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1. Question from Councillor Jon Tankard to the Leader of the Council:

Will the party opposite, apologise for the substandard accommodation suffered by the residents of Shannon House in the Gade Valley, a situation rightly identified and condemned by the party opposite in August?

Will they also now accept that the loss of residential rights, in part put upon private development, lost under the 'bonfire' of legislation lauded by the party opposite, enforcing Permitted Development rights in 2013, allowing change of use from Class B1(a) office to Class C3 residential without the need for planning permission and with the limitations placed on the local authority, to only allow assessments of:-

- transport and highways impacts of the development;
- contamination risks on the site;
- flooding risks on the site; and
- noise impacts from adjoining properties

Obviously excluding the basic human rights demonstrated within the Planning limitations set by at least the very basic, design and space standards, and further more directing that such developments will not contribute to the Local Infrastructure to financially assist the already burdened, Local Schools, Doctors and Dentists.

Given the impact and disgust expressed by Architectural, housing and human rights groups when this temporary enforcement was introduced, will they now identify, that to make this enforcement a permanent bypass of the basic human rights for housing in October 2015, was a grave error of judgement, as noted within their August publication, so I request again, having now first hand experience of the disaster of their policies, will they make a public apology to the residents of Shannon House for the direct association their Government brought to the legitimisation of delivery of sub standard accommodation to the poorest in our society.

Written response:

I totally agree the previous Conservative government let residents down allowing for sub-standard accommodation. This Council, as the Conservative group is fully aware, refused prior approval twice for this development on parking grounds and was overruled by the government inspector who accepted the units were sub-standard but could not refuse prior approval on those grounds.

It is deplorable that despite knowing the facts that the Conservatives deliberately misled residents during the recent Council by-election saying this council had "waved through permission" when it could have refused it.

Application reference 20/0369/PDR was given prior approval by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) for a change of use from Office (Class B1) to 74 Residential Units (Class C3). At the time of the PINS decision the Planning Inspector was only able to assess proposed development on the basis of:

- (a) transport and highways impacts of the development;
- (b) contamination risks on the site;
- (c) flooding risks on the site; and
- (d) impacts of noise from commercial premises on the intended occupiers of the development.

He had no powers to consider matters such as the occupiers' living standards and indeed commented in his decision letter:

“I recognise the concerns of interested parties in respect of the quality of accommodation, inadequate living space, excessive density, lack of affordable housing and loss of employment space, but these matters do not fall to be considered under existing legislation relating to prior approval applications for the change of use of office buildings.”

At the time this conversion was condemned by members of both the Parish and District council and concerns were expressed, but the 'Prior Approval' nature of the conversion, made it legally unchallengeable.

The rules were changed in 2020 following campaigning by national residential groups (including Three Rivers District Council) and in April 2021 minimum space standards were introduced for office to residential conversions. However, that change to the General Permitted Development Order could not be applied retrospectively and so did not affect the lawfulness of 20/0369/PDR.

Subsequent to the grant of prior approval on appeal, the Council later granted a planning permission for the same development under a S73 application (ref. 23/0343/FUL). The sole purpose of this application was to extend the time for completion of the development from December 2023 for a further 3 years. However, Officers considered only a 6 months extension was acceptable. The development was subsequently substantially complete by January 2024. The development programme could have easily been accelerated further if the S73 application had been refused in April 2023.

2. Question from Councillor Vicky Edwards to the Leader of the Council:

The site on which a hyper-scale data centre has been proposed for next to Bedmond Road was previously proposed by Three Rivers for allocation in the 2021 Regulation 18 consultation.

The site was subsequently withdrawn by the promoter, but the promoter has said that: *"It is relevant that the application site (the part proposed for built development) was considered appropriate for removal from the Green Belt. Even if the LPA changes its mind on whether it needs to be released for housing, it might still be appropriate to release the site to meet other development needs such as the need for Data Centres."*

Accordingly, does the Lead Member consider that the site is at more risk of being developed for having been previously proposed for housing by Three Rivers?

Written response:

The site was first included in the earlier Regulation 18 consultation as required by the legalisation. It was not included in the later consultations. This need was weighed up against the potential harm of removing the site for development from the Green Belt as evidenced by the Stage 2 Green belt review. The site would have not been included in the final Regulation 18 consultation if it had still been proposed as housing site as it was then rated as a higher harm site.

The Council did not have any evidence justifying the need for a data centre in the District, and so this use was not considered through the Local Plan process.

The need for housing is not related to the need for a data centre and as such it is not considered that inclusion at the first Regulation 18 stage in the Local Plan process increases the risk of the site being developed for this use. Indeed, the Green Belt review is clear evidence of the harm that the development of the site would be either as housing or as a Data Centre. The application for the data centre must be considered on its own merits taking into consideration the evidence provided justifying the need for such development and whether that meets the requirements for 'very special circumstances'.

It should also note that Local Plan preparation and planning applications are separate processes, and that the sites included at Regulation 18 consultation stage would be given minimal weight in a planning application. The site was consulted on, but this does not guarantee inclusion in the final version of the Local Plan.

3. Question from Councillor Oliver Cooper to the Leader of the Council:

Does Three Rivers recognise that the Planning Inspector considers – as it did in many cases, such as approving 150 homes and a 50-bed care home on the Green Belt in APP/V1505/23/3326612 – that an evidence base developed for withdrawn Local Plans or withdrawn site allocations is a material consideration even if those allocations are withdrawn?

Written response:

Evidence base documents can be material considerations in planning applications where relevant. The council refers to Local Plan evidence such as the Local Housing Needs Assessment and Economic Study in its determination of planning applications as well as the Green Belt assessment.

4. Question from Councillor Abbas Merali to the Leader of the Council:

Does the Leader of the Council agree that it is unfortunate that the Council did not get its act together to even get its Local Plan to Regulation 19 stage: leaving Three Rivers vulnerable to this Government's proposed changes to the NPPF and re-imposition of much higher housebuilding targets?

