

Table of Contents

QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL	4
1. Question from Councillor Keith Martin to the Leader of the Council:.....	4
2. Question from Councillor Keith Martin to the Leader of the Council:.....	5
3. Question from Councillor Chris Mitchell to the Leader of the Council:	6
4. Question from Councillor Ian Morris to the Leader of the Council:.....	7
5. Question from Councillor Chris Lloyd to the Leader of the Council:.....	8
6. Question from Councillor Oliver Cooper to the Leader of the Council:.....	9
7. Question from Councillor Oliver Cooper to the Leader of the Council:.....	10
8. Question from Councillor Oliver Cooper to the Leader of the Council:.....	11
9. Question from Cllr Oliver Cooper to the Leader of the Council:	12
10. Question from Councillor Vicky Edwards to the Leader of the Council:	13
11. Question from Councillor Vicky Edwards to the Leader of the Council:	14
12. Question from Councillor Oliver Cooper to the Leader of the Council:.....	15
13. Question from Councillor Oliver Cooper to the Leader of the Council:.....	16
14. Question from Councillor Oliver Cooper to the Leader of the Council:.....	17
15. Question from Councillor Vicky Edwards to the Leader of the Council:	18
16. Question from Councillor Philip Hearn to the Leader of the Council:	19
17. Question from Councillor Philip Hearn to the Leader of the Council:	20
18. Question from Councillor Chris Alley to the Leader of the Council:.....	21
19. Question from Councillor Vicky Edwards to the Leader of the Council:	22
20. Question from Councillor Oliver Cooper to the Leader of the Council.....	23
21. Question from Councillor Sara Bedford to the Leader of the Council.....	24
22. Question from Councillor Sara Bedford to the Leader of the Council.....	26
23. Question from Councillor Sara Bedford to the Leader of the Council.....	27
24. Question from Councillor Sara Bedford to the Leader of the Council.....	28
25. Question from Councillor Sara Bedford to the Leader of the Council.....	29
26. Question from Councillor Sara Bedford to the Leader of the Council.....	30
27. Question from Councillor Sara Bedford to the Leader of the Council.....	31
28. Question from Councillor Sara Bedford to the Leader of the Council.....	32
29. Question from Councillor Stephen Cox to the Leader of the Council	34
QUESTIONS TO THE LEAD MEMBER FOR RESOURCES	35
30. Question from Councillor Chris Mitchell to the Leader Member for Resources	35
31. Question from Councillor Ian Morris to the Lead Member for Resources.....	36
QUESTIONS TO THE LEAD MEMBER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.....	38

32. Question from Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst to the Lead Member for Infrastructure and Economic Development	38
QUESTIONS TO THE LEAD MEMBER FOR GENERAL PUBLIC SERVICES	40
33. Question from Councillor Cheryl Stungo to the Lead Member for General Public Services ..	40
34. Question from Councillor Narinder Sian to the Lead Member for General Public Services ...	41
35. Question from Councillor Narinder Sian to the Lead Member for General Public Services ...	42
36. Question from Councillor Ian Morris to the Lead Member for General Public Services	43
37. Question from Councillor Andrea Fraser to the Lead Member for General Public Services ..	44
38. Question from Councillor Andrea Fraser to the Lead Member for General Public Services ..	45
39. Question from Councillor Mike Sims to the Lead Member for General Public Services	46
40. Question from Councillor Andrea Fraser to the Lead Member for General Public Services ..	47
41. Question from Councillor Vicky Edwards to the Lead Member for General Public Services ..	48
42. Question from Councillor Vicky Edwards to the Lead Member for General Public Services ..	49
43. Question from Councillor Vicky Edwards to the Lead Member for General Public Services ..	50
44. Question from Councillor Vicky Edwards to the Lead Member for General Public Services ..	51
45. Question from Councillor Vicky Edwards to the Lead Member for General Public Services ..	52
46. Question from Councillor Debbie Morris to the Lead Member for General Public Services...	53
47. Question from Councillor Stephen King to Lead Member for General Public Services	54
48. Question from Councillor Stephen Cox to the Lead Member for General Public Services ...	55
QUESTIONS TO THE LEAD MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH.....	56
49. Question from Councillor Vicky Edwards to the Lead Member for Housing and Public Health	56
50. Question from Councillor Stephen Cox to the Lead Member for Housing and Public Health	57
51. Question from Councillor Joan King to the Lead Member for Housing and Public Health	58
52. Question from Councillor Rue Grewal to the Lead Member for Housing and Public Health ..	59
QUESTIONS TO THE LEAD MEMBER FOR LEISURE.....	61
53. Question from Councillor Ian Morris to the Lead Member for Leisure.....	61
54. Question from Councillor Debbie Morris to the Lead Member for Leisure.....	62
QUESTIONS TO THE LEAD MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PARTNERSHIPS.....	63
55. Question from Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst to the Lead Member for Community Safety and Partnerships.....	63
56. Question from Councillor Chris Alley to the Lead Member for Community Safety and Partnerships:.....	65
57. Question from Councillor Reena Ranger to the Lead Member for Community Safety and Partnerships:.....	66
58. Question from Councillor Vicky Edwards to the Lead Member for Community Safety and Partnerships.....	67

QUESTIONS TO THE LEAD MEMBER FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE 68

59. Question from Councillor Andrea Fraser to the Lead Member for Sustainability and Climate Change68

60. Question from Councillor Philip Hearn to the Lead Member for Sustainability and Climate Change69

QUESTIONS TO THE CHAIR OF PLANNING COMMITTEE 70

61. Question from Councillor Vicky Edwards to the Chair of the Planning Committee70

62. Question from Councillor Oliver Cooper to the Chair of the Planning Committee71

63. Question from Councillor Oliver Cooper to the Chair of the Planning Committee72

64. Question from Councillor Oliver Cooper to the Chair of the Planning Committee73

QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

1. Question from Councillor Keith Martin to the Leader of the Council:

Every member is, I know, absolutely committed to marking Remembrance Day in the most respectful manner. Many of us lay wreaths and attend ceremonies marking the enormous sacrifices made by others and that allow us to continue to live in a free and democratic society. For the past three years I have organized a Seniors Forum Remembrance Day Afternoon Tea at Rickmansworth School. Colleagues from all political parties have participated in this event. I know that they feel as I do, that it is a privilege for us to mark Remembrance Day with members of our fantastic community.

In order to ensure that the support for Remembrance Day events by all thirty-nine District Councillors is both seen to be and is non-partisan, I would like every member to consider amending our constitution. The following amendment serves the purpose of ensuring that nothing of a political nature can be inferred from any activities that any members conduct in respect of Remembrance Day.

All communications and activities conducted by District Councillors in respect of Remembrance Day shall be done in a wholly non-party political manner. This includes social media content. District Councillors shall make clear that any such activities are conducted as representatives of Three Rivers, both as a community and Council.

Out of respect to both our residents and everyone who has and is serving in our Armed Forces, does the Leader of the Council agree with me that this matter should be debated at the next Constitutional Committee?

Written response:

Thank you for the question.

I agree – I have taken the issues raised on board, whilst you would have not known at the time of submitting the question, but the Wreath-Laying Protocol, which sets out the council's arrangements for Remembrance Day services, is on the agenda for the 2 December 2024 meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee and the recommended changes include something very similar to what the member has proposed. At the time of writing this response, the Policy and Resources Committee has not met but I do hope that members on that committee, regardless of political affiliation, will support the changes to the protocol on which there has previously been cross-party agreement and that all members will continue to support Remembrance events in the district. This will thus make it clear that any councillor undertaking Remembrance Day activities on behalf of the Council must make it clear it is on behalf of Three Rivers District Council and not a political party or interest group.

2. Question from Councillor Keith Martin to the Leader of the Council:

Residents in Penn & Mill End, and Chorleywood received newsletters from the Conservative Party, containing quotations attributed to two Lead Members. Neither Lead Member made those remarks. It is possible that both sets of quotations were innocent, albeit amateurish, embarrassing and foolish errors on the part of those drafting the newsletters. Perhaps the authors knew that they were misquoting the Lead Members; I do not know.

Whether deliberate acts or embarrassing incompetence on the part of the Conservatives, does the Leader agree with me that residents may have been misled into thinking that Lead Members had made remarks that they never did?

Does the Leader also agree with me that the honourable thing to do would be for the Leader of the Conservative Group to ensure that newsletters are delivered to every home in Penn & Mill End, and Chorleywood, apologising for misleading residents? This would clearly be a matter of profound personal embarrassment for him, but I am sure that he would prefer that to the alternative; to knowing that his group had misled residents.

