THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

Three Rivers House
Northway
Rickmansworth
Herts WD3 1RL

Policy and Resources Committee
MINUTES

Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Monday, 27 January 2025 from 7.30 - 9.28 pm

Present: Councillors Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst Councillor Sarah Nelmes Steve Drury, Chris Lloyd, Louise Price, Andrew Scarth, Jonathon Solomons, Tom Smith, Jon Tankard, Oliver Cooper, Vicky Edwards, Andrea Fraser, Philip Hearn, Abbas Merali, Chris Mitchell, Narinder Sian and Stephen King

Officers in Attendance:

Alison Scott, Shared Director of Finance
Sally Riley, Finance Business Partner
Joanne Wagstaffe, Chief Executive
Stephen Rix, Associate Director Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer)
Leah Mickleborough, Interim Committee and Elections Manager
Tom Rankin, Principal Sustainable Travel Planner and Transport Officer
Kimberley Rowley, Head of Regulatory Services

PR124 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Reena Ranger and Stephen Cox

PR224 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

PR1224 MINUTES SILENCE

The Chair announced his intention to hold a minute's silence in recognition of International Holocaust Memorial Day. He thanked members who had attended events earlier in the day to mark the event and acknowledged the atrocities and acts of genocide that are commemorated on this day.

The Committee held a minutes silence.

Following this, the Chair announced the sad passing of Ross Pettefer, who had worked as a building surveyor in the Council's facilities team. Ross had passed away after a short illness and was well known to many members.

The Committee held a minutes silence

PR324 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair reminded the Committee that a supplementary agenda had been issued in order to add an urgent item of business in relation to the proposals to amend the opening hours of Waterdale waste recycling centre, and to introduce a booking system for waste recycling centres within Hertfordshire. The Chair informed the meeting he considered this urgent in order to respond prior to the closure of the Hertfordshire County Council budget consultation on 5 February.

A member raised that the budget consultation had begun in early January, and thus could have been included on the agenda for the meeting. The Chair informed the meeting that the proposals had been agreed for inclusion in the budget at the County Council meeting of 15 January, a short time prior to the agenda being issued for this meeting.

PR424 MINUTES

The minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee of 11 November and 2 December were considered by the Committee. Councillor Vicky Edwards requested an amendment to record her presence at the meeting of 2 December. Subject to this amendment, the minutes were agreed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair of the meeting when possible to do.

PR524 ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STRATEGY - PUBLIC CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

The Chair invited Tom Rankin, the Principal Sustainable Travel Planner and Transport Officer to present the report. The Officer explained that the report initially focused on town centre and car park charging, before moving to on-street solutions. He noted that several projects were already underway, which had been funded by Community Infrastructure Levy and external grant funding. A public consultation had been held in the summer on the plans for further expansion of charging, the outcomes of which were included within the report.

Councillor Sarah Nelmes, as the lead member, commended the strategy to the committee, which, if agreed, would be referred to Council for adoption. She noted the agreement of the strategy would facilitate the development of a roadmap, setting out how the strategy would be implemented.

The Chair invited members to debate the item. A wide range of questions were asked primarily relating to the grant funding arrangements; potential loss of parking spaces; how on-street charging provision could be achieved; how the contract arrangements with charging operators would work, including the fees payable and maintenance arrangements, and whether security would need to be enhanced in the car parks. In response, officers confirmed the grant funding arrangements, and that options such as the use of gulleys were being explored for on-street parking. It was difficult to predict the level of demand for chargers but charging rates would be established within the contracts. Contractors would be responsible for the charging units, but the Council would maintain responsibility for the underground connecting infrastructure helping potential future-proofing risks. Security enhancements would require additional funding but the Council would work with Parishes to assess need. Officers further confirmed the arrangements for securing sufficient power from the power networks.

During the debate Chris Mitchell proposed an amendment to attach an action plan to the strategy which would enable members to monitor how it was being delivered. Following confirmation from the Chair of the intention to bring forward a report to the General Public Services, Community Safety and Infrastructure Committee in due course with a roadmap and action plan to deliver the strategy, Councillor Mitchell withdrew the amendment.