Written response:

In preparation of the Local Plan the council has had to grapple with multiple changes to national planning policy, which have affected the potential levels of growth in the district and have therefore resulted in changes in approach. Additional time was taken to prepare a low growth version of the plan as agreed by all parties at Full Council in December 2022. Had the council continued with the draft plan consulted on in 2021 that came close to meeting the standard method housing target then it would most likely would have been adopted by now. However, that would have required the Council to agree to the much higher housing target at the time of 12,600 as promoted by his government. It was clear that the public and indeed this administration that was unacceptable.

The change in government has resulted in a new version of the NPPF being consulted on merely 7 months after the previous 2023 version was published, this speed of turnaround in national planning policy is unprecedented and could not have been foreseen by the Council.

5. Question from Councillor Oliver Cooper to the Leader of the Council:

In July's council meeting, the Leader of the Council falsely claimed that the change of use permitted development rights apply to Advertisement Consents, as justification for the permitting ugly shopfronts on Rickmansworth High Street. That is despite changes to permitted development rights not being relevant to Advertisement Consent and the Regulations not having been substantively unchanged since 2007. He then mentions flags – which weren't involved, as pictures of flags are not flags. Why did he mislead the council by making up two obviously incorrect excuses for his inaction in one answer?

Written response:

The previous answer was referring to the 'permitted' change of use of the premises.

With regard to the advert, 'deemed consent' is available to premises along the High Street, subject to complying with the conditions of Schedule 2, Part 1, Class 5 of The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007. Class 5 permits any advertisement which does not fall within Class 4A or 4B (illuminated adverts) displayed on business premises wholly with reference to any or all of the following: the business carried on, the goods sold or services provided, or the name or qualifications of the person carrying on the business, or supplying the goods or services, on those premises.

In respect of the picture of flags, officers were still investigating whether the 2nd fascia, as a result of the images on the sign, was 'deemed consent'.

Importantly, the main fascia sign was changed again following discussions with officers. The sign now in situ benefits from 'deemed consent' and thus does not require express consent from the local planning authority.

6. Question from Councillor Oliver Cooper to the Leader of the Council:

Will Three Rivers create or collaborate with neighbouring councils to create a foundation to receive donations or bequests for the benefit of charities or other non-profits in the area?

Written response:

We already do and I am surprised Councillor Cooper did not know this. A donations platform called “Connecting Three Rivers” was launched in June this year and is managed by Watford and Three Rivers Trust on behalf of the Local Strategic Partnership. We encourage residents and businesses to donate, in order to support projects that achieve the Community Strategy.

Funds raised will be awarded to organisations through successful applications. The first round is focussing on the following priorities:

1. Promote local employment and volunteering opportunities
2. Tackle and prevent Anti-Social Behaviour and Youth Crime
3. Address and prevent hate crime and promote community cohesion
4. Develop and coordinate the community and voluntary sector.

Donations can be made via connectingthreerivers.org

7. Question from Councillor Oliver Cooper to the Leader of the Council:

Did Three Rivers respond to the Government's consultation on imposing VAT on independent schools?

Written response:

As this does not directly impact on District Councils Three Rivers has not provided a response.

8. Question from Councillor Reena Ranger to the Leader of the Council:

There has been deep concern about action points from committee meetings not being taken up by Lead Members at all or for months until the minutes are published. This defeats the point of having the Committee System. Will the council introduce an Action Sheet after each committee meeting, as occurs for the Planning Committee?

Written response:

This would simply duplicate actions decided by the committee already being recorded within the minutes of meetings. The purpose of a committee system is for the council's committees to take decisions collectively, and the matters the committees formally decide recorded as resolutions within the minutes. When an individual member makes a commitment to follow something up outside of a meeting, that is a matter for him/her to follow up on. If the member has a query about a specific action that a lead member has committed to follow up, I encourage her to take the matter up with the lead member directly or an officer rather than drag the matter out and wait for a question at Full Council.

9. Question from Councillor Reena Ranger to the Lead Member for Infrastructure and Economic Development:

Three Rivers is yet to publish a report of series of recommendations made by SavetheHighStreet.org in 2022. Will the council publish the report and recommendations immediately?

Written response:

As previously advised to Full Council the proposals arising from the SaveTheHighStreet.Org work were to identify the issues and suggest how these could be addressed. The survey was in effect a 'wish list' from local businesses and High Street traders, rather than a developed and budgeted work programme. TRDC also recognised that the recommendations included roles for other key stakeholders and interested parties. No work has commenced on these specific recommendations, other than business as usual responses to any graffiti or damaged street furniture. However, the Leader recently announced (July 2024) a new project is set to be launched to look at improving Rickmansworth's High Street. This project will establish a working group with key council officers to both look at potential improvements and bidding for additional funding. This work could consider these previous recommendations.

10. Question from Councillor Andrea Fraser to the Lead Member for Leisure:

Why are the public not informed of the specific dangers envisaged by people using the Aquadrome path, when doing so is legally required to oust occupiers' liability?

Written response:

The public were informed through onsite notices and several social media posts that the pathway is closed due to health and safety concerns. In addition, heras fencing has been securely installed to prevent the public from accessing the site with signage on that fencing informing the public that the path is closed.

A statement regarding the pathway is also available on the Council's website:

<https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/services/leisure-parks-culture/parks-open-spaces/rickmansworth-aquadrome>

In addition, a detailed note was sent to all councillors explaining the position following a series of mis-information social media posts, and that could have encouraged residents to endanger themselves.

11. Question from Councillor Mike Sims to the Lead Member for Leisure:

Why when the footpath at the Aquadrome had to be closed at the beginning of this year were the public and councillors not updated until I tabled a motion for debate several months later?

Written response:

In addition to the onsite notices informing the public of the path closure, the public have been updated on many occasions as to the status of the path via social media throughout the winter and spring and updated in a council statement on 5th August 2024. Councillors were, following some social media posts on a local Facebook Group, provided with further information on 12th September 2024.

12. Question from Councillor Vicky Edwards to the Lead Member for Leisure:

A planning application has been submitted for Bedmond Sports Pavilion for a substantial part of the facility, including the function room and bar, to be changed into a supervised visitation centre which will be operational six days per week. Does Three Rivers support Abbots Langley Parish Council's decision to close Bedmond Sports and Social Club and end the future of Bedmond FC?

