

THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Full Council held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Tuesday, 24 February 2026 from 7.30 - 10.30 pm

Present: Councillors Councillor Stephen King, Councillor Tony Humphreys,

Christopher Alley, Ian Campbell, Oliver Cooper, Harry Davies, Steve Drury, Vicky Edwards, Andrea Fraser, Elinor Gazzard, Stephen Giles-Medhurst OBE, Rue Grewal, Philip Hearn, Raj Khiraya, Joan King, Chris Lloyd, David Major, Keith Martin, Abbas Merali, Chris Mitchell, Debbie Morris, Sarah Nelmes, Louise Price, Kevin Raeburn, Paul Rainbow, Reena Ranger, Ciaran Reed, Andrew Scarth, Narinder Sian, Tom Smith, Cheryl Stungo, Jon Tankard, Chris Whately-Smith and Anne Winter

Officers in Attendance:

Joanne Wagstaffe – Chief Executive Officer

Kimberley Grout – Associate Director for Corporate, Customer and Community and Monitoring Officer

Alison Betts – Associate Director for Finance and S151 Officer

Jonathan Boyle – Principal lawyer and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Lucy Smith – Committee and Electoral Services Manager

109 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Stephen Cox, Lisa Hudson, Khalid Hussain, Ian Morris and Mike Sims.

110 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 09 December 2025 were considered.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Cooper to correct paragraphs three and four. The Leader of the Council Councillor Giles-Medhurst confirmed that the proposed corrections were accepted as factual amendments.

That, subject to the agreed amendment, the minutes of 9 December 2025 were approved as a correct record.

111 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Joan King and Stephen King declared pecuniary interests in item 10, Review of Statement of Licensing Policy and would leave the Chamber for the duration of the item.

Councillor Sarah Nelmes declared a non pecuniary interest in item 8F, Community and Voluntary Sector Grant Agreements due to membership of a management committee associated with a grant recipient.

Councillor Drury declared a pecuniary interest in item 8F, Community and Voluntary Sector Grant Agreements and would leave the Chamber for the duration of the item.

112 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Harry Davies paid tribute to Eleanor Clarke, Councillor of Three Rivers District Council from 1999 to 2003 and Hertfordshire County Council from 2001 to 2005. Other Councillors spoke warmly of Eleanor, noting her contribution and she would be sorely missed.

The Chair of the Council announced details of the Chairman's Charity events, including a quiz night to be held at the Penn Chamber in the evening of the 17 April. and a Golf Day being held at Rickmansworth Golf Course on Saturday 14 March which includes a game of golf, breakfast and lunch.

As an order of business Item 8(d) was moved on the agenda as it formed an appendix to Item 7(a).

113 PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

114 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Four public questions had been submitted in advance of the meeting and published with the agenda.

Barry Grant was not present to ask a supplementary question.

Jon Bishop, on behalf of Chorleywood Residents' Association and Three Rivers Joint Residents asked a supplementary question regarding the timeline for progression for the Regulation 19 and how speculative planning applications would be prevented. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Giles-Medhurst replied that Officers had advised that Government officers hoped to respond as quickly as possible but the inclusion of additional sites would delay progression. The only effective way to prevent speculative applications was to progress the Local Plan.

Gary Ansell was not present to ask a supplementary question.

Sue Webb, on behalf of the Lemonfield Group asked a supplementary question regarding a petition concerning a proposed HMO and requested that the Council issue an Article 4 Direction. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Giles-Medhurst replied that an Article 4 Direction requires Secretary of State agreement and must be supported by robust evidence and that officers advice was that sufficient evidence was not currently available. The Council must determine applications in accordance with planning legislation and policy.

115 BUDGET PAPERS

115a MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2026/27 TO 2028/29 LIBERAL DEMOCRAT PROPOSALS

The Leader introduced the Medium Term Financial Plan 2026/27 Liberal Democrat Proposals, referring to the recent peer review and confirming that the budget had been fully costed and signed off by the Director of Finance. It was emphasized that the proposals represented a balanced budget with investment in key priorities.

During the debate, Members expressed differing views on the proposals. Supporters of the budget highlighted investment in social housing, sustainability initiatives, leisure provision and community services. Reference was made to continued weekly waste collections, property investment returns and funding allocated to conservation appraisals and Local Plan work. It was stated that the Council remained in a comparatively strong financial position.

Other Members raised concerns regarding the use of reserves and whether sufficient savings and efficiency measures had been identified. Reference was made to opportunities for technological efficiencies whether these had been fully explored. Questions were raised regarding the delivery of previous budget commitments, the pace of conservation area appraisals, and the allocation of funding in connection with the Afghan resettlement

programme. Concerns were also expressed about the protection of Green Belt land and whether sufficient financial provision had been made in that regard.

