# THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

**At a meeting of the Full Council held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Tuesday, 20 October 2026 from 7.30 - 10.00 pm**

**Present:** Councillors Councillor Keith Martin, Councillor Reena Ranger OBE,

Aidan Bentley, Ian Campbell, Oliver Cooper, Stephen Cox, Harry Davies, Vicky Edwards, Andrea Fraser, Elinor Gazzard, Stephen Giles-Medhurst OBE, Shelley Gormley, Lisa Hudson, Tony Humphreys, Matthew Hunt, Joan King, Chris Lloyd, David Major, Kerry Milliken, Chris Mitchell, Debbie Morris, Krutika Patel, Louise Price, Kevin Raeburn, Paul Rainbow, Ciaran Reed, Andrew Scarth, Narinder Sian, Mike Sims, Tom Smith, Jon Tankard, Kavan Trivedi and Chris Whately-Smith

**Officers in Attendance:**
Alison Betts – Associate Director for Finance
Jonathan Boyle – Monitoring Officer
Josh Sills – Head of Communications, Customer and Culture,
Lucy Smith – Committee and Electoral Services Manager

## 155 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Alley, Chopra, Drury, Khiroya, I Morris and Stungo.

## 156 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2026 were approved as a correct record.

## 157 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

## 158 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair reflected on recent engagements across the district and thanked Members, staff and community supporters for their contributions to fundraising and awareness activities for the UK Sepsis Trust. Activities included information stalls, a presentation at a temple, a cake sale, a gin tasting event and a lunch and learn event. The Chair reported that approximately £3,000 had been raised, and conveyed thanks on behalf of Yvonne Campanini.

The Chair also referred to the Pride of Three Rivers Awards event planned for 23 March 2027 at Micklefield Hall, with further details to follow.

## 159 PETITIONS

No petitions were received.

## 160 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Chair explained that written public questions and responses had been published with the agenda and invited supplementary questions from those present.

Jack Lambourne was not present to ask a supplementary question.

Alison Scarth asked whether the Leader would request an apology from four Councillors in relation to the disclosure of confidential information and their future handling of confidential matters. Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst responded that an apology was a matter for the individual Councillors and could not be required by the Council. He expressed concern that the early release of confidential information had undermined the Council's position. A Member sought to intervene, and the Chair indicated that the public questions item was not a debate.

Pandora Vaughan-Melly asked what steps the Council would take to address alleged encroachment, removal of hedgerows, storage of belongings and fly-tipping on land forming part of South Oxhey Playing Fields/the Old Golf Course village green. Councillor Louise Price reaffirmed the Council's commitment to protecting the village green and undertook to investigate the photographic and other information supplied.

Elizabeth Willetts sought a detailed schedule of maintenance undertaken during the preceding six months at Eastbury Recreation Ground, including playground, grass and planted areas. Councillor Giles-Medhurst advised that he did not have the requested breakdown to hand and would ask officers to provide any information which was available and could properly be made public, noting that records might not be maintained at the level of individual play areas.

Alex Hayward was not present to ask a supplementary question.

## 161 BUILDING SAFETY LEVY

Councillor Price moved the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Giles-Medhurst. Councillor Price explained that the new Government Building Safety Levy would be collected through the building control process and that the report proposed delegating its administration to Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd, which provided building control functions for the Council and other Hertfordshire authorities.

Members queried why Hertfordshire Building Control operated as a limited company and how levy receipts would be applied to support residents affected by defective or unsaleable properties. Councillor Price explained that the structure arose from the original trading company arrangements and indicated that fuller responses would be provided to the questions raised.

**RESOLVED:**

That:

- Hertfordshire Building Control limited be authorised to undertake the role of centralised collecting agent for the Building Safety Levy on behalf of Three Rivers District Council from 1st October 2026.
- New Burdens funding received from Government is passed through to Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd
- Hertfordshire Building Control retain any operating surplus from the set-up grant as a ringfenced contingency reserve.
- That the Chief Executive as shareholder for Hertfordshire Building Control be authorised to enter into the necessary legal agreements to give effect to the recommendations set out above.

## 162 POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

### 162a AQUADROME PROJECT - MATCH FUNDING REQUEST

The proposals were moved by Councillor Giles-Medhurst and seconded by Councillor Bentley. The Leader outlined the bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for approximately £5 million towards improvements at Rickmansworth Aquadrome. He explained that an additional £165,000 match-funding commitment was sought and that capital funding would be used if the corresponding Community Infrastructure Levy funding request was unsuccessful. Without the

contribution, elements of the scheme, including proposed improvements to Footpath 65 between Bury Lake and Stocker's Lake, could be at risk.