Written response:

I totally agree with your view. I have seen both the leaflets concerned and spoken to both the lead members. The so-called quotes are as stated are both inaccurate and misleading to say the least another word could be used!

It appears that the Conservative Councillors maned on the said leaflets appear ti adopting the Trump and Putin tactics of inventing things that just not true in attempt to mislead residents and gain votes based on half-truths and lies.

Yes, I would like to think that the Conservative leader would do as you propose but I do no hold out t any hope that that he will do the right thing and apologies to insulting and misrepresenting the two councillors.

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

Following our discussions and agreement I am delighted that the District and Parish Councils are collaborating on the future of the former Red Cross site on Barton Way in Croxley Green. It is encouraging to see from the joint statement that both councils are committed to work towards a win-win outcome.

Please could you update us on progress?

What is the plan and timetable going forward?

Which committees will consider the proposals and make any decisions?

Written response:

The proposal I have discussed and put forward, and now agreed in principle by Croxley Green Parish Council, a scheme that would lead to the replacement of the former Red Cross Centre, in Barton Way, with a new building which would provide office and meeting spaces for the parish council on the ground floor, provide a new community space and up to eight two bed flats for local families on the upper floors.

The proposal is still subject to detailed discussion regarding the financial and operational implications of the scheme, together with an assessment of the development viability, and as such, there is no formal timetable yet. Once initial viability is proven, draft heads of terms will need to be agreed between CGPC and TRDC. At that point, it will be possible to establish a formal timetable. A Planning Application will also be required.

It is anticipated that the matter will be presented to Full Council in due course.

4. Question from Councillor Ian Morris to the Leader of the Council:

As a former member of the Conservative Party—though I won't go into the reasons for my departure here—I can speak first-hand to the value of serving as an independent councillor. This role allows me to focus solely on the best interests of our community without being dictated to by others with alternative agendas, or being told what I can and cannot do. I believe that independence offers a clearer, stronger voice for residents.

I'd like to put a question to the Leader on behalf of every resident in our district, and it's a question of loyalty and accountability. Every councillor is duty-bound to put the interests of residents above all else—above party lines or political convenience. With the new government rules potentially reshaping our local plan, residents deserve a firm commitment that their voices are being heard and their interests protected.

Can the Leader confirm:

- i. That the council is actively collaborating with residents' associations, and other politically independent activist groups on the local plan, ensuring their views are at the heart of decision-making?
- ii. That all political groups are unified in prioritising residents' needs over any political agenda in this process?

If the answer to either question is anything less than a firm 'yes', we would like to know what's missing and how this council will correct course to stand up for our community.

Written response:

- i. Yes, the council has had multiple meetings with the Three Rivers Joint Residents Association which represents the majority of residents associations across the district. The Three Rivers Joint Residents Association has actively participated at Local Plan Sub-Committee meetings and voiced support for the council's approach to the local plan. Officers have met with other groups such as representatives from the Colne Valley Regional Park. Other groups have provided representations to local plan consultations and have had their views considered through this process.
- ii. Clearly it would be if greater benefit to our residents of the council had a united front and that every political party was telling the truth about the issues council faced. Misleading residents into thinking we can do things that are not legally possible is to say the least unhelpful. In the past we had a united front on the Local Plan such as the earlier consultation on a lower housing number but that has clearly been done much to everyone's disappointment.

5. Question from Councillor Chris Lloyd to the Leader of the Council:

I have recently become aware of claim made by a Conservative publication that County Councillor Paula Hiscocks supported Rickmansworth Park School when they were faced with “thousands of pounds of charges to use Rickmansworth Park as a playing field”.

Please could the Leader provide more details on this and the factually correct information and if he was aware of County Councillor Hiscocks’ involvement?

Written response:

In July 2024, a joint statement between Rickmansworth Park JMI School and Three Rivers District Council was published on the Council’s website. This followed a chain of statements outlining the situation with Rickmansworth Park. These statements can be found on the Council’s website:
<https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/services/your-council/use-rickmansworth-park>

It is factually incorrect to say that school was faced with thousands of pounds of charges. The initial suggestion of the fee level was actually made by the school for dedicated school use of part of the park under a required , as for any dedicated use, Hire of Grounds terms, which the school agreed to, and to be maintained to their requirements.

The School has always had access to the park and that remains unrestricted as it's a public park and the Council has laid out free of charge the part of this for their Sports Day.

I am not aware of any involvement from Cllr Hiscock who has not spoken to me, and I have been involved in meetings with Council officers at TRDC and County level on this on several occasions and Cllr Hiscock was not present. Indeed, the said school is not in Cllr Hiscocks County division it is in yours Cllr Lloyd and I know you have been in regular and helpful contact with the school. So it seems yet again a Conservative councillor inventing things that are not true and making inaccurate and misleading statements.

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

In October, the Leader stated that he had written to the Leader of Hertfordshire County Council regarding Rickmansworth Library. On what dates was this correspondence exchanged?

Written response:

I personally raised this matter with the Leader of HCC at a meeting I had, along with the Chief Executive on 24th July. The Leader of HCC said they were looking at all options and we offered again Three Rivers House subject to rental agreement.

Having heard that no progress had been made I emailed, Richard Roberts at 6.16am on the Sept 9th chasing the matter as to why it has not been agreed.

I had a reply at 21.31 that day say that was a “minor impasse on the costs”, “but that staffing, heating and lighting should be (cost) manageable. The email finished with “Good to get this sorted tomorrow”.

Having heard nothing further chased again on 9th October. I had a reply from a Director the following day that instead of TRH a Scout Hall site has been secured that could match the “opening hours” of the closed library.

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

Further to the answer to Cllr Ranger in the last full council meeting, can the Leader of the Council confirm that Three Rivers was not seeking to charge to Hertfordshire County Council more than the additional operating costs to Three Rivers of allowing opening of a library in Three Rivers House, namely security, lighting, and heating?

Written response:

The ground floor of Three Rivers House is currently being marketed for lease at a market rent. We were approached by the County to rent this space; the rent they offered was not at this level and would not have covered the costs of making the space available to them. Any further offer would be the subject of negotiation between the two parties and no further detail can be given at this time.

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

What have been the consequences of the delay in finding a new temporary home for Rickmansworth Library?

Written response:

This question is best directed to Hertfordshire County Council's Library Service. As the Member will be aware, an offer to occupy the vacant ground floor at Three Rivers House was rejected by Hertfordshire County Council.

9. Question from Cllr Oliver Cooper to the Leader of the Council:

When was the Leader first informed by someone other than Conservative councillors of the need to update the Local Plan evidence base?

Written response:

Work on the evidence base is an ongoing process in the build up to Regulation 19 Publication of the Local Plan. Studies such as the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Sustainability Appraisal and HRA Screening have been completed in the last year. Officers also advised early last year that some evidence base documents needed updating and that these would not affect the local plan timetable, with the Local Housing Needs Assessment and Economic Study updates having been completed in the last few months.

The advice from officers regarding remaining evidence base work was that there was no need to update the remaining evidence. However given the emerging NPPF and revised housing targets and the need to protect as much of the Council's Green Belt area as possible, further additional evidence is required and the reasoning behind that was not only detailed in the reports to Local Plan Sub Committee but also Policy and Resources Committee, on which you serve, and is detailed in my answer to the public question on this subject.

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

When did Three Rivers District Council first realise that it needed to update its considerations of allocations for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople as part of drafting a new Local Plan?

Written response:

Following the government's revision of the definition of Gypsies and Travellers in December last year officers advised that the study would need to be updated to consider the changes. The study then took several months to complete. As advised at the Local Plan Sub Committee, on which you serve, the initial data from the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment update now suggests an identified need for such pitches in Three Rivers. As such, further works now need to be undertaken to address these needs. This work is legally required prior to a Regulation 19 submission.

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

When did Sport England raise concerns that the needs in the Open Space, Sport, and Recreation Study (2019) were becoming out of date?

Written response:

Sport England had stated in a meeting with officers in June that the Open Space and Recreation Study would need updating, however they were happy for the council to go ahead with Regulation 19 and submission of the local plan as long as the council committed to updating the study as soon as possible after adoption. In the case that the plan was delayed they would then expect the study to be updated prior to Regulation 19.

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

Which sites does the Leader of the Council think the Planning Inspector will accept would fundamentally undermine the function of the Green Belt across the area of the plan as a whole if built upon?

Written response:

This question was asked at the 11 November Policy & Resources Committee, and the response remains the same. The question cannot be answered until further Green Belt (function of) evidence work is undertaken.