In responding to the debate, the Leader addressed the principal issues raised by Members.

In relation to concerns about the use of reserves, it was stated that the Council's reserves position remained prudent and proportionate. The Leader emphasized that reserves were being used strategically to support investment and transformation, not to support unsustainable revenue expenditure.

Responding to comments regarding the efficient savings and the use of technology including artificial intelligence, the Leader stated that the Council continued to pursue efficiencies and service improvements through digital transformation. It was acknowledged that technological change must be implemented responsibly and in a way that protected service standards and statutory compliance.

In relation to conservation area appraisals, the Leader recognized that progress had been slower than originally anticipated, largely due to resource pressures and competing priorities, particularly Local Plan work. It was confirmed that additional provision had been included within the budget to accelerate this work.

Addressing Local Plan funding and protection of the Green Belt, the Leader confirmed that specific budget provision had been made for Local Plan work in the base budget, alongside earmarked reserves. It was emphasized that sufficient funding was available should additional legal or consultancy support be required.

On Article 4 Directions and HMOs, the Leader reiterated that such directions required robust evidence and carried financial implications, including potential compensation risks. It was stated that the cost of introducing an Article 4 Direction could be significant and that the Council must act within the legislative framework.

The Leader concluded by stating that the budget contained no service cuts and no redundancies, maintained weekly waste collections, sustained investment in leisure and environmental services, and demonstrated sound financial management.

The substantive motion was put to the vote and declared as CARRIED by the Chair with the voting as follows:

For Councillors, Davies, Drury, Gazzard, Giles-Medhurst, Grewal, Humphreys, Khuroya, J King, S King, Lloyd, Major, Martin, Mitchell, Nemes, Price, Raeburn, Rainbow, Scarth, Sian, Smith, Stungo, Tankard, Whatley-Smith, Winter (24)

Against Councillors, Alley, Campbell, Cooper, Edwards, Fraser, Hearn, Merali, D Morris, Rander, Reed (10).

Councillor Grewal left the meeting at 21:06 after the vote.

116 SPECIAL EXPENSES

Councillor Price introduced the item and moved the recommendations in relation to Special Expenses, which were seconded by Councillor Giles-Medhurst.

In introducing the report, it was explained that Special Expenses were levied in accordance with the statutory framework to reflect the services provided in particular parts of the District and not elsewhere, and that the calculations had been undertaken in line with established methodology. It was noted that parishes declare the services they provide and that the District Council determines its Special Expenses accordingly.

During the debate, Members raised a number of issues concerning the allocation and transparency of Special Expenses.

Concerns were expressed regarding the continued inclusion of Watersmeet within the Special Expenses calculation. It was suggested that Watersmeet did not operate in the same way as other community facilities and that its inclusion disproportionately impacted residents in Rickmansworth. Reference was also made to business rates paid in respect of Watersmeet and whether alternative governance arrangements, such as a charitable trust model, might be explored in the future.

Members also debated the position of the Aquadrome. It was argued by some Members that the Aquadrome represented a key asset for Rickmansworth residents and that the condition and management of certain areas had given rise to concern. Questions were raised regarding whether expenditure allocated through Special Expenses was sufficiently transparent and whether residents could clearly see how the funds were being applied. Particular reference was made to car park conditions and long term management plans.

Other Members spoke in support of the existing arrangements, stating that land owned and maintained by the District Council necessarily required appropriate funding and that the methodology for apportionment had been consistently applied. It was emphasized that the budget itself had already been approved and that the Special Expenses decision concerned the allocation of costs rather than the overall level of expenditure.

A further issue raised during debate was the relationship between parish precepts and Special Expenses, and whether the two should be presented more distinctly in future documentation to assist clarity for residents.

Councillor Cooper moved an amendment which was seconded by Councillor Fraser

“To remove Watersmeet from the Special Expenses Calculation”

The Monitoring Officer advised that if the amendment were carried, the council would not be able to set the Council Tax at this meeting and an extraordinary meeting would be required. It was further advised that while the overall budget would not change, there would be implications for Council Tax billing and cashflow timing, particularly in relation to payments due to Hertfordshire County Council.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was declared LOST by the Chair with the voting being

For Councillors, Alley, Campbell, Edwards, Fraser, Hearn, Merali, D Morris, Ranger, Reed, Sian and Stungo (12)

Against Councillors, Davies, Drury, Gazzard, Giles-Medhurst, Humphreys, Khiroya, J King, S King, Lloyd, Major, Martin, Nelmes, Price, Raeburn, Rainbow, Scarth, Smith, Tankard, Whatley-Smith and Winter. (20)