Members across the chamber supported progressing the funding bid while raising concerns about the need for a deliverable alternative should the bid fail. Councillor Fraser called for a written, costed contingency plan explaining the use of existing funding and prioritising the reopening of the Woodland Walk. Other Members highlighted the importance of access to the Aquadrome and uncertainty arising from previous projects. Councillor Sims drew attention to the imminent 12 November application deadline and the pressure on officer resources from preparing a separate alternative plan before submission.

In response, the Leader referred to substantial work on the bid with partners and officers, the prospect of funding from a number of sources, and the intended inclusion of the Woodland Walk among the first works if the bid succeeded. He also clarified the circumstances of the cancelled Riverside Festival, including support provided to the trust towards costs.

**RESOLVED:**

That:

- £165,000 of capital funds be allocated to be used as match funding towards the Aquadrome Project as detailed at point 1.5 and between points 3.7 and 3.10, should a funding application to the Community Infrastructure Levy be unsuccessful.
- That public access to the report be immediate.
- That public access to the decision be immediate.

**162b BUDGET MONITORING REPORT TO 30 JUNE 2026**

Councillor Price moved the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Giles-Medhurst. Councillor Price introduced the period three financial monitoring position, reporting that forecast revenue variances were within the applicable forecasting and contingency arrangements, that capital variances included works at Eastbury playground and that collection of council tax and business rates was ahead of target at 30 June 2026.

Councillor Cooper expressed concern about the forecast general fund deficit of approximately £1.2 million, the potential depletion of reserves and the absence, in his view, of a sufficiently clear longer-term plan to address the structural position. Other Members queried budget transparency, audit scrutiny, staffing and individual variances, and the implications of financial pressures for future years.

In response, the Leader referred to the external audit position, the peer review, savings and carry-forwards, and ongoing monitoring, while expressing optimism that the forecast deficit could be contained or reduced. Councillor Price emphasised that the period three position was not the year-end outturn and that Members were being asked to approve the recommendations concerning revenue and capital budget variances and supplementary estimates reflecting a change of only £0.272m.

**RESOLVED:**

That:

- The revenue budget virements as set out in Appendices 1 to 3 and noted in paragraph 4.1.4 be approved and incorporated into the three-year medium-term financial plan.
- The revenue budget supplementary estimates of £0.272m as set out in appendices 1 to 3 and noted in paragraph 4.1.5 be approved and incorporated into the three-year medium-term financial plan.
- The revenue variances to be managed of £0.128m as set out in appendices 1 to 3 and noted in paragraph 4.1.6 be noted.
- The capital budgets of £0.277m as set out in appendices 1 to 3 and noted in paragraph 4.4.2 be approved and incorporated into the three-year medium-term financial plan

## 162c PLANNING COMMITTEES AND THE NATIONAL SCHEME OF DELEGATION OF PLANNING FUNCTIONS

Councillor Giles-Medhurst moved the substantive recommendations, seconded by Councillor Price. The Leader explained the introduction of the national scheme of delegation, its implications for the types of planning applications capable of being considered by Planning Committee, and the gateway test for relevant applications. He set out the revisions to the supplementary recommendations following discussions with Members and officers, including the ability of parish councils to seek application of the gateway test and the approach to certain section 106 modifications. Members also discussed retrospective applications, houses in multiple occupation and notifications to residents.

1. New forms of applications that are not listed in the constitution or those unclear as to how they are classified will be treated as eligible for triage through the Gateway Test.
2. Add a further clarifying statement that HMO applications that are not dwellinghouses nor comprise dwellinghouses are eligible for triage to the Gateway Test.

Councillor Cooper moved a further amendment, seconded by Councillor Edwards, seeking an additional gateway representation or panel process to enable more formal Member consideration of potential committee referrals. Supporters argued that the approach would preserve democratic scrutiny and offer residents a clearer route to representation. Other Members raised questions about practicability, Member capacity, officer resource, legislative compatibility and the possibility of reviewing the arrangements once operational. The Leader said that existing arrangements and the changes he had accepted would provide a route for representations, including all members and parish councils and considered the proposed additional panel unnecessary. The Leader pointed out that no other authority had or was prosing to introduce such an “additional committee” made up of only the principle opposition and would clearly be contrary to the legalisation.

A recorded vote was requested on the amendment. The result was 13 votes For, 19 Against and 1 Abstention. The amendment was Fell.