It would be stupid and foolhardy to speculate on the results of that independent study or to suggest as some now are, that all Green Belt sites are going to be built on. This new work, as advised by professional officers and experts, is the best, if not, the only way to prevent massive Green Belt development I hope and expect every councillor will now support that work.

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

Which sites does the Leader of the Council guarantee will not be allocated by this council due to fundamentally undermining the function of the Green Belt across the area of the plan as a whole if built upon?

Written response:

I refer to the answer at Question 12 from the same party. This question was asked at the 11 November Policy & Resources Committee, and the response remains the same. The question cannot be answered until further Green Belt evidence work is undertaken.

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

Which sites does the Leader of the Council guarantee will be recommended by officers as fundamentally undermining the function of the Green Belt across the area of the plan as a whole if built upon?

Written response:

I refer to the earlier answers to the similar questions 12 and 13. This question was asked at the 11 November Policy & Resources Committee, and the response remains the same.

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

In 2023, Three Rivers granted permission to the owner of Shannon House to convert it into flats. However, a change of law in 2021 required office to flat conversions to all abide by the National Described Minimum Space Standard of at least 37 square metres. None of the flats in Shannon House met this standard and some are as small as 13 square metres.

External experts and advisers say there are strong legal grounds for taking enforcement action due to Shannon House's conversion therefore being unlawful. However, Three Rivers disagrees with them, saying it is not able to take any enforcement action.

As such, why has Three Rivers not sought advice from external counsel, particularly in light of the huge benefits shutting down Shannon House to the local community and its residents?

Written response:

Yet again this is fake news that Three Rivers granted permission for the conversion of flats at Shannon House. As you well know from correspondence and answers to questions, this Council actually refused permission when Cllr Sara Bedford moved refusal on parking grounds. This was overturned by the Planning Inspectorate, and it is disappointing that you continue to state something that you know is totally untrue.

The Council has issued an official statement on this which you have clearly ignored.

Officers have, following your enquiries, sought legal advice from the Council's Principal Planning Lawyer. Officers are satisfied with this advice. The Council is clear a valid planning permission has been implemented and there is no further action that it can take.

I also refer the answer to the public question on this subject and it is very disappointing that some councillors and certain political parties are continuing to mislead the public on this matter when they have been told repeatedly the correct legal position.

I would also say that repeatedly raising the matter at council and in correspondence with officers is not only wasting available officer time - as it is the same answer each time - it is diverting officers from other core duties where they can take action. It also seeks to undermine our professional officers in an unacceptable way by repeating the misinformation as if it is fact when it is not.

16. Question from Councillor Philip Hearn to the Leader of the Council:

Can the Leader of the Council confirm that the current National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 145 does not require a redrawing of the Green Belt boundaries?

Written response:

National Planning Policy Framework 145 does state that there is no requirement for Green Belt boundaries to be reviewed, however the framework needs to be considered as a whole. Officers have advised that exceptional circumstances for altering Green Belt boundaries do exist due to the acute housing need in the area, especially affordable housing need and specialist accommodation such as housing for the elderly. As such, it is expected that the Inspector would find the plan unsound at examination if no attempt is made to meet these needs by releasing some Green Belt land for development. It is important to protect the District's valuable Green Belt, but it is also important that we can meet the needs of existing residents and future generations.

As you will, or should, be aware, if no Green Belt land were released the use of Brownfield sites only would result in less than 1,000 new homes. You will equally be aware that the Three Rivers Joint Residents' Associations accept that using that number does not meet our housing needs. Our approach has always been to reduce the amount of Green Belt release whilst still providing much needed, and required, homes for current and future generations in accommodation that is fit for purpose.

17. Question from Councillor Philip Hearn to the Leader of the Council:

Do you think it's appropriate that TRDC – unlike neighbouring Dacorum, Hertsmere, and Buckinghamshire – continues to hold district elections every year, when the cost has doubled this year from £76,000 to £152,000?

Written response:

If the member is asking about budget monitoring reports, he will note that the 2023/24 spend at year end was also approximately £152,000. If the member is referring to the overall costs of running an elections service, then the costs of this are far broader than simply the costs of administering elections themselves, including but not limited to the annual canvass, accounting for regulatory and legal changes, updating the technology used, staffing, and much more.

The costs of administering elections in a given year are affected by the number of district by-elections held as well as the number of non-district elections.

Nonetheless, the costs of administering elections have increased, with printing and postage costs having gone up significantly in recent years.

There are years where the district does not hold elections – 2025 being one such example – where the costs of elections to be met by this authority are zero.

18. Question from Councillor Chris Alley to the Leader of the Council:

Three Rivers' proposed First Homes policy has a Local Connection Test of just six months, allowing people who have been here for just a short tenancy to leapfrog long-time local residents. Why is this so much shorter than the Local Connection Test applied to First Homes by other councils – such as 10 years in Hillingdon? And why is it so much shorter than the 5 out of 6 years that Three Rivers applies for affordable housing tenants?

Written response:

Following the Local Plan Sub-Committee on 29th August 2024, Officers brought an amended First Homes Policy to the 17th October 2024 Local Plan Sub-Committee. This amended policy added new text on the local connection test and eligibility criteria to the policy wording and reasoned justification. At the Local Plan Sub-Committee, officers agreed to look into whether the length of the connection test can be increased. Officers are currently in the process of reviewing and updating policies following the 17th October Local Plan Sub-Committee, including the First Homes Policy. Following the publication of the new NPPF (which may require further amendments to policies) officers will bring the policies back to Local Plan Sub-Committees in 2025.

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

How much does the Leader expect the Council to spend on defending appeals against refusals or non-determination of planning permissions over the next two years?

Written response:

The cost of defending appeals cannot be estimated as the cost depends on a wide range of factors including the number of applications subject of an appeal – and without knowing the applications that we will receive over the next 18 months and how those applications might be determined, the question cannot be answered.

20. Question from Councillor Oliver Cooper to the Leader of the Council

Two meetings were moved in October – the Full Council and Planning Committee – despite objections that this would be political prejudicial against the Conservative Group. Does the Leader accept that meetings should not be moved when Group Leaders object?

Written response:

No. Rule 30(1) provides that 'Ordinary meetings of the Committees shall be held in each year on such days as the Council shall determine unless amended by the Chief Executive with the agreement of the appropriate Chair and the nominated representatives of each of the minority groups.' The Chief Executive obtained my agreement and that of the Green Group so based on overall seats there was a majority in support of moving the meetings.

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

Many residents of Bedmond and Abbots Langley have expressed their strong disappointment at the Leader's failure to address their concerns over his proposal to inset the village of Bedmond into the Green Belt, rather than continuing the current situation of washing over. So will he respect those concerns and tell them via Council what are the advantages and disadvantages of each position? Or will he continue to state that those residents who ask questions via their elected representatives are questioning his integrity?

Written response:

Whilst I note what the member has said not a single resident has contacted me or emailed or made a comment on social media regarding the last Council and your question.

At the 16 July 2024 Local Plan Sub-Committee Members agreed to remove the Officer recommendation to inset Bedmond in the Green Belt. This means that Bedmond remains washed over by Green Belt.

Paragraph 149 of the NPPF sets out that:

“If it is necessary to restrict development in a village primarily because of the important contribution which the open character of the village makes to the openness of the Green Belt, the village should be included in the Green Belt. If, however, the character of the village needs to be protected for other reasons, other means should be used, such as conservation area or normal development management policies, and the village should be excluded from the Green Belt.”

As part of the evidence base for the Local Plan the council conducted a Green Belt review which concluded that by virtue of size and density Bedmond could be inset from the green Belt, potentially providing a focus for modest development. It could therefore make a modest contribution to the area's acute housing needs.

The area proposed for insetting was the village core which makes little or no contribution to the openness of the Green Belt. Therefore, it did not need to be included in the Green Belt. There is little advantage in this area remaining washed over as it comprises previously developed land and development would likely not be considered inappropriate in the Green Belt.

Indeed, I would point out that in a letter dated 12 August 2022 published and promoted by Cllr Sara Bedford from Cllr Mathew Bedford (who at the time led on the Local Plan) to every house in Bedmond, made it clear that insetting Bedmond would have no effect on the open spaces surrounding that would remain the Green Belt. Indeed, the map on the letter was very clear and identical to the officer reports to the Local Plan Subcommittee.

Insetting would have given some benefits to the existing home holders in the village re their permitted development rights that are constrained re the Gen Belt requirements

I note recently that you have again falsely claimed that the Council was removing all of Bedmond from the Green Belt when you know this is not case ie the decision taken 16 July.