Written response:

Whilst this is a matter for the democratically elected Abbots Langley Parish Council to decide I understand that the assumption made “the end the future of Bedmond FC” is just untrue and has no basis in facts the Social Club officially closed in 2017.

I am surprised that Cllr Edwards has not checked the facts with Abbots Langley Parish Council. The following facts have been provided by the Parish Council.

Bedmond Pavilion Timeline of Events

1) The Bedmond Sports and Social Club, under whose banner Bedmond FC (men's seniors' team) played, closed in July 2017 as per a vote taken at its EGM held in April 2017. The club's lease officially ended in January 2018.

2) Private local residents took possession of the property in January 2018. The new occupiers said they were operating under the name of Bedmond Sports & Social Club. The Council assumed the previous leaseholders would legally assign the lease to the occupiers as the new trustees of Bedmond Sports & Social Club and these would then seek a renewal of the lease with the Council. This never occurred.

3) The Council was in discussions with the new occupiers from January 2018 until June 2023, with a pause during the pandemic. During this time, the Council repeatedly offered a lease to the new occupiers. As the Council is not able to sign a lease with individuals, the Council also requested proof of the occupiers' legal registration as Bedmond Sports & Social Club. This was never provided.

4) In May 2023, the Council gave the occupiers a final deadline of June 2023 to provide proof that the club was legally registered as Bedmond Sports & Social Club and was legally able to sign a lease with the Council. This was never provided as the club was never legally registered, therefore, the Council took back possession of Bedmond Pavilion at the end of June 2023.

5) In June 2023, Bedmond FC (men's seniors team) closed stating that they could not continue to operate without the Bedmond Pavilion as a clubhouse. The FA's rules do allow lower division teams to use local pubs as their clubhouse while continuing to use a pitch at another location as a home pitch. It is unknown if this option was investigated.

6) Bedmond Youth FC (under 16s and below) have continued to use Bedmond Playing Fields as their home pitches and have use of the home and away changing rooms, and storage room at Bedmond Pavilion.

7) In July 2024, Council Officers inspected the building and identified significant works were required to make the property safe. Although the original lease with Bedmond Sports & Social Club was a fully self-repairing lease, Officers found the building was in a significant state of disrepair and no repairs had been undertaken and as the club ceased to exist there was no ability to get them to fulfil their obligations. The Council completed the necessary repairs in February 2024.

8) In March & April 2024, the Council received 2 expression of interest applications to lease the newly refurbished building. Applications were considered at the Council's meeting in May 2024 and a decision made to offer an applicant a lease. The lease offered excludes the home and away changing rooms, and the storage area. These have been separately let to Bedmond Youth FC.

The changing rooms, including toilets, and the storage facilities at Bedmond Sports Pavilion have been excluded from the lease negotiations. These facilities have their own dedicated entrances, separate from the main hall, and will remain under Council management.

The changing rooms and storage facilities have been offered to Bedmond Youth FC. Following a grant from Tesco the Council is making for further improvement of the changing rooms. This will improve these facilities for the benefit of the players. Additionally, the Parish Council has agreed with Bedmond Youth FC to increase the number of pitches to be marked out at Bedmond playing fields to 3 junior pitches. This is being done to help meet the needs of the club.

13. Question from Councillor Chris Alley to the Lead Member for Leisure:

I asked in July whether Three Rivers Council has looked into dilapidations or liabilities it may have to pay for repairs it has not carried out, once the Sir James Altham 3G pitch has been returned to Hertfordshire County Council in April 2025. No answer was forthcoming, despite it clearly playing a large part in the public discussion and publicity issued by Three Rivers and being a material budget item. Is Three Rivers responsible for dilapidations and how much are they expected to be?

Written response:

An answer to this question was provided in writing at Full Council on 9 July 2024. As far as this matter is concerned, the answer remains the same, pending progress on the surrender of the lease of the Sir James Altham site to Hertfordshire County Council.

14. Question from Councillor Abbas Merali to the Lead Member for Leisure:

Padel is one of the fastest growing sports in the UK. With its low barriers to entry, it is a great sport to encourage greater participation, promoting physical and mental health well-being. However, there are no padel courts in Three Rivers. Can the Lead Member commit to consider provision of padel facilities, including one in Eastbury Recreation Ground, which lends itself to such a facility?

Written response:

As Cllr Merali has previously been advised, in response to his question to the 17 October 2023 Full Council meeting, there is currently no budget or plans to incorporate padel tennis facilities. Such facilities would cost in the region of £75k and although it is fast growing nationally, it is still very niche. Officers will continue to monitor any local demand for the sport and identify any opportunities to incorporate it into the existing programme where external funding becomes available.

15. Question from Councillor Chris Alley to the Lead Member for Leisure:

What is the average length of time taken for three rivers to carry out repairs on children's playing areas?

Written response:

Time for repair will very much vary dependant on what specifically needs to be repaired. There are several variables including the availability of materials, the level of fix required i.e. basic or requiring more specialist services. All repair work and materials must be to the required BS EN 1176 (play equipment) or BS EN 1177 (safety surfacing) standard. Some items can be repaired immediately, whilst others will take longer.

**16. Question from Councillor Chris Alley to the Lead Member for
Community Safety:**

In response to recent crimes and the release of thousands of criminals on to our streets by the Labour government, will TRDC increase resources for more CCTV in areas such as Delta Gain and South Oxhey?

Written response:

Response to follow

17. Question from Councillor Vicky Edwards to the Lead Member for General Public Services:

The council has left pupils walking from Abbots Langley to Parmiter's School at risk on the roads by not requiring the provision of a crossing across High Elms Lane, in accordance a condition of planning permission 15/1026/FUL. Three Rivers let the applicant off the hook by approving a report from the applicant arguing it was unnecessary. However, the conclusion of the report was based solely on children from Fraser Crescent and who used the path before the bridleway was opened, and so does not reflect the number pupils from the rest of Abbots Langley which would have shown much higher demand for a crossing. Will the council urgently add the provision of a crossing to its recently completed parking consultation on High Elms Lane and commit to using CIL to fund it to make the walk to school safe for children?