Councillor Cooper expressed his concern regarding the potential loss of car parking spaces. He believed it was important that rapid chargers were accessible to users passing through

towns, however there could be less demand for slower chargers in the day and proposed an amendment to 5.1 of the strategy so that:

“Spaces next to rapid or ultra rapid chargers are generally expected to be reserved for electric vehicles. However, other spaces - such as fast chargers - should not be reserved solely for electric vehicles, to minimise the loss of parking spaces to users of other vehicles.”

The amendment was debated. Concern was raised that firstly, this may not comply with the terms of grant funding available or obtained by the council; that this may deter companies seeking to install chargers as it could result in a loss of income, and thirdly, that people may be deterred from purchasing an electric vehicle or using local chargers if spaces were not available.

In response, Councillor Cooper highlighted a number of other Councils who had taken this approach, and so considered that his suggestion still was merited. Appreciating the points raised, he proposed a revised amendment to read:

“Spaces next to rapid or ultra rapid chargers are generally expected to be reserved for electric vehicles. However, other spaces - such as fast chargers - should, **where possible**, not be reserved solely for electric vehicles, to minimise the loss of parking spaces to users of other vehicles”

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Vicky Edwards, who specifically referred to the proposals in Abbots Langley. She noted that the positioning of the electric vehicle charging spaces were important, and if they were placed towards the back of the car park, this may mean users only use the electric vehicle charging spaces when there were no other spaces available.

The Chair confirmed that whilst the Council could consider Councillor Cooper’s proposal, he would want to understand the potential impacts on grant funding as identified by members of the committee and would also want any consideration to include why authorities have elected to restrict spaces to electric vehicles only before committing to bringing such proposals forward alongside the action plan. Had the proposal been brought forward at an earlier stage, it could have been considered within the emerging strategy.

The amendment was put to the vote and with 5 votes in favour and 12 against, was **DEFEATED**.

The substantive motion was put to the vote and with 12 votes in favour and 5 abstentions, it was **RESOLVED** to:

i) Agree the Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy for adoption; and

ii) Agree that the Strategy is progressed to Full Council for final adoption.

PR624 FINANCIAL PLANNING - RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chair invited Alison Scott, Director of Finance, to present the report. The Director of Finance reminded members that the report primarily served to facilitate Council to be able to consider the budget and therefore the item was just for noting by the committee.

With no members wishing to debate the item, it was agreed:

That the Policy and Resources Committee notes that the Administration will publish its final recommendations on Financial Planning 2025/26 to 2027/28 five working days prior to the Council meeting on 25 February 2025 and present them at this meeting.

PR724 FINANCIAL PLANNING - REVENUE SERVICES

Alison Scott, Director of Finance, presented the report and confirmed that it included all updates in respect of the period 8 budget monitoring.

Councillor Solomons, as lead member for resources, noted that there had been a small number of adverse variances, particularly in relation to the Aquadrome and local plan, however there was sufficient contingency to cover the variances.

Members debated the position regarding the local plan funding and whether sufficient provision had been made within the emerging budget. The Chair confirmed that it was expected the Council would be receiving £70k of grant funding from government to support the further evidence sought in respect of the green belt, and it was understood this funding was not contingent on the housing figures within the local plan.

The Director of Finance committed to providing written responses in relation to questions in the reduction of income on the shop units in Furtherfield, and the location of the investment property on Oxhey Drive.

Queries were also raised by members in relation to whether the council had considered alternative delivery models to reduce business rates on leisure provision and the increased costs of the banking and external audit contracts. The Director of Finance reminded members that whilst the Council can consider alternative models, reductions in business rates are a loss to the Council. The council had been required to re-tender its banking contract and whilst the rise in costs of the external audit contract was disappointing, this was undertaken through the Public Sector Audit Appointments body and so the council had very limited control or influence over the outcome. It was noted that the Council had been successful in securing further funding from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

The Committee noted the report.