Abstention Councillors, Mitchell. (1)

The substantive motion was put to a recorded vote and declared CARRIED by the Chair, with the voting being

For Councillors, Davies, Drury, Gazzard, Giles-Medhurst, Humphreys, Khiroya, J King, S King, Lloyd, Major, Martin, Mitchell, Nelmes, Price, Raeburn, Rainbow, Scarth, Sian, Smith, Stungo, Tankard, Whatley-Smith and Winter. (23)

Against Councillors, Alley, Campbell, Cooper, Edwards, Fraser, Hearn, Merali, D Morris, Ranger and Reed. (10)

116a COUNCIL TAX - DISTRICT ELEMENT

Councillor Price moved the recommendations relating to the District element of the Council Tax. It was explained that the calculation combined the District element, Special Expenses and Parish Precepts and that the 2.99% increase was calculated across the total district tax base. Councillor Giles-Medhurst seconded the motion.

On being put to the vote the substantive motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair with the voting being

For Councillors, Davies, Drury, Gazzard, Giles-Medhurst, Humphreys, Khuroya, J King, S King, Lloyd, Major, Martin, Mitchell, Nelmes, Price, Raeburn, Rainbow, Scarth, Sian, Smith, Stungo, Tankard, Whatley-Smith and Winter (23)

Against Councillors, Alley, Campbell, Cooper, Edwards, Fraser, Hearn, Merali, Morris, Ranger and Reed. (10)

117 SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX - 2026/27

Councillor Price moved the recommendations to set the Council Tax, incorporating the Hertfordshire County Council and Police and Crime Commissioner precepts. Councillor Giles-Medhurst seconded the motion.

On being to the vote, the substantive motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair, the voting being

For Councillors, Davies, Drury, Gazzard, Giles-Medhurst, Humphreys, Khuroya, J King, S King, Lloyd, Major, Martin, Mitchell, Nelmes, Price, Raeburn, Rainbow, Scarth, Sian, Smith, Stungo, Tankard, Whatley-Smith and Winter. (23)

Against Councillors, Alley, Campbell, Cooper, Edwards, Fraser, Hearn, Merali, D Morris, Ranger and Reed. (10)

118 POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

118a COUNCIL PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2026

Councillor Giles-Medhurst moved the recommendation to approve and publish the Council Pay Policy Statement 2026. The motion was seconded by Councillor Nelmes.

In introducing the item, it was noted that the Pay Policy Statement was a statutory requirement.

During debate concern was raised that the report had not been discussed in detail at committee stage and that the list of posts subject to market factor supplements did not include traffic engineers. It was suggested that recruitment difficulties in this area were well established and that without appropriate market supplements the Council would struggle to deliver its parking programme commitments.

On being put to the vote, the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair, the voting being 23 votes for, 10 votes against.

118b COUNCIL PLAN 2026-2029 - FINAL

Councillor Giles-Medhurst moved that Full Council adopt the Council Plan 2026/2029. The motion was seconded by Councillor Nelmes.

Members noted that the plan had been considered by the Service Committees and the Policy and Resources Committee, and that minor amendments had been incorporated following

Member feedback. The Leader advised that the Council would reflect upon comments arising from the recent peer review, particularly in relation to targets and performance measures.

During debate, concern was expressed that the formal peer review report had not yet been received and that Members were relying on informal feedback. It was confirmed that the formal report was due mid-march but that summary feedback had been presented and circulated.

The motion was put to the vote and declared CARRIED by the Chair with the voting being 23 votes For, 0 votes Against and 10 Abstentions.

118c FINAL SERVICE PLANS 2026-29

The recommendations in the report were moved by Councillor Giles-Medhurst and seconded by Councillor Nelmes.

It was reported that the Service Plans had been considered at Service Committees and Policy and Resources Committee and that minor amendments had been incorporated following Member comments.

During debate, reference was made to postal vote renewal requirements and the proportion of postal voters who had not been renewed. Concern was expressed regarding potential disengagement among vulnerable residents, particularly those in care homes and retirement accommodation. It was suggested that further work be undertaken through the relevant Service Committee work programme to encourage renewals although no amendment was proposed.

It was confirmed that reminder communications had been issued to affected electors and that officers were continuing to monitor renewal figures.

The motion was agreed by general assent.

119 FINANCIAL PLANNING - RECOMMENDATIONS

As an order of business Item 8(d) was moved on the agenda as it formed an appendix to Item 7(a).

119a BIODIVERSITY DUTY REPORT 2026

Councillor Tankard introduced the report and moved the recommendations in the report. The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Lloyd.