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

The Councillor Code of Conduct states that councillors must *'impartially exercise their responsibilities in the interests of the local community'*. How is the local community served by preventing their knowledgeable and informed councillors from involvement in the decision-making process where it affects residents represented by these councillors?

Written response:

I actually have no idea what on earth this question refers to. All councillors have equal access to officers and can attend meetings and if not a member of that committee must abide the Constitution and it is up the Chair on the Committee or Sub Committee under Rule 35 to decide if they can speak or not. It has been custom and practice for ward members to be allowed to speak on ward items on the agenda but not on non-ward items.

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

Antisocial behaviour is an issue that concerns many residents of the District and the item on the agenda of the November Policy & Resources committee stated that it was applicable to 'all wards'. Why therefore were councillors representing views of residents prevented from speaking on the policy?

Written response:

I refer to my previous answer. The item was on updating the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and will be going to Full Council for debate and decision. It was not about individual ward issues. This matter will go to full council and all members will have the opportunity to speak if they so wish. Thus no one is prevented from speaking as suggested.

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

Does the Leader agree that there is no provision within the 37 Rules of Council Procedure that allow the use of 'exceptional circumstances' to override the Council's Constitution?

Written response:

I believe this question is referring to Rule 30 cross-referenced from Rule 37 and the moving of October's Planning Committee and full Council meetings. Rule 30(1) provides that 'Ordinary meetings of the Committees shall be held in each year on such days as the Council shall determine unless amended by the Chief Executive with the agreement of the appropriate Chair and the nominated representatives of each of the minority groups.' The Chief Executive obtained my agreement and that of the Green Group so based on overall seats there was a majority in support of moving the meetings.

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

Does the Leader agree that the quorum required for meetings is of all councillors and not just those of the Administration?

Written response:

The quorum levels for meetings are not contingent on the political grouping, if any, of members and are contained in the council's constitution.

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

Does the Leader agree that the inability of the Administration to have its preferred councillors available for a meeting date agreed over a year in advance cannot in any circumstances be 'exceptional' and necessitate the postponement of a meeting?

Written response:

I believe this has been answered already in earlier questions in that meetings of Council and Council Committees have been moved due a number of circumstances, not least the calling of the July General Election which affected every Council's Calendar in the Country.

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

Does the Leader agree that the postponement of the October Planning Committee was unconstitutional and will he therefore apologise to Council for allowing the postponement to go ahead?

Written response:

I refer to my earlier response to question 24.

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

Does the Lead Member for the Local Plan believe that the council is right to help developers build on Abbots Langley's Green Belt through the attempt to facilitate a SANG (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace) at the Horses' Field?

Written response:

Last year's Regulation 18 consultation on a low growth approach to the Local Plan included two sites, both lower harm sites, that fall within the zone of influence for the Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Natural England provided representations to the Regulation 18 consultation and follow up meetings were held to consider the impacts of the proposed Regulation 18 sites on the SAC. Through this process, Natural England requested that Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) sites be provided or contributions to a SANG site be provided to help mitigate housing development sites of more than 100 dwellings that fall within the zone of influence.

So officers are exploring options, as they legally required to do, as you are aware, on whether there were any potential SANG sites in the area. As such, they are considering potential mitigation required for these sites to come forward. This is similar to considering mitigation for flooding and requiring SuDS as mitigation. The vast majority of development sites have constraints that require some sort of mitigation; thus this must be considered before any rejection.

The Council has been exploring options; however, no decisions have been made on whether these housing sites should be included in a Regulation 19 Publication version of the plan, or where any potential SANG sites would be located. Any such decisions will be made through the committee process.

It should be noted that the requirement to provide a SANG site(s) in itself would not be a reason to reject potential development sites in the local plan unless it can be demonstrated that there are no suitable SANG sites or potential new SANG sites in the near vicinity of those potential housing development sites.

However, your question now gives me the chance to refute misleading facts that you have issued in a leaflet in the Abbots Langley area especially claiming that that an allocation of the Horses' Field as a SNAG site "would end the annual visit from grazing cattle". This is as you know untrue and designed to scare and upset people.

You have used on a publication, without permission I understand I an internal draft map was prepared by officers but was only in draft form and was not for publishing in the public domain as it was part of background work exploring what options were available.

Officers have confirmed even if the Horses' Field were designated as a SANG area the cattle grazing would not be affected. Natural England had no issue with the grazing continuing. There would not be a new path either, the walking route does not need to be surfaced it is merely a suggested route for people to take, evidencing that there is sufficient room for a circular walk to meet the SANG criteria. Given this you should have the decency to print, and apology and retraction of your false statement and I ask that you so do rather than the misinformation to spread.

Initial findings point to a SANG site being unviable at this stage. All of this will be reported to a future Local Plan Sub-Committee.

29. Question from Councillor Stephen Cox to the Leader of the Council

Will the Leader accept the appreciation and thanks of the Labour Group for the additional CCTV camera promised for exclusive use in South Oxhey and does this demonstrate the effectiveness of the ward councillors in supporting residents and working to tackle crime effectively? Does he believe that personal attacks on hard-working councillors are inappropriate, unnecessary and deplorable.

Written response:

I thank Cllr Steve Cox for raising this issue in advance of the Policy & Resources Committee meeting and thus allowing me to consider this with officers as to its feasibility and we all agreed the extra camera in an area of need. This indeed does show the effectiveness of Cllr Steve Cox in raising in advance rather than trying to make political points at the meeting just for self-publicity. Steve knows the best way is to talk to get things done.

Doing so allowed for mutual agreement on a positive way forward much for South Oxhey.

I have tried to engage with other members but have been rebuffed. Working together for all our residents is by far the best way as I know Cllrs Steve Cox and Chris Mitchell know.

I have likewise been gobsmacked at the very personal attack on hard working and long serving South Oxhey Cllr Joan King in the Conservative publication from a Conservative councillor. Joan is in my view owed an apology. Joan has not been in the best of health, and I hope she is now recovering. Personal attacks such as on Joan have in my view no place in politics but seems the Conservatives believe is acceptable.

QUESTIONS TO THE LEAD MEMBER FOR RESOURCES

30. Question from Councillor Chris Mitchell to the Leader Member for Resources

Croxley Green Parish Council resolved some years ago to enter into discussions with the District Council about the future management, control, and ownership of the village Green and Stone's Orchard in Croxley Green. I am aware that there are currently ongoing discussions about the greenspace management plan.

Please could you update us on the progress of discussions about the control and ownership of the land?

Written response:

The leader has been in contact with officers to get more information on the complex arrangements of both sites that the Council inherited from RUDC in 1972.

The Green is covered by some complex legal issues.

The Leader has informally discussed both sites with the Chair of the Parish Council, and the Chair of the Parish agrees that The Green under Common Land ownership may well be something the Parish does not wish to follow up on.

The Leader has informally discussed this also with Cllr Chris Mitchell. The leader has asked officers to arrange a detailed informal briefing session with the Dickinson Ward Councillors to go through the issues and explain the considerable work and monies that TRDC undertakes at Stones Orchard before discussing and outlining such to CGPC.

31. Question from Councillor Ian Morris to the Lead Member for Resources

In light of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, many residents are facing unprecedented financial challenges, making it increasingly difficult to meet regular bill payments, including Council Tax. The impact of rising living costs has led some residents to make partial payments as they strive to balance essential expenses. We are concerned that current enforcement practices may not fully consider the financial strain our community members are experiencing. Given this, we seek clarity on the Council's approach to handling cases of partial Council Tax payments and on its overall policy for issuing summonses. Understanding the rationale and flexibility within this policy is crucial for ensuring we are responsive and fair to residents during these challenging times.

What is the Council's policy regarding the issuance of summonses for non-payment of Council Tax?

- **1. Treatment of Partial Payers vs. Non-Payers:**
Does the Council consider residents who are making partial payments the same as those who make no payments at all?
- **2. Timing of Summonses During the Live Tax Year:**
Why does the Council issue summonses to residents who are making monthly payments, albeit below the expected amount for 2024/2025, when the Council Tax year remains open until March 2025, allowing time for full settlement?
- **3. Authority on Prosecution Decisions:**
Considering that court summonses are sent from Watford Council, is it Watford Council or Three Rivers District Council that makes the ultimate decision to prosecute residents for non-payment?

With the winter fuel allowance now axed, residents are likely to face even greater financial hardship this winter. What steps is the Council planning to take to support financially strapped residents?

