

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES

THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Monday, 2 December 2024 from Times Not Specified

Present: Councillors Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Councillor Sarah Nelmes,

Steve Drury, Louise Price, Andrew Scarth, Jonathon Solomons, Jon Tankard, Raj Khiroya (In place of Chris Lloyd), Chris Whately-Smith (In place of Tom Smith), Andrea Fraser, Philip Hearn, Abbas Merali, Reena Ranger, Chris Mitchell, Narinder Sian, Stephen Cox and Stephen King

Officers in Attendance:

Stephen Rix, Associate Director of Legal and Democratic Services
Alison Scott, Director of Finance
Matthew Stickley, Interim Group Manager – Democratic and Electoral Services
Joanne Wagstaffe, Chief Executive

PR124 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Chris Lloyd, for whom Councillor Raj Khiroya attended as a substitute, and Councillor Tom Smith, for whom Councillor Chris Whately-Smith attended as a substitute.

PR224 NOTICE OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of other business.

PR324 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

PR424 FEES AND CHARGES 2025/26

Alison Scott, Director of Finance, introduced the report.

In response to questions, officers confirmed that there were no changes proposed to services and so the report did not outline any environmental implications, but that the council's environmental strategy had been considered in preparing the proposals.

The committee discussed the proposals for increases for fines for fly tipping, noting that officers' advice was that setting fines at the highest level allowable in law would lead to the council being taken to court to challenge such fines. The committee discussed the likelihood of offenders being caught, the likelihood of court challenges being successful, and the possibility of introducing a tiered system of fines.

Councillor Oliver Cooper moved an amendment to the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Andrea Fraser, such that the fixed penalty notice rates for fly-tipping be set at the legal maximum. Following debate, Councillor Oliver Cooper withdrew the amendment.

The Leader proposed that a meeting be convened between the Lead Member, Associate Director for Environment, and the leaders of the political groups to discuss the charges for fly-tipping prior to the report being brought to Council, and that, subject to the outcome of that meeting, an updated version of the charges be brought to Council.

The committee debated the proposed increases for hire rates for Leavesden HIVE, noting that the percentage increase for the community rates being higher than the commercial rate was to ensure the difference in rates did not grow over time. The committee further discussed the rates differences between commercial and community rates at Watersmeet Theatre.

Councillor Philip Hearn moved an amendment to the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Oliver Cooper, such that 35 spaces at The Ferry Car Park be available at a rate of £4 per day. Officers confirmed that the council's fees and charges could be amended at any point during the fiscal year, and that there was scope for a report setting out such a proposal to be brought forward at pace. In response to a question, the Leader of the Council committed to a report on these proposals being brought forward early in the new year, and that any decision would be taken following consultation with residents and parishes. The amendment was subsequently withdrawn.

The committee discussed the charges for pre-application advice for both planning and licensing, both in terms of the structure and how these compared to neighbouring authorities, noting officers' advice was that pre-application advice fees for planning applications needed to be set at a rate which did not lead to applicants submitting planning applications directly and not using the pre-application process.

Councillor Oliver Cooper moved an amendment to the recommendations such that the pavement licence fee be halved to £250. The amendment was not seconded. In debate, the committee discussed proposals for pavement licensing, with the committee agreeing that a report on pavement licensing options be brought to the Licensing Committee for further consideration.

The committee welcomed the continued practice of not charging for the burial of children in council-owned cemeteries.

RESOLVED:

That Policy & Resources Committee recommends to Full Council:

1. To approve the Fees and Charges set out in the schedule at Appendix 1 to be effective from 13 January 2025.
2. To approve the Fees and Charges set out in the schedule at Appendix 2 to be effective from 1 April 2025.
3. To approve the Fees and Charges set out in the schedule at Appendix 3 to be effective from 1 April 2025.
4. To approve the Fees and Charges set out in the schedule at Appendix 4 to be effective from 1 April 2025.

The item was not moved.

PR624 BUSINESS RATE POOLING 2025/26

Alison Scott, Director of Finance, introduced the report.

The committee debated the risks of business rates appeals across the county, previous risks presented by Three Rivers District Council relating to the Warner Brothers site, and the possible composition of rates pools. Officers confirmed that Three Rivers District Council could only join a pool which had the County Council as a member.

RESOLVED:

That Policy & Resources Committee recommends to Full Council:

1. That Council agrees in principle that Three Rivers District Council enters into the Hertfordshire Business Rates Pool, subject to the Government accepting its application to form a pool.
2. That Council delegates authority to the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance to sign up to the Hertfordshire Business Rates Pool, within 28 days of the Local Government Finance Settlement.

PR724 WREATH LAYING PROTOCOL

The Chair introduced the item, explaining that the changes reflected the request of Oxhey Jets FC to ensure the annual Remembrance Match was recorded.

Councillor Stephen Cox moved an amendment to the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Stephen King, such that paragraph 2.3 of the protocol be amended such that it finished:

In the event that no ward member is available to lay a wreath, the relevant group leader may ask another member to lay a ward wreath on their behalf.

The amendment was put to the vote and agreed.

The committee noted that ward councillors did lay wreaths at the Oxhey Jets FC Remembrance Match alongside specific council officeholders.

The committee discussed the need for councillors to mark Remembrance Day events as representatives of the council and the residents of their wards.

RESOLVED: To agree the revised Wreath Laying Protocol at Appendix 1, as amended.

PR824 OTHER BUSINESS - IF APPROVED UNDER ITEM 3 ABOVE

There was no other business.

PR924 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

A motion to exclude the public and press was not moved.

The meeting ended at 8:51pm

CHAIR