Written response:

This is just not the case, TRDC cannot just "add in a crossing" because it wishes to do so. Road safety is the remit of the County Council, and it is they who have the final say on a crossing provision.

The Councillor is wrong to state that the applicant has been let "off the hook" claiming false claiming TRDC argued a pedestrian crossing.

In fact, the planning condition states:

The development shall not be begun until full details of the proposed access arrangements from and to the existing highway network have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details submitted shall include the proposed roundabout junction on Woodside Road, zebra crossing on Woodside Road, upgraded vehicle activated signs on Woodside Road, the extent of vegetation clearance for visibility at the crossing point on High Elms Lane (to the north of the Bridleway) and the proposed bus stop enhancement works on Horseshoe Lane. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and no dwelling shall be occupied until the approved works have been completed and made available for use, with the exception of the roundabout junction which shall be completed and brought into operation prior to commencement of the residential development.

Reason: This condition is a pre-commencement condition in the interests of highway safety in accordance with Policies CP1 and CP10 of the Core Strategy (adopted October 2011).

These measures are in fact in place as agreed with Herts County Council funded by the required Section 106 so I have no idea why the Council is claiming they are not.

The decision on whether to proceed with a crossing would for Hertfordshire County Council. Any future decision to progress a crossing point along High Elms Lane would for a decision for the County Council. They are aware of the District Council's proposals for a parking scheme.

My colleague, Cllr Stephen Giles-Medhurst, knows a lot about the latest scheme to improve safety at in High Elms Lane and has worked with officers, the schools and the Crem to get an agreed scheme to improve safety for many years. The County Council has been I understand very difficult about this. Indeed, at on the most recent proposals where Cllr Giles-Medhurst suggested a formal crossing from the public footpath from Boundary Way where it joins High Elms Lane. HCC said they would not support such a proposal but have agreed that the TRDC plans, and its funding, include a clearer crossing point. If Cllr Edwards wants more details, I suggest she discusses it with Cllr Giles-Medhurst.

18. Question from Councillor Oliver Cooper to the Lead Member for General Public Services:

Three Rivers says it will not consider taxed cars to be abandoned, meaning they can be abandoned in Three Rivers for up to 12 months before TRDC even thinks it has to act. This led to Three Rivers refusing to do anything about a car abandoned on the footpath from Chorleywood village centre to Clement Danes until after term started: forcing at least dozens of Year 7s to walk into a National Speed Limit road on their first day of secondary school. Three Rivers does not appear to have a published abandoned cars policy, as other district councils in Hertfordshire do. Will Three Rivers publish an abandoned vehicles policy that makes clear its responsibilities for removing abandoned vehicles?

Written response:

As is clear below the Council DID NOT TAKE 12 months to get an abandoned vehicle removed this appears typical of Cllr Cooper misleading residents.

The council's policy in relation to abandoned vehicle is already published on the Council website on the page titled 'Abandoned and nuisance vehicles' within the Council services, Transport and Streets section:

<https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/services/transport-and-streets/abandoned-nuisance-vehicles>

In relation to the case in question far from refusing to do anything about this specific car, officers of this council went above and beyond this council's responsibilities to remove the vehicle. Whilst abandoned vehicles fall under the councils remit for action, dangerous vehicles are in fact the responsibility of the Police and not this council.

In this instance TRDC officers first received a report of this vehicle on Monday 16th September (it having been reported to the council online on Saturday 14th). The council's Enforcement Officer visited on Tuesday 17th and placed a 7-day notice. There were no keeper details on record and the vehicle has a valid MOT.

Whilst this matter would usually fall to the Police to remove as a dangerous vehicle, as despite being aware of it they had not acted, officers requested the council contractor on Thursday 19th September to remove the vehicle which they promptly did on Friday 20th. The Council further had to arrange to store and pay for storage of this vehicle, for 7 days, in case a keeper did come forward. It would have been normal practice to place a 24-hour notice of removal on the vehicle, after the 7 days.

As officers were not able to do so in this instance it was necessary to incur the additional costs in case a keeper comes forward.

Far from refusing to do anything, officers not only acted quickly but did so outside of our usual processes and our responsibilities, to deal with this matter and ensure the safety of young people in our district.

19. Question from Councillor Philip Hearn to the Leader Member for General Public Services:

What will be the impact on traffic as a result of the proposed cycle scheme along Chorleywood Road / Rickmansworth Road / Chenies Road (A404)?

Written response:

All proposed interventions on the routes within the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan are draft and may be subject to change. The current proposed interventions on the A404 focus on widening of the pavement and junction improvements with minimal traffic impact expected.

20. Question from Councillor Rue Grewal to the Lead Member for General Public Services:

Frequent overflowing of bins creates a vicious cycle where people feel justified in dumping their rubbish. This exacerbates the problem and highlights the failure of management agents who are charging residents service fees while forcing them to live in unacceptable conditions. These conditions are unsightly and pose serious health risks, including spreading disease and attracting rats. What actions does Three Rivers plan to take to address this worsening issue and hold management agents to account for their neglect?

Written response:

The issue is not worsening, rather significant improvements have been seen over the past couple of months. Unfortunately, however, there has been a couple of incidents recently where fly tipped waste has caused an overflow. Waste services consistently empty the bins on the scheduled day.

Management agents have, in the main, responded in a timely manner to any reports made by our enforcement team, the most recent having less than a 48 hour turnaround from the waste being reported to council officers and being cleared by the management agent.

Officers will continue to monitor identified areas twice weekly and report any issues onto the management agents to resolve in a timely manner, if a management company fails to act on our reports, then officers will take action under a Community Protection Notice. So far there have not had any incidents where the managing agent has failed to act on our reports and the council has not received any complaints in the past month.

21. Question from Councillor Oliver Cooper to the Leader Member for Housing and Public Health:

Why has Three Rivers not included a Local Connections Test in its application of the First Homes policy to ensure local people benefit from local homes for affordable ownership? Will it now commit to include one urgently?