PR824 FINANCIAL PLANNING - CAPITAL STRATEGY AND THE TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Director of Finance reminded the Committee that the capital strategy, which had been prepared in line with the CIPFA code of practice, and the treasury management strategy, were being referred to Council alongside the revenue budget. She reminded members that the strategies established the parameters that officers worked to.

The Committee noted the report.

PR924 AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Chair presented the report, confirming in his view the proposals included a number of practical changes to assist with the operation of the Council. He invited members to debate each proposal in turn.

Concern was raised with the proposals where group leader consent was required, as if one group had a majority on the Council, it would only require that group leader to agree in order for the proposal to proceed. The Committee agreed in principle to support that consent is required from a majority of group leaders representing the majority of members but requested

that officers re-draft proposals to be circulated to the group leaders for comment before presentation to Council on 25 February 2025.

Turning to the proposal to not allow motions or amendments that included defamatory or unlawful wording, it was noted that there could be opportunity for officers to suggest to the proposer amendments to the wording which would make it acceptable. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that this is what would happen in practice and the Committee agreed for this to be included in the re-drafted proposals to be presented to Council.

The Committee considered the situation where a request may be received to postpone a meeting as one group could not attend, even though the meeting may still be quorate. It was agreed to have a discussion on this matter outside of the committee.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to:

Request that the Monitoring Officer and Interim Committee and Elections Manager amend Appendix 1 in accordance with the debate, and re-circulate this to Group Leaders for consideration prior to submission to Council for approval.

PR1024a PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE OPENING HOURS OF WATERDALE HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE

The Chair reminded members that the Hertfordshire County Council budget consultation included proposals to decrease the operating hours at Waterdale Waste Recycling Centre to 5 days a week, despite having made significant investment in the site, and to introduce a booking system across the Waste Recycling Centre sites. He informed the Committee that he was minded to as the Chief Executive to write to the County Council, as follows, and invited members to debate this proposal:

“Three Rivers District Council strongly object to Hertfordshire County Council's plans to reduce the opening hours and days of the Waterdale Household Waste site to 5 days a week, over concerns of increased flytipping across Hertfordshire. We also oppose the introduction of an imposed online booking system, which would restrict access to the site to only those who have pre-booked. These proposed changes are likely to result in increased fly-tipping and will significantly reduce accessibility for many residents. The Chief Executive so requested to inform Hertfordshire County Council .

1. **Request a full impact assessment** from Hertfordshire County Council, outlining the potential consequences of reduced opening hours on fly-tipping, recycling rates, and public access.
2. **Encourage Hertfordshire County Council** to explore alternative measures to improve the efficiency of waste disposal services **without reducing accessibility**.”

Members of the Committee expressed concern at the proposed changes to the Recycling Centre and booking system, particularly as this could lead to an increase in recycling. The proposals could lead to an increase in fly-tipping, and may not be in accordance with the County Council’s own commitment to good practice in waste management and environmental sustainability.

Specifically in relation to the booking system, concern was raised regarding access to the Rickmansworth Waste Recycling Centre, where the access and road layout could create problems if people had arrived without appointments. It was unclear within the proposals as to how those without internet access could make bookings, and where the cost savings would arrive if staff were required to check users had made bookings. Users may not always be able to anticipate when they would need to make use of the centre.

A member confirmed their understanding that a further consultation would be carried out on the more detailed proposals, and it was important that the Council was able to feed in its local knowledge when the detailed proposals emerged.

Recognition was given that the County Council had invested in the Waterdale site, and were proposing further capital investment to include a suppressant system, as was legally required, to reduce the emission of fumes. This was a positive step and it was agreed the response should include a statement to confirm the Council's support for capital investment in the Waterdale and other Waste Recycling Sites.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to support the submission of a representation to Hertfordshire County Council as proposed by the Chair, subject to the inclusion of a statement of support for capital investment in the site.

CHAIR