

Public Document Pack

THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Full Council held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Tuesday, 9 July 2024 from 7.30 - 10.00 pm

Present: Councillors: Councillor Raj Khiroya (Chair), Christopher Alley, Oliver Cooper, Stephen Cox, Harry Davies, Elinor Gazzard, Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Philip Hearn, Lisa Hudson, Tony Humphreys, Khalid Hussain, Joan King, Stephen King, Chris Lloyd, David Major, Keith Martin, Abbas Merali, Chris Mitchell, Debbie Morris, Sarah Nelmes, Louise Price, Kevin Raeburn, Ciaran Reed, Andrew Scarth, Narinder Sian, Tom Smith, Jonathon Solomons, Cheryl Stungo, Jon Tankard, Chris Whately-Smith and Anne Winter

Officers in Attendance:

Stephen Rix, Associate Director of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer)
Anita Hibbs, Committee Officer

1 _____ APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ian Morris, Reena Ranger, Steve Drury, Rue Grewal, Mike Sims, and Andrea Fraser.

2 _____ MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

In response to a question, the Chair confirmed that an amended set of minutes had been published on the council's website and were proposed for agreement at the meeting.

RESOLVED: To confirm, as being a correct record, the minutes of the meeting of Full Council, held on 20 February 2024 and Annual Council, held on 21 May 2024 and for them to be signed by the Chair.

3 _____ APPOINTMENT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND LEAD MEMBERS

The Chair announced that he had accepted the item of urgent business to allow for the Council to agree replacements to the positions of Deputy Leader and two Lead Member roles. The nominations were proposed by Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst and seconded by Councillor Louise Price.

In response to a question about the vacancies on committees, officers confirmed that in-year changes to committee could be made outside of Council meetings by the group leaders notifying the Monitoring Officer of changes to their group's appointments, but where vacancies existed which required a review of the Council's proportionality, such appointments would require a report to be agreed by the Council which set out the revised proportionality for its agreement.

RESOLVED:

1. To appoint Councillor Sarah Nelmes as Deputy Leader of the Council.
2. To appoint Councillor Steve Drury to the position of Lead Member for Housing and Public Health.
3. To appoint Councillor Jonathon Solomons to the position of Lead Member for Resources.

4 _____ CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair announced that he had attended a range of events since the last meeting of the Council, including an event celebrating International Children's Day and the High Sheriff of Hertfordshire's garden party. The Chair further announced that he would add the objective of feeding the needy and hungry to his charitable aims for the year alongside the commitment to raise money to support those with ovarian cancer

5 PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

6 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were four questions from the public with written answers provided. There was one supplementary question on question four, to which the Lead Member responded to say they he supported all sports being played in the district and would be happy to discuss the matter further.

7 POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

7a LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

The recommendations within the report were moved and seconded.

Council debated the proposed timeline for submission of a local plan.

In debate, an amendment was moved and seconded such that the date for approval of the plan should be changed to 10 December 2024 for submission in January 2025. The amendment was put to the vote and lost.

RESOLVED: On the recommendation of the Policy and Resources Committee, to agree the Local Development Scheme as set out in Appendix 2.

7b BUDGET MONITORING REPORT TO 31 JANUARY 2024

The recommendations within the report were moved and seconded.

RESOLVED:

1. That the revenue budget virements as set out in appendices 1 to 3 be approved and incorporated into the three-year medium-term financial plan.
2. That the revenue budget supplementary estimates as set out in appendices 1 to 3 be approved and incorporated into the three-year medium-term financial plan.
3. That the revenue variances to be managed as set out in appendices 1 to 3 be noted.
4. That the capital variances as set out in appendices 1 to 3 be approved and incorporated into the three-year medium-term financial plan.

7c BUDGET OUTTURN 2023/24

The recommendations within the report were moved and seconded.

Council debated the long-term financial health of the authority, the forecast changes to interest rates which may affect future returns on investments, the continuation of the delivery of services by the authority in recent years, and the in-house delivery of refuse collection and recycling services.

RESOLVED:

1. That the favourable revenue year end variance after carry forwards of £0.419m be noted.

2. That the capital year end position as summarised in paragraph 2.11 and Appendix 3 be noted.
3. To approve to carry forward the unspent service budgets from 2023/24 to 2024/25 which total £0.277m to enable completion of projects as detailed at Appendix 2.
4. To approve the rephrasing of capital projects from 2023/24 to 2024/25 detailed at Appendix 4.

7d THREE RIVERS BIODIVERSITY POLICY AND BNG UPDATE

The recommendations within the report were moved and seconded.

An amendment to the recommendations was moved and seconded to add within section 5 – other relevant associated policies – of the biodiversity net gain policy the phrasing: ‘Three Rivers District Council will seek to fully map all riparian rights, duties and biodiversity net gain opportunities within the district and publish this information freely available online’.

In debate on the amendment, members debated its implication on the council’s budget and that the county council was the lead authority for flooding. The amendment was put to the vote and not carried.

RESOLVED:

1. To note the content of the report.
2. To approve the adoption of the Three Rivers Biodiversity Policy.
3. To approve the use of the Maple Lodge BNG S106 funding being used on Three Rivers District Council owned land as identified in section 6 (Including: Beechen Wood, Coombe Hill Road open space, Berry Lane & Mead Place).
4. To agree in principle for Council owned and maintained land to be considered as potential receptor sites with the final decision on individual receptor sites to be delegated to the Leisure, Climate Change and Community Committee.

7e LEISURE AND NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE CONTRACTS 2024

The recommendations within the report were moved and seconded.