Written response:

The Council's First Homes position statement was added to the Council's website following the Government's introduction of First Homes through a Written Ministerial Statement. The position statement sets out how the First Homes policy can be applied alongside the Council's existing affordable housing policy. This meets the Government's requirements but has not added any additional requirements such as a local connection test as the evidence to justify further requirements still needed to be prepared. The Council is updating Local Housing Needs Assessment, and this includes a section on First Homes which will inform any changes to the emerging Local Plan policy.

It should be noted that the council's Local Housing Needs Assessment sets out that the district's greatest need in terms of affordable housing is social rent followed by affordable rent. The new consultation draft version of the NPPF is proposing to remove the First Homes requirement. This does not mean the Council cannot require First Homes but the amount required will need to be based on evidence and we need to have that evidence to support it which is what the council is undertaking.

22. Question from Councillor Rue Grewal to the Lead Member for Housing and Public Health:

Thrive Homes' disgraceful attitude, incompetence, and failure to resolve issues – including leaving disabled individuals living in squalor – is wholly unacceptable. It is intolerable that we allow Thrive Homes to treat our residents as second-class citizens. What actions does Three Rivers plan to take to address this unacceptable relationship with Thrive Homes? I want to know the specific action plan for holding them accountable and ensuring our residents receive the respect and living conditions they deserve.

Written response:

As a registered provider of social housing within England, Thrive Homes is subject to regulation by the Regulator of Social Housing. The regulator is responsible for setting consumer and economic standards for registered providers of social housing and can act if these standards are breached.

The consumer standards include the safe and quality standard, that requires registered providers of social housing to ensure that their tenants properties meet the standards set out in the Decent Homes Guidance.

Whilst the Regulator of Social Housing cannot assist to resolve individual tenant complaints, if any tenant of Thrive Homes is not satisfied with the conditions in their property or believe that Thrive Homes have failed to undertake any required remedial work, they can raise this with Thrive Homes through their complaints process. If the tenant remains unsatisfied following the progression to the end of this complaints process, this complaint can be escalated by the tenant to the Housing Ombudsman.

Following their investigation into an individual tenant complaint, the Housing Ombudsman may formally refer a matter to the Regulator of Social Housing where they believe that their investigation into a case may reveal a wider systemic failing and possible evidence of a breach of the standards set by the Regulator.

If Cllr Rue Grewal has specific examples of what she describes I would expect her to bring to the attention of senior officers or indeed myself so it can be investigated.

23. Question from Councillor Mike Sims to the Lead Member for Resources:

Is there a budget allocated for repair of the Aquadrome path? And if it will cost at an absolute minimum £198,000, why have the Council and the Policy & Resources Committee not been informed, consulted, and asked for consent?

Written response:

The 2022 – 2027 Aquadrome Management Plan was approved at the 12 October 2022 Leisure, Environment and Community Committee. The Management Plan's vision is:

'For the Aquadrome to be enhanced, nurtured, and protected. To achieve a balance so nature can flourish, and visitors can connect with and discover beautiful and unique habitats whilst understanding the importance of the environmental heritage of the site.'

This plan was approved on the basis external funding would be secured to deliver this vision.

Three Rivers District Council was recently successful in their funding application of £510,463 to the HS2 Colne Valley Regional Park Panel for habitat and accessibility works to the Wet Woodland and River Colne, including the existing footpath. In addition, the Council were also successful in a funding bid of £161,000 to the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Recovery and Resilience project, which focused on scientific based evidence gathering for work to the Aquadrome. This included the commissioning of a Hydrological Study to inform future work.

Budget is therefore available for the work to the path from the funding partner identified above, however this work cannot take place until the hydrological study is complete. Patchwork repairs would be washed away in the coming weeks and months. Any significant work to the path would require a Flood Risk Activities Permit (FRAP) from the Environment Agency and this application will require the evidence from the Hydrological Study.

There is therefore no requirement for the Policy & Resources Committee to be informed, consulted, or consent asked for at this stage.

24. Question from Councillor Vicky Edwards to the Chair of the Planning Committee:

Why did the s73 application for Shannon House (23/0343/FUL) not apply a condition requiring its squalid shoebox flats to meet the nationally-described minimum space standard, even though the s73 application was submitted after the change in the law making such minimum space requirements mandatory?

Written response:

Application 20/0369/PDR gave prior approval for a change of use from Office (Class B1) to 74 Residential Units (Class C3). Imposing a planning condition which secured a lower number of residential units would have required a variation to the description of the development. Section 73 of the 1990 Act does not permit a planning permission to be rewritten.

25. Question from Councillor Vicky Edwards to the Chair of the Planning Committee:

Does the council agree with the applicant for Land to the rear of 63 The Crescent (24/1060/RSP) that it benefits from the self-build exemption from CIL?

Written response:

No, the development is not considered to comply with the requirements of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) self-build exemption.

26. Question from Councillor Oliver Cooper to the Chair of the Planning Committee:

How many First Homes have been built, secured in permissions, or does the Chair expect to be secured in pending applications?

Written response:

None to date that officers are aware. I refer to the earlier answer re the evidence being gathered to support such ab allocation.

27. Question from Councillor Oliver Cooper to the Chair of the Planning Committee:

The Chair told Cllr Cooper in July that 'minor improvements' had been made to the unsightly tattered scaffold sheeting on the building opposite Three Rivers House. Yet it is now worse than ever. Why has Three Rivers not issued a section 215 notice and why has it done nothing to stop the terrible state of this very prominent building marring Rickmansworth High Street?

Written response:

Requests from members to officers have been received about the condition of the scaffolding. As communicated to local ward councillors, officers have recently met with the owner and requested that the sheeting is replaced or repaired as soon as possible to avoid direct action. From discussions with the owner and when considering the extent of works, the scaffolding is likely to be removed in the coming months.

28. Question from Councillor Chris Mitchell to the Lead Member for Resources:

One of our main concerns in Croxley Green is to retain a valuable community space that has been classified as a site of community value. We have had extensive discussions about this and wish to work on a cross-party basis to agree a long term sustainable solution to retaining this on the Red Cross site in Croxley Green. Therefore, please can you confirm when the fair, transparent and reasonable negotiation with Croxley Green Parish Council to reach an agreement will commence, and who will represent Three Rivers?

