultation both with, and between the parishes so that the recommendations now read:

1. Request that a report come to the next meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee to establish a clear consultation process, timeline and criteria to for a potential Community Governance Review of the Croxley Green and Sarratt boundary
2. Support the collective engagement with and between TRDC and both parish councils

Councillor Cooper confirmed that whilst he appreciated the changes that had been made to the motion, his group would be abstaining on the vote due to the views of Sarratt Parish Council remaining unclear.

The motion was put to the vote and was carried.

PR1424 OFFICERS ICT DEVICE REPLACEMENT

The Chair introduced the item, reminding members that if they wished to consider the detail of the report, it would be necessary to exclude the press and public from the meeting. He proposed that the Council supported the option set out in the report for 50 of the laptops to be retained for community use.

Members debated the proposal. It was confirmed that the disposal process would seek to recycle parts wherever possible. It was queried whether more than 50 laptops could be retained for community use, however some of the laptops had very limited battery life, and there are costs associated with this in terms of removing existing data and rebuilding the operating system.

The recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor Sarah Nelmes, were agreed by assent.

CHAIR