In introducing the item, it was noted that the report strengthened the Council's biodiversity approach and included monitoring of biodiversity net gain delivery. It was reported that the majority of biodiversity net gain projects within the district had been delivered on site.

During debate, reference was made to biodiversity net gain calculations and the potential to secure further biodiversity improvements, particularly in relation to waterways and speculative development. It was suggested that additional opportunities should be explored.

In response, it was stated that biodiversity net gain operated in accordance with the statutory metric applicable to individual development sites and that gains must relate to the characteristics of those sites.

The motion was agreed by general assent.

119b COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR GRANT AGREEMENTS

Councillor Drury declared a pecuniary interest and left the chamber at 22:03.

Councillor Lloyd introduced the report and moved the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Giles-Medhurst.

Whilst presenting the report, reference was made to the range of organisations supported through the grants programme, including advice services, community transport, youth and mental health provision, and voluntary sector partners. It was noted that the grant provided to Citizens Advice was among the largest made by district and borough councils in Hertfordshire.

During debate, Members spoke in support of the voluntary sector and highlighted the value of discretionary grants, particularly at a time when many authorities were reducing support.

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

Councillor Drury returned to the Chamber at 22:08.

119c FIXED PENALTY NOTICES

Councillor Nelmes introduced the report and proposed the recommendations. Councillors Giles-Medhurst seconded the recommendations.

It was explained that environmental fixed penalty levels would remain unchanged and that fees and charges would be set at £4450 in order to reduce unnecessary court proceedings.

An amendment was moved by Councillor Cooper and seconded by Councillor Alley.

“The Fixed Penalties Notices for the following offences be set at the following levels with immediate effect:

Offence	FPN	Reduced charge
Abandoning a vehicle	£200	No early payment discount
Depositing litter	£500	£250
Unauthorised distribution of literature	£150	No early payment discount
Failure to produce waste carrier registration documents	£300	No early payment discount
Graffiti and fly posting	£500	No early payment discount
Waste receptacles (placing the wrong items in your bins)	£60	£40
Failure to produce waste transfer notes	£300	No early payment discount
Fly-tipping	£1,000	No early payment discount
Breach of Community Protection Notice	£100	No early payment discount
Littering from vehicles	£500	No early payment discount
Domestic duty of care under s34(1) or s34(1A) (i.e. for waste carriers)	£600	No early payment discount
Domestic duty of care	£600	£336

under s34(2A) (i.e. for households)		
Nuisance vehicles	£100	No early payment discount

During debate on the amendment, it was stated that the average court fine was lower than the proposed fixed penalty level and that reducing the fixed penalty could encourage offenders to pursue court proceedings. It was suggested that deterrence should remain a key consideration.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was declared LOST by the Chair, the voting being 10 votes For, 23 votes Against.

The substantive motion was then put to the vote and was declared CARRIED by the Chair, the voting being 23 votes For, 10 votes Against.

120 CIVIL PENALTY NOTICE POLICY

Councillor Drury moved the recommendation to adopt the Civil Penalty Notice Policy which was seconded by Councillor Giles-Medhurst.

During the debate, Members discussed enforcement powers, Landlord compliance, and the need to ensure proportionality and effectiveness of civil penalties in advance of the implementation of the Renters' Rights Act.

It was agreed that the policy be adopted and that authority be delegated to the Policy and Resources Committee to review and amend the policy if necessary through urgent action.

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

121 REVIEW OF STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

Councillors Joan King and Stephen King declared a pecuniary interest in the item and left the Chamber at 22:27 and the Vice Chair took the Chair for this item.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Davies and seconded by Councillor Giles-Medhurst.

On being put to the vote, the motion was declared CARRIED by the Vice-Chair, the voting being by general assent.

Councillors Joan King and Stephen King returned to the Chamber at 22:28.

122 ANNUAL COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES REVIEW

Councillor Giles-Medhurst moved the recommendations and Councillor Price seconded. Councillor Giles-Medhurst pointed out the recommendation were from the independent panel and the uplift was in line with the pay award with staff and it had been customs and practice, irrespective of party views to always accept the independent panel recommendations.

During debate reference was made to the overall performance of the Council and the appropriateness of the proposed uplift.

On being put to the vote, the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair, the voting being 23 votes For, 10 votes Against.

123 APPEALS UNDER 64 OF PART 4 ACCESS TO INFORMATION PROCEDURE RULES

This item was not reached.

124 LEAD MEMBER REPORTS

This item was not reached.

125 QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER AND LEAD MEMBERS

This item was not reached.

126 MOTIONS

This item was not reached.

CHAIRMAN