Written response:

As Councillor Mitchell is aware, I've been pushing for transparency for all concerned regarding this issue since June 2023 and am glad that we are now in a position to progress. As Councillor Mitchell will now be aware, since submitting his question he has been invited to attend a meeting on this matter, as the Local Ward Councillor together with the Leader, Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources, together with relevant Officers. This will be the next step in engaging in further dialogue with Croxley Green Parish Council.

29. Question from Councillor Chris Mitchell to the Lead Member for Sustainability and Climate Change:

Please confirm that we are doing all we can to secure the services of our very good staff in the Sustainability team, as I am aware that the funding for one or two post may be coming to an end.

Written response:

The current funding arrangement for the Climate Change and Sustainability team is a mix of council funded establishment (permanent) posts (1.5 Part time positions) and grant funded posts (currently 1 FTE post funded until June 2025). An outline business case has been prepared to inform the council's budget considerations which includes a proposal to increase the establishment roles by 1FTE which would if approved by council provide security of tenure to the current postholder whilst still seeking where possible to secure funding externally for resource in this important area of work.

30. Question from Councillor Chris Mitchell to the Leader of the Council:

We discussed the issue of the future ownership and control of the Green and Stones Orchard in Croxley Green. As you know the Parish Council does most of the maintenance at no cost to Three Rivers, however they have to pay us to carry out any events. The Parish Council has requested that this is looked into seriously for over 12 years now.

Please can you confirm when a team for us and the Croxley Green Parish Council on the future ownership and control of the Green and Stones Orchard will be set up.

Written response:

As I have said I have asked officers to set up an informal meeting to discuss this issue with you and the Parish and away forward as the issue is rather more complex than the question suggests.

31. Question from Councillor Narinder Sian to the Lead Member for General Public Services:

Please provide an update on the implementation of the Beryl Bike scheme in our area.

Hertsmere, who began their engagement with Beryl after Three Rivers District Council, is already live with 27 bays, 40 bikes, and 20 e-bikes. Meanwhile, we have yet to see any significant progress on our own trial.

Since the Full Council Meeting on 11 July 2023, we have been asking for updates on this initiative. Unfortunately, despite assurances that the scheme was imminent, there has been a noticeable lack of progress.

Could you kindly provide clarity on the current status of the scheme and outline what steps are being taken to address these delays? I also hope you can shed light on the reasons behind this continued stagnation and what is being done to resolve it.

Written response:

Cllr Stephen Giles-Medhurst who has pushed through this project along with former Cllr Paul Rainbow over the last four years has already provided details to you and other councillors and Croxley Green residents over the reasons for the delays with Herts County Council. Indeed, without his most recent two direct interventions as Leader as officers were not getting replies the scheme would not be able to go live.

The required contract and licences have been signed to enable this scheme to start with a scheduled launch date of the 7 October 2024.

32. Question from Councillor Narinder Sian to the Lead Member for General Public Services:

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst's recent comments in the Watford Observer on 14th September 2024 (attached) attributes the six-month delay of the Beryl Bike scheme in Croxley to Hertfordshire County Council's bureaucracy.

While there may be challenges in securing agreements, it is troubling that, despite these claims, no clear actions have been communicated to expedite the process.

Given the success of the scheme in Watford and Hertsmere, where HCC agreements are already in place, this ongoing delay raises concerns about the leadership and coordination within our own council.

While Councillor Giles-Medhurst describes this as "bureaucracy gone mad" and blames HCC for the setbacks, it is important to note that he has been working on this project for over three years. His leadership has been a constant throughout the negotiation period, and despite his long involvement, the scheme has still not come to fruition.

Could you kindly provide clarity on what responsibilities Councillor Giles-Medhurst has had in the implementation of the scheme.

Written response:

The Beryl Bikes project has been led by officers working closely with our legal team, Beryl Bikes and Hertfordshire County Council. Regular updates have been provided to the Leader (and Lead Member) who has provided support chasing senior officer at HCC to complete the work on the documentation for the project to progress, including raising the matter with the Acting CEO of HCC.

33. Question from Councillor Narinder Sian to the Lead Member for Resources:

At the Croxley Green Local Area Forum on Thursday 5th September 2024, an update from officers was read out by Councillor Chris Mitchell which mentioned the development of 9-10 residential units with ground floor community space. The number of residential units differs from previous numbers provided. Could you please clarify the basis for this recalculation? Have any indicative drawings been prepared to demonstrate how this can be achieved, and if so, are these available for review?

Written response:

There has been and remains some flexibility in the designs relating to the potential redevelopment of the former Red Cross Building. The variation to the number of units is based upon seeking maximum development viability of any potential scheme. Each variation has been financially modelled, with indicative drawings prepared where necessary. As indicated in response to Councillor Mitchell's question on this subject, an initial review of proposals will be shared shortly.

34. Question from Councillor Cheryl Stungo to the Lead Member for Resources:

At the Croxley Green Local Area Forum on Thursday 5th September 2024, an update from officers was read out by Councillor Chris Mitchell which mentioned the housing needs register with over 100 families in Croxley on it,

In previous discussions, the housing officer has been unable to confirm the figure of 100 families from Croxley on the register. This figure appears to be an important part of the decision-making process, and it would be helpful to understand how this figure has been derived and whether more precise data is available.

Written response:

As per the Council's Housing Allocations Policy, any application to the Council's Housing Register is only verified at the point of any offer of accommodation, not on application. Therefore, any report on the address of those who have applied to join the Council's Housing Register will only extract information on a customer's current address at the time of application and this information has not been verified. At the time that the Council's Housing Operations Manager provided this figure (July 2023) there was 106 households who had stated their address at the point of application was in Croxley Green, however, there is no way to indicate whether these households still reside within Croxley Green or have moved. Furthermore, if a household that resided within Croxley Green prior to July 2023 had applied for the Council's Housing Register, however, they had not filled in their current address correctly, this would not be included within this figure.