RESOLVED: That where external funding is identified in Appendices A and B, the Director of Finance be authorised to increase budgets in respect of the additional funding received.

8 LOCAL AREA FORUMS - PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO TERMS OF REFERENCE AT ARTICLE 10 OF THE CONSTITUTION

The recommendations within the report were moved and seconded.

An amendment to the recommendations was moved and seconded to clarify to which Local Area Forum the unparished areas would be allocated, namely Article 10.01 such that it would read:

Chorleywood and Sarratt (including the unparished area west of the M25)
Rickmansworth (including the unparished area west of the M25)

The amendment was accepted by the mover and seconder and the recommendations, as amended, put to the vote and carried.

RESOLVED:

1. To consider the proposed amendments on local area forums detailed at Annex 1.
2. To approve the proposed amendments on local area forums at Annex 1, subject to the amendment of Article 10.01 to clarify the allocation of unparished areas.

9 CIL SPENDING REQUESTS 2024/2025

The recommendations within the report were moved and seconded.

Members spoke in support of the applications and debated the funding arrangements for the pedestrian bridge and the dates on which commitments had been made by various bodies to provide funding for the bridge.

RESOLVED: To approve CIL funding for the following scheme detailed in Table 1 of the report.

10 LEAD MEMBER REPORTS

Council received the reports of the Leader of the Council and Lead Members.

The Leader of the Council provided a verbal update on two matters:

1. that a further £55,000 had been provided to the authority through tranche four of the Household Support Fund and commended officers for their work in securing this funding; and
2. that the planning permission refusal of the Abbots Langley data centre application which had been appealed would be considered by the Secretary of State, but that the council had appointed counsel to defend the council's position on the matter.

Further verbal updates were provided by several Lead Members and questions asked thereof.

11 QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER AND LEAD MEMBERS

Council considered the written questions and responses which had been published on the council's website ahead of the meeting.

Various supplementary questions were asked following the questions to the Leader of the Council. In response to the supplementary questions, the following summary points were made:

Councillor Keith Martin asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst:

The Nolan Principles were issued in 1992. I'd like to ask the Leader which of two other events that also occurred in 1992 and have never occurred since he thinks we are more likely to see first: Leeds United being English World Champions again, or the Conservative Group producing a budget?

In response, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst said he would welcome an opposition budget proposal in future and congratulated Councillor Abbas Merali on his performance at the general election of 4 July 2024.

Councillor Harry Davies asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst:

Would the Council Leader comment on the potential implications of the new government's proposed changes to planning legislation and in particular the possible effect on our Council's green belt protection policy?

In response, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst explained that officers had been working hard to develop planning policies which protected the green belt, that it would be for the Planning Committee to determine applications, and that he was opposed to an arbitrary figure of houses to be built imposed upon the district by HM Government.

Councillor Chris Mitchell asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst:

To help us all, can we bring in a clear and transparent process to ensure that we all abide by the Nolan Principles which have already been mentioned, possibly to be discussed and agreed by the Group Leaders?

In response, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst explained that the council's code of conduct referenced the Seven Principles of Public Life [Nolan Principles] and that the constitution would be reviewed.

Councillor Chris Mitchell asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst:

Can the Leader provide an update on the date of the proposed informal meeting of Group Leaders and Deputies?

In response, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst advised that he hoped to hold an informal meeting of group leaders and their deputies toward the end of July 2024 [to discuss changes to the constitution].

Councillor Stephen Cox asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst:

I note that you don't deny points (a) – (h); do you think that this authority is now better off as a result of your new team?

In response, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst said he would make no further comment.

Councillor Jonathon Solomons asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst:

Can the Leader make it clear who it is who invites Ward Councillors to the Local Area Forums?

In response, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst explained that Local Area Forum meetings were open to the public, including to parish, district, and county councillors, and that membership of each Forum was made up of each district councillor from the wards which constituted each Forum, and it was for those members to agree to the dates, times, and formats of each meeting.

Councillor Cheryl Stungo asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst:

Do you have the latest status concerning the Red Cross building in Barton Way, and how does that affect the Welcome Club?

In response, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst explained that he thought the written answer addressed the question and re-stated it: the situation is that the Welcome Club is the responsibility of the British Red Cross, who have now passed that responsibility to the Watford & Three Rivers Trust. As indicated in the response, they have been given notice to vacate the premises and the lease agreement which goes back to 1966 requires the Welcome Club to be accommodated on other suitable premises. We have offered assistance to the Watford & Three Rivers Trust in relation to the relocation, but it is not and never has been the responsibility of this Council to manage and operate the Welcome Club. We are still awaiting the valuation from an independent valuer in relation to the building. Once that has been received we will consider it against the offer that has been made by the Parish Council and no doubt there will be a meeting with the Croxley Councillors and representatives of the Parish Council to discuss it further.

Councillor Philip Hearn asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst:

Would the Leader of the Council agree with me that anybody claiming that the Chorleywood Car Park proposal will never go ahead, even if it's included in the Local Plan, is simply wrong and is giving the public false hope?

In response, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst explained that he was not aware of any definitive statement that the development of the Chorleywood car park would not take place, but that the figures within the Local Plan would be indicative, as they were for all sites identified within the plan.

As the time limit for the close of the meeting had been reached during this item, no further supplementary questions were asked.

12 REPORTS OF, AND QUESTIONS TO COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Council received the reports of and questions to committee chairs.

13 MOTIONS

The motions listed within the agenda were not moved prior to the closure of the meeting.