Written response:

The Council makes every attempt to engage with residents with council arrears and will wherever possible agree payment plans to deal with arrears.

Where residents pay by monthly direct debit and fail to make payments then the full bill becomes immediately due, however we will still seek to agree a payment plan for this amount. Where a payment plan is agreed and not complied with or where a resident refuses to engage then we will commence recovery action where appropriate. This is to protect all Three Rivers residents and taxpayers.

The Revenues and Benefits shared service is provided on behalf of both Watford and Three Rivers by this Council and Three Rivers determines its recovery policies.

QUESTIONS TO THE LEAD MEMBER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

32. Question from Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst to the Lead Member for Infrastructure and Economic Development

It has recently been claimed in a banner headline from a leaflet promoting a County Councillor (Paula Hiscock) that the “Lib Dems voted for a plan to rip up A404 for Cycle Path”.

As I was present at the General Public Services Committee that discussed Local Cycling and Walking Routes as required by Herts County Council and do not recall any such scheme to “Rip up the A404”, could the lead member confirm the truthfulness of such a headline?

Written response:

There is no such plan to “rip up the A404 for a Cycle Path” and the use of such untruthful, inflammatory and misleading language by the Conservative Party in their recent leaflet is designed to alarm residents.

Three Rivers District Council has been working with Hertfordshire County Council, the Highways Authority, to consult residents on a suitable way to improve cycle and pedestrian routes across the district including the existing pavement along the A404 road between Rickmansworth and Chorleywood. The current proposed interventions on the A404 focus on widening of the pavement and junction improvements to make it safer to use for both pedestrians and cyclists. The proposals are not expected to adversely impact traffic flow on the A404 and there is no proposal to reduce usable road space.

There is likely to be an impact during construction, as with any scheme, which would be short-term, minimalised where possible and result in a long-term benefit.

This route forms part of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). The LCWIP is a new, strategic approach to planning sustainable active travel networks, developed to support the aims and objectives of the National Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy and required to enable the local Highway Authority, the County Council, to apply for funding for these routes. The LCWIP will support the transition to sustainable forms of travel in the district and reduce emissions.

The LCWIP public consultation closed on 17 July 2023 and over 1500 responses were received from residents, with the highest proportion coming from Chorleywood residents. Three Rivers District Council and Hertfordshire County Council have taken into consideration objections to aspects of the proposed cycling route including those received in relation to the Common, including from Chorleywood Parish Council and Chorleywood Residents

Association. Consequently, Three Rivers District Council agreed on 15th October 2024 to amend the proposed cycling path route to extend the path along the A404 to Clement Danes School and remove the route across Chorleywood Common. All proposed interventions indicated on the routes within the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan are draft and may be subject to change following further investigation.

QUESTIONS TO THE LEAD MEMBER FOR GENERAL PUBLIC SERVICES

33. Question from Councillor Cheryl Stungo to the Lead Member for General Public Services

Croxley Green Parish Council was delighted to be able to organise a community Diwali celebration this year showcasing music, dance, and cultural traditions and drawing an enthusiastic crowd. However, we were overwhelmed by the response of our communities to the event. We realise that we don't have a venue capable of holding the larger event that our communities desire.

Would Three Rivers District Council be willing to collaborate with the Parish Councils in hosting a Diwali celebration at Watersmeet next year?

Written response:

Three Rivers District Council's Partnerships team and Watersmeet team would be happy to work with the parish councils to support hosting a Diwali event at Watersmeet. There is no current budget available so funding from the parishes or from sponsorship would need to be found to cover the cost of hiring Watersmeet at the not-for-profit hire rate and any other event costs.

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

Residents frequently raise concerns about parking, particularly parking around schools and during evening hours. It would be helpful to understand any planned changes in enforcement availability or strategy in Croxley Green following the recent review of the parking enforcement service provided by Hertsmere Borough Council.

Please would you share any updates on this review and how it might address specific local concerns including how to prevent parking across dropped kerbs?

Written response:

The member will be aware Officers recently consulted all members on parking enforcement in the district and specifically areas where additional parking enforcement is thought to be required. This information has been collated and shared with our parking enforcement provider, Hertsmere Borough Council, to consider. We are awaiting their feedback.

This review did not consider dropped kerb enforcement. The council's approach to dropped kerb enforcement is detailed on the council's website. We have previously advised some benchmarking will be carried out on this guidance but unfortunately this has been delayed due to other priorities.

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

I am sure the lead member shares my delight that the Beryl bike scheme has been extended to Croxley Green for a trial period and wishes it every success.

An important part of any trial scheme is careful monitoring, including data on usage such as the number of rentals, locations and timeframes, feedback from users and the local community, impacts on local traffic and congestion, operational challenges and costs.

What are the plans for monitoring the scheme, reporting the results and reviewing them? When do you anticipate bringing the information to committee for review?

Written response:

Officers meet monthly with the Watford BC contract manager to review the scheme including usage, bike availability and other performance metrics. Regular reporting updates on the scheme will be provided in the Member Information Bulletin.

36. Question from Councillor Ian Morris to the Lead Member for General Public Services

Many residents, myself included, are increasingly frustrated and alarmed by the lack of safe pedestrian crossings at critical points, particularly at Delta Gain by the shopping precinct and on Harrow Way near our GP surgery. These crossings are heavily used by elderly residents, families with young children, and people with disabilities—individuals who are particularly vulnerable to speeding or inattentive drivers.

Residents need to know who specifically is responsible for ensuring these pedestrian crossings are in place? Why has this urgent issue been overlooked for so long, and why does it seem so difficult to get any council to act on this matter? Furthermore, what pressure can our District council exert on the County council to prioritise and fast-track the installation of safe crossings at these locations? The safety of our residents should not be left hanging in bureaucratic delays or administrative debates. It's time for decisive action to protect our community.

Written response:

Road Safety is a responsibility of Hertfordshire County Council as the Highway Authority, and it would be for them to bring forward a highway scheme here understanding they may relook at this but that it was not a priority. I have asked the Leader of the Council, who also sits the Highways Panel at County, to raise the matter.

37. Question from Councillor Andrea Fraser to the Lead Member for General Public Services

Will Three Rivers increase on-the-spot fines (Fixed Penalty Notices) for littering, flyposting, and graffiti to the maximum permitted, i.e. £500, instead of the current £150?

Written response:

Fees and Charges, including the level of Fixed Penalty Notices where the council has discretion on amounts, are determined by Full Council. The proposed rates are on the agenda for discussion at Policy and Resources Committee on 02 December 2024 and on the agenda of this council meeting so all members can discuss the merits or otherwise of this proposal as part of the debate.

In considering this matter however it is important to consider that Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) only work where they present an effective alternative to court proceedings. The higher the amount of an FPN, the less likely the culprit is to pay it. Non-payment of FPNs result in court action. There is a lot of officer resource and financial cost involved in taking a case to Court where, what often happens, the Court fine given ends up being lower than the original FPN (if they are found guilty, of course). Therefore, if FPNs are set too high there would unfortunately be incentive on the part of the culprit to not pay in favour of going to court to receive a lesser penalty

The council through the Herts Fly Tipping Group, the LGA and DCN amongst other networks, have and will continue to lobby the Government and the Sentencing Council to try and address this point.

38. Question from Councillor Andrea Fraser to the Lead Member for General Public Services

Will Three Rivers increase on-the-spot fines (Fixed Penalty Notices) for fly-tipping to the maximum permitted, i.e. £1,000, instead of the current £436?

Written response:

Fees and Charges, including the level of Fixed Penalty Notices where the council has discretion on amounts, are determined by Full Council. The proposed rates are on the agenda for discussion at Policy and Resources Committee on 02 December 2024 and on the agenda of this council meeting so all members can discuss the merits or otherwise of this proposal as part of the debate.

In considering this matter however it is important to consider that Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) only work where they present an effective alternative to court proceedings. The higher the amount of an FPN, the less likely the culprit is to pay it. Non-payment of FPNs result in court action. There is a lot of officer resource and financial cost involved in taking a case to Court where, what often happens, the Court fine given ends up being lower than the original FPN (if they are found guilty, of course). Therefore, if FPNs are set too high there would unfortunately be incentive on the part of the culprit to not pay in favour of going to court to receive a lesser penalty

The council through the Herts Fly Tipping Group, the LGA and DCN amongst other networks, have and will continue to lobby the Government and the Sentencing Council to try and address this point.

39. Question from Councillor Mike Sims to the Lead Member for General Public Services

Residents, businesses, and shoppers are now being charged to park on Moneyhill Parade. Will the revenue from this be spent on parking enforcement and provision in the Moneyhill and Mill End area?