It is important to note that if a household that lives within Croxley Green were to bid on any property that was advertised within that area, they would not have any additional priority over a household that was eligible to bid on that property, who lived in any other area. The local connection required to join the Council's Housing Register and bid on any available social housing properties is a local connection to the district as a whole and households are not restricted to a local connection to certain areas of Three Rivers. For clarity, there are currently 1,415 live applications on the Council's Housing Register.

35. Question from Councillor Cheryl Stungo to the Lead Member for Sustainability and Climate Change:

I was disappointed with the agenda for the Climate Change, Leisure and Housing Committee meeting held on 24th July 2024. Despite the Council's declared climate emergency and its stated goal to put the environment at the centre of all its activities, the meeting included only one climate-related agenda item: The Bury Grounds Biodiversity Project.

Given the urgency of the climate crisis and the Council's commitment to addressing it, I expected a broader range of climate-related topics to be discussed.

Housing, which is another key issue in our district, was not covered at all. This is particularly concerning considering housing and sustainability are interconnected, especially when considering the district's responsibility to balance development with climate resilience. We have a shortage of affordable homes and an increasing demand for energy-efficient housing.

Locally, Hertfordshire faces increased flooding risk, rising air pollution levels and growing pressure on green spaces.

I would appreciate being informed about what steps will be taken to ensure more comprehensive discussions on climate and housing in future meetings.

Written response:

Climate Change and sustainability is at the core of everything the council does and as such all reports requiring decisions by the committee are supported by a Sustainability Impact Assessment, there is therefore ample opportunity for members to discuss climate and sustainability in relation to any and all matters before any committee, not simply the Climate Change, Leisure and Housing Committee, and indeed Full Council.

In the past 12 months the CCLH Committee has had comprehensive discussions on not only the Bury Biodiversity Project but also the achievements of the 2023-26 Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy and it has considered, discussed and approved an updated Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy for 2024 -27 as well as new action plan for its delivery. The progress of the council's strategy and its associated action plan is reported to the CCLH Committee Biannually with the next report being considered this month.

There was no agenda item from Housing Services at the last Climate Change, Leisure and Housing Committee as there was nothing that required a decision from Committee at that time.

36. Question from Councillor Stephen King to the Lead Member for General Public Services

Can the Lead Member confirm whether the double yellow line at the junction of Henbury Way and Oxhey Drive has been fully painted, is enforceable and the date upon which it was finished, or if it yet to be completed when will it finally be done?

Written response:

Attempts have been made to complete the lines; however, motorists have been ignoring the parking suspension signs put in place to enable the contractors to finish them. Officers are chasing the matter with our parking services provider and will aim to get them completed quickly.

37. Question from Councillor Stephen Cox to the Lead Member for General Public Services

Would the Lead Member please advise what progress has been made with Thrive Homes regarding the rubbish bin situation at Erskine House and Forfar House since the answer given at July's Full Council meeting and an update on the actions this council is taking to ensure the bins are collected weekly to prevent overflowing and the obvious threat to public health?

Written response:

Progress is being made at these blocks, namely;

1. TRDC has produced significantly sized metal signage that has now been installed in the in the bin areas. Smaller signs are also on order to be placed on the recycling racks.
2. TRDC officers have met with Reps from Thrive to discuss moving of the bin store to the drying area.
3. Coded padlocks have been fitted to the bin store doors this week (one is however already missing).
4. TRDC have commenced charging Thrive for returned visits where refuse vehicles have been unable to gain access.
5. Meetings have been held to discuss potential for traffic restrictions eg yellow lines.
6. TRDC have requested that Thrive have a tree cut back which is restricting access.
7. Meetings continue to be held with Thrive on a quarterly basis. Discussions and emails are exchanged in between meetings to update on progress or discuss issues are they arise.

38. Question from Councillor Joan King to the Leader Member for Resources

Does the Lead Member agree with me that the designation of the former Pavilion in Green Lane as an Asset of Community Value is important, but while the building remains closed to the public it is of no use to the community and what action has been or is being taken by this council to ensure that the building is maintained in accordance with the lease conditions?

Written response:

Officers continue to review the condition of assets that are subject to covenants to 'keep in repair'. Whilst disclosure of any intended action within a public forum may prejudice the Council's position, as Lead Member for Resources, I am happy to arrange for a meeting between Councillor Joan King, myself and appropriate Officers to discuss this matter.

39. Question from Councillor Sara Bedford to the Leader of the Council

What does the Lead Member understand are the main advantages of retaining Bedmond as a 'washed over' village within the Green Belt?

Written response:

As the question questions the integrity of the lead member, I have no intention of answering it in detail. The information regarding this is in the public domain as the member is well aware.

40. Question from Councillor Sara Bedford to the Leader of the Council

What does the Leader understand are the main disadvantages of inseting Bedmond within the Green Belt?

Written response:

As the question questions the integrity of the lead member, I have no intention of answering it in detail. The information regarding this is in the public domain as the member is well aware.

41. Question from Councillor Sara Bedford to the Leader of the Council

What does the Leader understand are the differences introduced by Paragraph 145 of the NPPF as updated in December 2023?

Written response:

As the question questions the integrity of the lead member, I have no intention of answering it in detail. The information regarding this is in the public domain as the member is well aware.

42. Question from Councillor Sara Bedford to the Leader of the Council

Several senior staff had been routinely copying emails from opposition councillors to the Council Leader and lead Members in direct contravention of the Member-Officer protocol. Why was this allowed to happen?

Written response:

I have not been routinely copied into emails to opposition members as is stated above. I have been copied into emails, as have other members, across say the Abbots Langley Parish area regarding Leavesden Country Park (which is in my ward) that affect the whole Parish, and that practice was recently stopped on the advice of the Monitoring Officer.

43. Question from Councillor Sara Bedford to the Leader of the Council

I have been unable to obtain an undertaking that the requirement to maintain the privacy of emails has been shared with all officers. Should this not have happened immediately?

Written response:

I understand from the Monitoring Officer that it was not considered necessary to share this with all officers and it was shared with the specific officers concerned. I have no other comment to make.

44. Question from Councillor Sara Bedford to the Leader of the Council

How can Members be confident that their correspondence with officers is secure and private?