Councillors For: Councillors Campbell, Cooper, Edwards, Fraser, Hudson, Hunt, Milliken, D Morris, Patel, Ranger, Reed, Sims and Trivedi (13)

Councillors Against: Councillors Bentley, Cox, Davies, Gazzard, Giles-Medhurst, Gormley, Humphreys, King, Lloyd, Major, Martin, Price, Raeburn, Rainbow, Scarth, Sian, Smith, Tankard and Whately-Smith (19)

Councillors Abstentions: Councillor Mitchell (1)

The Council then resumed consideration of the substantive motion following a comfort break. Members expressed significant concern about the reduction in local democratic oversight resulting from the national changes, while acknowledging the need to adopt a compliant procedure. The discussion included parish council involvement, the information available to residents, the role of the Planning Committee Chair and planning officers, and the potential to review local arrangements in light of experience elsewhere.

During this debate, Councillor Cooper questioned whether Councillor Tankard’s professional involvement in planning gave rise to a disclosable pecuniary interest in the item. The Monitoring Officer advised that the matter before Council concerned the national scheme and constitutional arrangements, rather than an individual planning application, and that the pecuniary interest provisions were not relevant and Councillor Tankard had every right to be present. Councillor Cooper acknowledged that advice but did not withdraw his earlier allegation that Cllr Tankard was acting “illegally” although asked to do by the Chief Officer on three occasions. Members expressed concern about the allegation and called on Cllr Cooper to withdraw it ; the Chair reminded Members of the need to maintain appropriate conduct and subsequently indicated that a conduct complaint would be made.

In summing up, the Leader outlined the safeguards proposed in the Council's arrangements, including the capacity for Ward Members and parish councils to make representations in relevant cases, the distinction between applications which must be determined by officers and those potentially referred through the gateway test, and the possibility of reviewing arrangements subsequently.

## 163 LEAD MEMBER REPORTS

The Leader reminded Members that nominations were open for the Pride of Three Rivers Awards in March 2027 and encouraged Councillors to nominate deserving members of the community, noting that Councillors themselves were ineligible.

In view of the time remaining, the Chair exercised discretion to bring forward urgent questions under item 11 using Rule 6(2) Rules of Procedure from the constitution before returning to questions on Lead Member reports.

Councillor Sian asked the Leader about ensuring that all residents felt safe and welcome and about collective action against antisemitism, racism and discrimination. The Leader emphasised mutual respect, challenging discriminatory behaviour where safe, reporting hate incidents and celebrating the district's diverse communities.

Councillor Edwards asked about the relocation of local neighbourhood police teams to Abbots Langley and South Oxhey and whether the Leader had been wrong to support their previous move to Rickmansworth. The Leader disputed the characterisation of his earlier comments, noted that police station operational arrangements were a matter for the police and the Police and Crime Commissioner, and referred to representations he had made on behalf of residents.

Councillor Sims sought figures on the percentage of Council employees who lived within the district and the proportion of the working week undertaken from home. The Leader indicated that officers should be able to supply the figures while cautioning against treating residence and work location as proxies for staff performance.

Councillor Mitchell asked who should specify replacement posts and obtain professional advice regarding Croxley Green land managed by the District Council. The Leader referred to the importance of understanding the wishes of Croxley Green residents and the parish council before deciding upon replacements for existing boulders, and noted that he had suggested consultation.

## 164 QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER AND LEAD MEMBERS

This item was not reached.

## 165 URGENT QUESTION

Councillor Debbie Morris raised concerns about visitors and vehicles reportedly locked inside the Rickmansworth Aquadrome car park after the gates were closed at 6 pm on 1 October 2026, asking about emergency access arrangements and the availability of staff. Councillor Chris Lloyd said that he had not previously been aware of the particular incident, invited further direct discussion and undertook to obtain a written response from officers on the operational arrangements.

Councillor Mike Sims referred to a motion adopted by the Green Party of England and Wales on 4 October 2026 concerning Zionism, and asked the Leader to reaffirm that the Council did not tolerate antisemitism, racism or discrimination and that it supported the Jewish community. Councillor Giles-Medhurst stated that national party motions did not determine the position of Three Rivers District Council; reaffirmed the Council's commitment to equality, community

cohesion and tackling hate crime; and referred to the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Equality Forum, reporting arrangements and Community Safety Partnership. He also made clear his personal and party disagreement with the motion.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Sims asked how the Leader would work with local Green Party Councillors given their continuing membership of that party. The Leader replied that the Councillors had been elected to represent their communities, that he respected that role notwithstanding political disagreement, and that his discussions indicated that the local Members concerned did not support the national motion.

## 166 MOTIONS

This item was not reached.

**CHAIRMAN**