Written response:

Any revenue received from parking enforcement will be placed in the Parking Account and will be used to provide the parking enforcement service in the whole District including the administration of permits and penalty notices. If a surplus is identified on the Parking Account (the account is currently in a deficit) it will be utilised for parking or transport related schemes across the District.

40. Question from Councillor Andrea Fraser to the Lead Member for General Public Services

Three Rivers has previously told me that angled parking on the service road on Moneyhill Parade would create 12 new parking spaces, but the administration would not do it because of the cost. How much does Three Rivers estimate it would cost to create angled parking on the service road on Moneyhill Parade?

Written response:

Officers have previously discussed the viability of creating angled parking on the service road on Moneyhill Parade. This was pursued by a former Officer. Officers do not have the costs but advised at the time it would be prohibitively expensive and in addition it would likely result in the overall loss of spaces as the parking on one side of the service road would need to be removed.

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

In heavy rain, surface water from Three Rivers' Causeway Car Park floods into the homes and gardens of residents on Standfield. Residents have raised concerns about this for over five years, but Three Rivers has not fixed the drains which take the rainwater to a soakaway in Dellmeadow. Does the Lead Member think it is acceptable for the council to allow residents' homes to be flooded?

Written response:

The Member will be aware, from regular updates provided by Council Officers, that the drainage issues at Standfield in Abbots Langley are not because of defects with the Council's drains, but rather damage to the drains downstream of the Causeway car park. Despite the Council regularly maintaining its drains within the car park, surface water is 'backing up' because the damaged drains are no longer able to accept the quantity of water flowing into them when there are periods of heavy rainfall.

To compound the issue, contractors working on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council also regraded a low embankment, which used to channel the water towards the car park drain, but instead, the surface water now flows away from the drain and along a footpath, and down steps leading towards Standfield.

The Council, as landowner, has no authority over the repair and maintenance of the private downstream drains, and as a result it has been necessary to refer the matter to the Council's Environmental Health Team.

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

Three Rivers has told me that the developer that built Standfield in the 1960s has a positive obligation to maintain the drain from Causeway Car Park. The developer has denied any responsibility for the drain other than if the blockage is under land retained by them. As such, will Three Rivers commit to fixing the drains?

Written response:

As indicated in the response to the earlier question relating to drainage at Standfield. Officers have identified that the former developer is responsible for a short section of drain which was never adopted or transferred following completion of the estate in the 1960's. The other sections of drain are the responsibility of the residents for whom the drains pass beneath their land.

TRDC have no obligation to fix privately-owned drains. This matter is now being investigated by the Council's Environmental Health Team who do possess powers of enforcement.

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

At the last Full Council, the lead member for General Public Services, in response to my question about adding a crossing for children to cross High Elms Lane safely, incorrectly referred to Condition 22 of planning permission 15/1026/FUL. The relevant condition of the development of Fraser Crescent in relation to the provision of a crossing on High Elms Lane is condition 33 which states:

Prior to the commencement of any site or highways work, a survey to identify the potential demand and safety implications for a pedestrian crossing at the crossing point on High Elms Lane (to the north of the Bridleway) shall be carried out and the results submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. If the survey indicates that there is sufficient demand for a pedestrian crossing in this location, then the residential development shall not be occupied until the crossing is provided in the highway and in operation.

The developer submitted a report on demand for the crossing, but it was based solely on children crossing High Elms Lane prior to the bridleway referred to in Condition 33 being opened, and as such the report showed, unsurprisingly, that the crossing was unnecessary.

Accordingly, does the Lead Member now accept that Three Rivers let the applicant off the hook in relation to the provision of a crossing, and consequently will the lead member commit to adding a crossing to its new parking scheme for High Elms Lane?

Written response:

The applicant complied with the requirements of the planning condition (condition 33 of planning permission 15/1026/FUL). The information submitted pursuant to the discharge of condition was reviewed by HCC, as the Highways Authority, and in their response, they confirmed the submitted Pedestrian Survey report looked at the anticipated generation of pedestrian trips. HCC considered the information was acceptable and the condition was discharged.

The decision on the need for a crossing on High Elms Lane would for Hertfordshire County Council as the Highways Authority. They are aware of the District Council's proposals for a parking scheme.

At a most recent meeting with officers at TRDC and HCC the Leader raised this very issue again, especially as regards the exit from the public footpath from Boundary Way where County had refused to consider a crossing, and by Fortunes Farm. However, the latter is different given its location with a road entrance to the Farm.

HCC Officers have been asked to rethink these points.

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

Can the Lead Member confirm the calendar years on which requests for parking controls (i.e. requests for parking restrictions or parking controls or parking schemes or reviews of parking controls) were submitted and which are anticipated will be included in the draft 2025-27 Parking Management Programme?

Written response:

The parking request list has been devised over a number of years. The oldest request is from 2011, as no requests are removed from the list if they are not investigated. This approach is currently being reviewed by Officers.

Any parking requests received are added to the list and then the list is prioritised against set criteria as part of the Parking Management Programme every 2 years.

The next review is due in January 2025 and will be presented to the General Public Services, Community Safety and Infrastructure Committee. This Programme is still being devised. Requests not prioritised for the next programme will remain on the list for future consideration.

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

Only in relation to parking schemes which are implemented, please will the Lead Member confirm the average amount of time between a request for parking controls being submitted to the council and the parking scheme/controls/adjustments being implemented?

Written response:

There is no specific timescale given the process referred to in the question above and a request could sit on the request list for a period of time before it is even prioritised to be further investigated.

In addition, even if a parking request is investigated, any new parking control scheme can only be progressed following public consultation. Most schemes are developed through several stages of consultation with people at local addresses and stakeholders such as the Police and Hertfordshire County Council. The scale and complexity of the scheme including the amount of local interest/response will affect the timescales but even the most straightforward Traffic Regulation Order would take approximately 6 months from initial consultation to implementation.

46. Question from Councillor Debbie Morris to the Lead Member for General Public Services

At the September full council meeting, in answer to Cllr Hearn, the Lead Member for General Public Services justified herself being Chair of the Rickmansworth Local Area Forum by claiming that there is not a Conservative majority among district councillors elected to represent parts of the area covered by the Rickmansworth Local Area Forum. Is that still her view?

Written response:

A report will be brought to the February 2025 Council meeting, as the issue of unparished areas needs to be addressed.

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

How many storm drains are there in Oxhey Woods, what schedule is there for clearing them and when were they last cleared?

Written response:

There are eight drains in South Oxhey that are checked and cleared by TRDC Grounds Maintenance. The drains were last checked and cleared by the Grounds Maintenance team on 1 October and are scheduled to next be checked in the first week of December.

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

The parking situation near the Leisure Centre in Gosforth Lane is acute. Residents are frustrated that another proposal to address this which was ready for public consultation (the first scheme having not been sufficiently well explained) has not seen the light of day and it has now become seemingly dependent upon the outcome of discussions that I referenced at the last Full Council meeting in respect of access to the rubbish bins principally at Forfar House.

Can the Lead Member advise me of the result of the discussions in respect of putting double yellow lines on the service road from Gosforth Lane to Forfar House, what impact those discussions have had on an already badly delayed parking scheme and when the parking proposals which were agreed to by ward councillors or an amended version will be put out to consultation?

Written response:

In order to ensure a comprehensive solution is found to alleviate parking issues in the areas and ensure refuse access to nearby properties is maintained Officers are working across service areas to devise a way forward. This will need to include engagement with Thrive who own the nearby properties. We will share updates with Ward Councillors when further progress has been made. It is anticipated revisions to the draft parking scheme will need to be incorporated into any final project.

QUESTIONS TO THE LEAD MEMBER FOR HOUSING AND PUBLIC HEALTH

49. Question from Councillor Vicky Edwards to the Lead Member for Housing and Public Health

How much does Three Rivers estimate it is costing the housing team in money and staff time equivalent to deal with Shannon House, WD4

Written response:

Officers do not record their time spent on individual cases or areas of work, so it is difficult to provide an estimate of cost to the housing team. Site visits have been conducted by Residential Environmental Health Officers alongside Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue and Hertfordshire Constabulary.

Both the Strategic Housing Manager and the Housing Operations Manager have been involved in various meetings with the local Community Safety Partnership and the Management Company.

50. Question from Councillor Stephen Cox to the Lead Member for Housing and Public Health

At the last Full Council in July, I asked during your report for information regarding the South Oxhey Initiative specifically in relation to the housing element. This has not been forthcoming.