Written response:

I understand this is the subject of ongoing correspondence between you and the Monitoring Officer. I therefore have no other comment to make.

45. Question from Councillor Sara Bedford to the Lead Member for Infrastructure and Economic Development:

What is the cost of installing EV charging points a) in the access road in front of the shops in Abbots Langley High Street and b) in the car park behind?

Written response:

The cost to install EV charging points is £107,561.36 for the access road in front of the shops in Abbots Langley High Street and £121,605.12 for the carpark behind.

However, the latter is not considered a viable commercial operation by the councils preferred provider so if the service road were not preceded with it is likely the whole scheme might be withdrawn.

46. Question from Councillor Sara Bedford to the Lead Member for Infrastructure and Economic Development:

The parking spaces in the proposed EV. Harbinger spaces are much used as convenient short stay spaces and by disabled drivers because of their easier access in and out of a car. Why, despite this being brought to the attention of two officers has this not been taken into account when planning the spaces?

Written response:

As advised in previous correspondence, Officers do not propose to make any changes to the current parking restrictions on the chosen bays. The bays are currently 1-hour maximum stay between Monday and Saturday 8am and 6pm and this will remain the same to enable the regular 'churn' of new visitors to the parade.

Officers have consulted with a Charging Point Operator about implementing 'overstay' fees which is a small payment customers of the EV Chargers would pay if their vehicle reached 100% before they move it. An overstay fee would also help to enable the frequent vacation of cars from these spaces. Officers will monitor the utilisation of the Electric Vehicle chargers and implement an overstay fee if this is needed.

Councillor concerns on the enforcement of the current disabled bays have been raised with the parking enforcement team. If further disabled bays are identified as being required, this would be required to follow the formal parking request process.

47. Question from Councillor Sara Bedford to the Lead Member for Infrastructure and Economic Development:

What is the point of having EV charging spaces if they are not going to be subject to enforcement?

Written response:

Following Councillor concerns on the Electric Vehicle Charging spaces, some fast-charging bays will not be enforced so as not to penalise drivers during incidences of high parking pressure. This situation will be monitored.

48. Question from Councillor Sara Bedford to the Lead Member for Leisure:

Despite management and some replanting, some of the trees in the orchard on the north side of Leavesden Country Park are in poor condition. Why has consideration not been given to expand and revitalise the orchard, including planting a greater variety of fruiting trees and shrubs. Surely this would support a number of the council's priorities.

Such changes would be welcomed by local residents and funding could be sought from within S106 funds, CIL or the council's own funds.

Written response:

Officers from the Trees and Woodlands team have visited the heritage orchard at LCP recently to assess the condition of the trees. Many of the trees are currently heavy with fruit, and whilst this is in many ways positive, this has led in some cases to trees struggling to support the weight and being bent over towards the ground. Officers carried out some formative pruning of the trees last winter, which has reduced this issue, but clearly there is more pruning work required.

Last winter, six replacement trees were planted, and these appear to be doing well, however, several other existing trees have died, so officers will carry out more replacement planting this coming planting season, as per the management plan.

The majority of the trees in the orchard are on dwarfing, or semi-dwarfing root stock, so will always be relatively small trees. The use of these root stocks has become increasingly common as it enables the fruit to be picked much more easily, without the need for ladders. Officers will though look to plant some trees on larger growing root stocks to provide greater landscape benefits.

In the longer term it is intended to explore expanding and revitalising the heritage orchard, including planting a greater variety of fruiting trees and shrubs, however, this is not an action within the current management plan, and Council does not have the resource capacity at this time to make more substantial changes.

**49. Question from Councillor Sara Bedford to the Lead Member for
Community Safety and Partnerships:**

Abbots Langley Neighbourhood Policing Team currently has fewer than half its establishment of police officers and PCSOs. I understand that the situation is little better at Rickmansworth and Oxhey. What representations has the council made to attempt to get a full establishment restored at Abbots Langley and other NPTs?

Written response:

The council works closely with the Police and the wider Community Safety Partnership however, the responsibility for the staffing and workforce sits with Hertfordshire Constabulary.

50. Question from Councillor Sara Bedford to the Chair of the Planning Committee:

Why was the decision made to change the date of the October planning committee to 7th November? I understand this was not the decision of the planning officers or at their request and has involved the in extra work. This leaves 56 days between committees, which removes the ability of the Local Planning Authority to determine an application as quickly as possible.

Written response:

Officers have advised only one 'Extension of Time' for an application has been required because of this change to the committee date, and the applicant agreed to this request.

51. Question from Councillor Sara Bedford to the Chair of the Planning Committee:

Why were most members attending compulsory planning training in May 2024 not informed that the threat of designation had been removed, when some non-councillors were informed almost two weeks previously?

Written response:

Whilst DLUHC confirmed on 8 May that the Minister is minded not to designate for poor performance, the letter confirmed “Whilst no further action will be taken at this time, we will continue to closely monitor the authority’s performance, and this decision does not preclude the potential for further action should the performance of your authority fail to meet the required thresholds in the future”. Officers continue to monitor performance, and the performance has not improved since receipt of the letter. On that basis, Officers do not consider that the threat of designation has been removed.

52. Question from Councillor Sara Bedford to the Chair of the Planning Committee:

Were the trainers informed that the immediate threat had been lifted? If so, why did they emphasise the threat?

Written response:

The trainers were advised of the content of the letter. However, it is considered that the threat remains in place.

The letter from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (now known as Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) confirmed that decisions made by the authority were being closely monitored and the decision not to take further action did not preclude the potential for further action in the future.

53. Question from Councillor Sara Bedford to the Lead Member for Infrastructure and Economic Development

Twenty years ago the Heritage finger pointer signs at the junction of Gallows Hill Lane and Gallows Hill were repaired by this council. Why is the council now refusing to again repair the sign?

Written response:

As a District Council, TRDC is not a Highway Authority and as such has no responsibility to place/replace traffic signs. However, it is acknowledged these specific signs are bespoke signs and Officers are currently investigating ownership and responsibility for maintenance. Officers have reported the overgrown verge which hinders the visibility and access to the sign to the County Council but have not yet received any response or update.