What is the total number of properties constructed across all sites, the number of each by tenure (private, shared ownership, social housing or other) and what percentage of 'affordable housing' has been provided?

Written response:

The total number of properties delivered through the South Oxhey regeneration project is 659. Following 11 of the market housing units being purchased through the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) and being capped at affordable rent (capped at local housing allowance) this has increased the affordable housing provision. At the time of writing this consists of:

Market Housing: 415 (63%)
Social Rent: 140 (21%)
Affordable Rent: 11 (2%)
Shared Ownership: 93 (14%)

Total affordable: 244 (37%)

However, the Council have recently been contacted by Home Group who have expressed a desire to purchase a further 46 market homes. Subject to Homes England funding, they will convert the tenure of those properties into Shared Ownership. If they are successful, this will increase the total number of affordable homes within the scheme from 37% to 44% of the total number of properties. Made up as follows:

Market Housing: 369 (56%)
Social Rent: 140 (21%)
Affordable Rent: 11 (2%)
Shared Ownership: 139 (21%)

Total affordable: 290 (44%)

51. Question from Councillor Joan King to the Lead Member for Housing and Public Health

Thrive Homes is selling off social rented housing, that is housing at the lowest rent and turning properties into shared ownership which are more expensive to live in and certainly not what tenants were promised when they were sold off by this council.

What impact has Thrive Homes' policy had upon local residents in desperate need of places to live at social rent, what has this authority done to alleviate the negative impact of the policy and what will this authority be doing in the immediate future to address the difficulties caused by it for individuals, couples and families?

Written response:

I can confirm that Thrive Homes currently own and manage 4,030 homes across the Three Rivers District. Of this 3,421 are for social and affordable rent, 157 are shared ownership and 452 are leasehold.

When a home becomes empty, Thrive Homes undertakes an assessment to understand the work that is needed to bring it up to regulatory and energy standards to ensure their customers have safe, comfortable, easy to heat homes that are built to last. It is only in situations where a property requires significant investment to meet government requirements that they may decide to refurbish it and sell it. The majority of homes are sold as shared ownership so that they ensure they remain within district as a form of affordable housing which is a low-cost route into homeownership and is available for existing customers and local residents.

As a not-for-profit organisation, any profits made from sales are invested back into their maintenance and development programmes. This helps them continually improve the quality of their existing stock and build more affordable homes within the local communities.

Since 2021-22, investment into Thrive Homes existing properties has increased from £4.2m to £6.82m with improvement works resulting in 83% of their homes now holding an EPC-C rating or above. The refurbishment programme is enabling new affordable homes to be developed in the district. Thrive Homes have built a total of 44 new homes in the district (of which 23 were affordable rent), with a further 42 homes for affordable and social rent currently under construction at Grove Court, Grove Crescent and will house 131 people. They are also reviewing pipeline opportunities for more affordable housing for land in Thrive Homes ownership in the TRDC area with a pipeline of over 100 homes.

Thrive Homes have confirmed they would be happy to provide Councillors with a tour of their energy efficient and development projects within Three Rivers.

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

As someone who is personally navigating significant health challenges within my own life and family, I have a deep and personal appreciation for the importance of health initiatives in our community. This perspective only strengthens my commitment to participating in and championing the many health-related programs available in Three Rivers.

Having attended numerous health-related events locally, I've witnessed firsthand the positive impact of these initiatives. I've had the privilege of hearing directly from participants about how much these efforts mean to them, which underscores their value in improving quality of life.

One area where I believe we can grow is in our outreach to minority ethnic communities, particularly Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups. These communities often face unique barriers to accessing health resources, and it is vital that we proactively work to understand and meet their specific needs. By strengthening our engagement with these groups, we can not only ensure equity in service provision but also build trust and foster stronger community ties.

With this in mind, I'd like to ask:

- How are we engaging with minority ethnic communities to understand and address their specific health needs?
- What strategies are being used to raise awareness of resources like Healthy Hubs within these communities?
- What data or metrics do we have to measure the effectiveness of these hubs, particularly in reaching minority ethnic groups?

I am more than willing to collaborate with anyone who shares an interest in exploring these important questions further. By fostering meaningful connections with our minority ethnic communities, we can ensure that every resident in Three Rivers has access to the resources and support they need to lead healthier, happier lives.

Written response:

- Over the last year the Strategy and Partnerships team has funded WACA (Watford African and Caribbean Association) through UK Shared Prosperity Fund and continue to work closely with them to promote health initiatives they are involved with. We have also worked closely with One Vision on Cancer Champions project. Part of One Vision's offer is to engage and support South Asian communities. In previous years we have held events both virtually and in person to address health needs specific to minority communities, e.g. prostate cancer, diabetes, hypertension. Now we promote organisations that are doing this as we are reliant on funding from Hertfordshire County Council to deliver specific health initiatives and

we continue to work closely with Public Health on addressing these health inequalities.

- More recently we had a pop-up healthy hub event during South Asian Heritage Month. We also engage with Gate Herts and JummaH in Chorleywood to understand more about challenges faced by their communities.
- Information about the Healthy Hub is shared regularly with partners supporting these communities. When we have capacity we run Healthy hub pop ups/engagement at community events.
- The communications team also support the healthy hub with promotion through press releases, videos and social media.
- The Healthy Hubs are monitored, and we report to Hertfordshire County Council on a quarterly basis which will include information on service we provide, pops and those accessing the hubs.

QUESTIONS TO THE LEAD MEMBER FOR LEISURE

53. Question from Councillor Ian Morris to the Lead Member for Leisure

I'd like to recognise the tremendous amount of hard work done behind the scenes to secure £1 million in CIL funding for Oxhey Jets, a longstanding and much-loved sports facility and a local institution. This investment will have a lasting impact, benefiting so many residents in my ward and beyond.

Given the success of this project, I'd like to ask: is Oxhey Jets a one-off, or are there other longstanding sports facilities in the Three Rivers area that might also benefit from similar support through CIL funding?

It's essential that we continue to strengthen our community assets, and I'd be eager to know if there's potential for further investment in other cherished local facilities.

Written response:

The Council is pleased it was able to support the Oxhey Jets project through the CIL bidding process and recognises the huge amount of work achieved by the club in the local area.

The CIL funding bidding process is open to all organisations seeking funding for strategic infrastructure arising from development in an area. Other leisure projects and leisure organisations have already benefitted from CIL funding and it is anticipated more will apply in the future. Full details of the CIL application process are on the Council's website for everyone to view.

Through the development of the Local Plan, an updated infrastructure delivery plan will be produced to highlight the key infrastructure priorities, including leisure facilities in the district. This will be completed following an updated Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study, which will assess all indoor and outdoor provision, highlighting where the gaps and needs are.

54. Question from Councillor Debbie Morris to the Lead Member for Leisure

Moor Park and Eastbury ward councillors would like to be involved in the ongoing interactions of the council with Eastbury Farm School students and staff along with the designers of the new play area on Eastbury Recreation Ground regarding the new play area. In particular, on the Name the Bear event, the viewing of the works with Earth Wrights, the visiting wildlife project, any opening event, and all news stories from the council. Does the Lead Member have any objection to this and if not, will he authorise officers to include ward members going forward?

Written response:

Member involvement in the work undertaken by officers of the council is governed by the Council's constitution. Part 5 - Protocol on Member/Officer Relations, paragraph 4.2. states:

e) In the course of their work Officers sometimes meet with and/or negotiate with various individuals and bodies concerned with Council business. As a general rule it will not be appropriate for Members to attend. If Officers believe it is necessary/appropriate for Members to attend, then this should be agreed with the Chief Executive or Director of Finance (Chief Finance Officer/S151 Officer) or Associate Director

f) Occasionally it is appropriate to have a political perspective at such meetings and, if the Chief Executive, Director of Finance (Chief Finance Officer/S151 Officer) or Associate Director so decides, the Lead Member will be invited and may invite other appropriate Members to attend.

g) If it is necessary to advise Members of issues arising there will be a report to the Information Bulletin. Committees should not receive reports for noting only.

Updates on the Eastbury Recreation Ground project will continue to be provided to Ward and Lead Members as is normal practise and will include any outputs/outcomes from the work with the schools. The desire for members to be involved is noted and officers will ensure that invitations to events are made where and when it is appropriate to do so.

QUESTIONS TO THE LEAD MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PARTNERSHIPS

55. Question from Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst to the Lead Member for Community Safety and Partnerships

It was recently claimed in a Conservative publication that it was claimed that the Council “only debate keeping Three Rivers safe once a year” and personally attacked a Labour Councillor by name. Is this just not true regarding the meetings?

I understand that there is a Three Rivers Community Partnership and the Local Strategic Partnership Board that meets regularly, according to Council Partnership that meets regularly, indeed we can see from the Council Calendar it appears to meet at least 4 or 5 times a year.

Could the Deputy leader who chairs these meeting (and chaired the meeting at which the Labour Councillor was attacked for), outline how this Council works with the Police to help reduce crime and keep Three Rivers a low crime area?

Written response:

Three Rivers District Council is dedicated to ensuring the safety of our residents through our proactive Community Safety Partnership. This partnership is organised into several groups: the Community Safety Board, Local Strategic Partnership, Community Safety Coordinating Group, and Domestic Abuse and VAWG Forum, all meeting quarterly (16 meetings annually). Additionally, the Anti-Social Behaviour Action Group and Youth Action Panel meet monthly (24 meetings annually). Each meeting addresses emerging issues, violence against women and girls, and police priorities.

We actively discuss and create plans to combat crime and disorder, supporting residents throughout the district. When hotspots arise, the Council, Police, and other partner agencies collaborate on enforcement actions and support packages, such as those currently in place around Shannon House. The Council, Police, and Fire Service meet every Monday morning to address current and emerging issues. Our presence within the community is strong, with efforts to raise awareness and guide residents toward available support, including 20 Community Safety awareness events in the past 10 months.

Three Rivers District Council also plans and delivers three action plans as part of the Community Safety Partnership: the Community Safety Action Plan, Domestic Abuse and VAWG Action Plan, and the White Ribbon Plan. These plans encompass multiple actions to enhance resident safety and support the prosecution of crime and disorder perpetrators, ensuring our community lives free from fear.

Additionally, Three Rivers is the only local authority that contributes financially to local Police Community Safety Officers and commissions a Community Support Service to assist residents with complex mental health needs.

56. Question from Councillor Chris Alley to the Lead Member for Community Safety and Partnerships:

Given Delta Gain Co-op is by far the most stolen-from shop in the district and attracts significant anti-social behaviour, will Three Rivers commit to install and fund the operating costs to ensure CCTV is available on Delta Gain?

Written response:

Three Rivers District Council is committed to utilising every available tool and resource to combat crime and disorder, including the redeployment of CCTV cameras. As detailed in our CCTV Policy, applications can be made to redeploy cameras with a sponsor from the Community Safety Board or via a petition with at least 25 signatures.

It is recommended that anti-social behaviour and crime is always reported to the police via 101 or in an emergency 999. These reports help to build the evidence base which can be used to allocate or redeploy a camera to a new location. The Community Safety Partnership also provide advice, support for local shopkeepers and employ a range of other crime prevention methods to help reduce anti-social behaviour and crime in the community.

57. Question from Councillor Reena Ranger to the Lead Member for Community Safety and Partnerships:

There is a well-documented trend of burglaries being targeted at households of South Asian ethnicity or heritage locally, such as in Carpenders Park and eastern Chorleywood. Has the Lead Member raised this with the police or community safety partnership, and what is being done by Three Rivers about it?

Written response:

The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) work closely with the PCC on all issues in the local area including burglaries targeting South Asian jewellery. Burglary is one of the Community Safety Partnerships strategic priorities with the Police as the lead agency for crime in the area. We are aware that the police are working with neighbouring police teams from Dacorum and Hertsmere and crime prevention advice has been issued by the police through news articles as well as outreach work.

58. Question from Councillor Vicky Edwards to the Lead Member for Community Safety and Partnerships

How much does Three Rivers estimate it is costing the community safety and partnership teams in money and staff time equivalent to deal with Shannon House, WD4? How much does Three Rivers estimate it is costing the police in money and staff time equivalent to deal with Shannon House, WD4?

Written response:

Officers do not record their time spent on individual cases or areas of work so it is difficult to provide an estimate of cost to the partnership team. The Community Safety and Safeguarding Manager attends bi-weekly meetings with the police and regular meetings with the Management Company. We also hold monthly internal meetings to discuss Shannon house.

We are unable to comment on Police time, this would need to be sort direct from them.

QUESTIONS TO THE LEAD MEMBER FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

59. Question from Councillor Andrea Fraser to the Lead Member for Sustainability and Climate Change

What has Three Rivers done to lobby the Environment Agency to include projects in and around the district, and particularly the Aquadrome, to reduce flood risk as part of the Environment Agency's Colne Valley Flood Plan or other programmes?

Written response:

Council officers have a strong working relationship with the local EA officers especially within the FGB (flooding, geomorphology and biodiversity) team. With the EA officers accompanying on multiple site visits to many of the council's sites where a river passes through. This has and will continue to lead to opportunities for support from the EA, for example at the Bury Grounds where the project gained EA approval through the Affinity Water WINEP requirements.

The Colne Valley Strategic Area has a list of measures that are being or will be undertaken within the catchment area accompanied by national measures. A key local measure is to "collaborate with key partners and stakeholders in the Colne Management Catchment." The Colne Catchment Action Network is the catchment host for the Colne and at present Three Rivers District Council are the only local authority within the steering group attending regularly.

Officers have lobbied the Environment Agency through the Steering Group for updates and a publishing date for the updated Upper Colne Flood Modelling – a key piece of information, which will inform all projects within the Catchment.

As the Rickmansworth Aquadrome project develops with the outcomes of the hydrological study, projects will seek the guidance of the EA.

60. Question from Councillor Philip Hearn to the Lead Member for Sustainability and Climate Change

How much has the installation of heat pumps reduced the energy costs for Three Rivers House?

Written response:

The cost of utilities for TRH increased by £28,968 in the year after the air source heat pump was installed. This increase was in part due to the standing charges which rose from £6.86 per day to £25.54 per day.

In the first 6 months of this year, 2024/25 the bill has been £6,726 less than the same period in 2023/24.

QUESTIONS TO THE CHAIR OF PLANNING COMMITTEE

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

How much does Three Rivers estimate it would cost to get external counsel's opinion on the council's ability to take enforcement action at Shannon House, WD4?

Written response:

Officers are of the view that obtaining external Counsel's advice is not required and therefore would be a waste of resources therefore an estimate has not been sought. Officers estimate the cost to obtain the advice would be between £2000 to £4000.

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

Three Rivers has allowed tattered scaffolding sheeting to dominate Rickmansworth High Street for almost 18 months. When I asked in July for a section 215 notice to be issued, the Chair of the Planning Committee promised me that it would be resolved soon. But in the last five months, it has only become worse. Three Rivers' enforcement policy states: "Section 215 notices are only used when informal requests to remedy the situation have not produced the desired effect." And yet no section 215 notice has been issued. Why does the Chair of the Planning Committee think that this continued ugly presence over Rickmansworth is the 'desired result'?

Written response:

Officers have previously engaged with the owner regarding the condition of the scaffolding sheeting who responded by making some repairs. However, despite best efforts from officers it is accepted the repairs were not of a high standard.

Whilst officers have considered issuing a section 215 notice, the owner has confirmed in writing that the scaffolding and associated sheeting will be removed in the early to mid-part of December. Given the fact that the scaffolding is to be dismantled and taken down in the coming weeks, it would not be expedient to serve a section 215 notice, which if served, cannot be enforced until at least 28 days have lapsed from the service of the notice.

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

At the last full council meeting, Cllr Whately-Smith said that no First Homes have been secured as evidence had not been collected to support it. However, the ministerial statement HCWS50/ HLWS48 of 24 May 2021 expressly said that the evidence base does not need to be updated (except where a higher discount or a Local Connection Test is proposed). Why did the Chair of the Planning Committee falsely claim that the evidence base had to be updated?

Written response:

Following further investigation, officers have reviewed the planning application data and can now confirm 3 housing schemes have secured First Homes since the introduction of this affordable housing tenure. Officers had not previously collated First Homes tenure mix data, so this involved a desk top exercise, this is being reviewed. The Council's position statement on First Homes has been included as part of the Council's affordable housing policy since October 2021. Whilst other eligible residential schemes may have come forward First Homes were not secured due to other considerations such as viability, as is the case with other forms of affordable housing. The evidence base is required in connection with the emerging Local Plan and revised draft NPPF requirements.

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

At the last full council meeting, Cllr Whately-Smith said that no First Homes had been secured. However, 25% of all affordable housing was required to be First Homes for all applications decided after 28 December 2021 (or 28 March 2022 where substantial pre-application engagement took place). Since then, hundreds of units have been built or approved. Why has Three Rivers not secured the First Homes that the law requires it to?

Written response:

Please see answer above with updated figures.