

SERVICE DELIVERY PLANS 2025-2028 PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

- **POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**
(01/12/2025)

PART I

SERVICE DELIVERY PLANS 2025 – 2028 PROPOSED AMENDMENTS **(ADCCC)**

1 Summary

- 1.1 Service Plans for 2025-2028 were agreed at full council on 21st October 2025. It was also agreed that 5 proposed amendments from the 2025-2028 service plans would be referred back to P&R for discussion.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That:
- 2.2 **Amendment 1 proposed – New CIL charging schedule:** Officers recommend that the update to the CIL charging schedule be included in the 2026-2029 service plans when there is officer resource and service budget available to cover the time and costs of completing the update, not in the current years' service plan.
- 2.3 **Amendment 2 proposed – Commercial cinema to Watersmeet:** Officer recommendation is not to include the proposed amendments of exploring outsourcing Watersmeet to a commercial operator or any other operating model but instead to focus on delivering the existing Watersmeet business plan and to continue its current trajectory towards cost neutrality.
- 2.4 **Amendment 3 proposed – Rescue Plan for Rickmansworth Aquadrome:** The proposed amendment is unnecessary as the Aquadrome Programme is already listed as a project within the Natural Infrastructure Service Plan and covers all aspects of the Aquadrome.
- 2.5 **Amendment 4 proposed – Mitigate rise in fly tipping:** There is no evidence that this is the case. No changes have been made to Recycling Centre operations, and those being consulted on should, if brought in, bring forward a greater level of recycling so it does not need to be included in the service plan.
- 2.6 **Amendment 5 proposed – Increase take-up of trade waste service:** Officer recommendation is not to include this as a project, as we already offer a service in line with Simpler Recycling.

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 Rebecca Young, Head of Strategy & Partnerships

3 Details

4 Amendment 1 proposed:

- 4.1.1 To add under 'Support and enable sustainable communities' in the Planning Policy part (p5) of the Planning Policy and Conservation Service Delivery Plan:
- 4.1.2 *Draft a new CIL charging schedule removing the £0 per square metre CIL charge for CIL Area C (Watford Rural Parish and Tolpits Lane) and otherwise reviewing the CIL charges across the district.*

4.2 Officer response

- 4.2.1 Officers do not consider delivering a new CIL charging schedule by June 2026 is possible without impacting the council's work on the Local Plan. Although the work would be undertaken with assistance from external consultants there would still be significant officer input required. This work would be undertaken by officers in the Planning Policy and Conservation service who are currently working to full capacity on progressing the Local Plan. The earliest realistic time frame is to commence work on the charging schedule following submission of the plan for examination. This would be dependent on the availability of government inspectors to undertake the Local Plan examination and how quickly they could be appointed. In the case that there is a fast turnaround then work on the CIL charging schedule would not be able to commence until after the examination is completed.
- 4.2.2 Officers were always committed to undertaking a review of the CIL charging schedule following submission of the Local Plan. This cannot be undertaken in the current financial year due Local Plan work taking priority, as such it is not proposed to be included in this year's Service Plan. It will, however, be included in next year's Service Plan.
- 4.2.3 Preparing a new CIL charging schedule takes several months. The draft CIL charging schedule needs to be prepared with evidence supporting it (2/3 months work), then it needs to be consulted on for 6 weeks and those responses considered (2/3 months work), then it needs to be examined by an Inspector and then formally adopted by the Council (another 3 months potentially).
- 4.2.4 The review could potentially commence in May 2026 if there is a delay to Local Plan examination due to lack of available Inspectors, which is quite possible. Otherwise, work would not commence until post Local Plan examination as officer time would be fully taken up on work supporting the examination process. In this case commencement likely wouldn't be until early 2027. Realistically, the CIL charging schedule review won't be complete until the 2027/28 financial year, subject to budget setting.
- 4.2.5 The estimated consultant costs of completing the CIL charging schedule would be circa £15,000, though this figure would need to be confirmed through the receipt of quotations from relevant consultants. The costs of examination would be in the region of £40,000 which mostly goes on the costs of the examiner and programme officer. As such in total it would be over £50,000 to complete the CIL charging schedule. This would need to be agreed in future budgets.

4.3 Amendment 2 proposed:

4.3.1 To add under 'Support and enable sustainable communities' in the Watersmeet part (p7) of the Customer Experience Service Delivery Plan:

4.3.2 *Improve the attractiveness and financial viability of Watersmeet, including exploring and, if possibly, bringing a commercial cinema or theatre operator to Watersmeet.*

4.4 Officer response

4.4.1 At a current net direct cost to the council of £26,000 in financial year 2024-25, Watersmeet already operates at a very efficient level for an arts and entertainment venue of its size, with many similar venues operating at a cost of between £100k-£300k per annum. Watersmeet is currently on track to deliver its existing business plan objective of continuing to reduce the cost to the council, having delivered a reduction for the past 3 years running, demonstrating the business plan is working and viable.

4.4.2 Handing control of the venue over to a commercial operator would introduce significant risks with very limited financial upside, if any at all.

4.4.3 Financial considerations

4.4.3.1 The council would still retain building ownership, landlord responsibilities, and likely capital investment costs in order to secure a commercial operator. There would be costs associated with transfer of management, including potentially a rent-free period and possibly the council paying a management fee to an operator to run the venue. Any of these scenarios would effectively negate any potential savings. It would be very unlikely to secure a deal where a commercial operator paid the council a fee as venues of under 1000 seats are notoriously difficult to operate profitably and Watersmeet is unlikely to be attractive to an experienced commercial operator, who would see it as high risk with limited potential financial reward. Opting for a smaller operator or charitable trust would deliver no benefit but would incur significant risk, as there would be no economies of scale or utilisation of centralised programming and marketing functions, an area that gives larger operators a competitive advantage.

4.4.4 Loss of community access and identity

4.4.4.1 Watersmeet's current balance of community hires and events, film and professional theatre would almost certainly be lost. A commercial operator's primary focus is on maximising ticket yield, and community events, local schools, amateur groups and charities could easily be priced out. If the council tried to impose restrictions on the commercial operator to counter this, it would likely end up having to pay a larger management fee to the operator.

4.4.5 Loss of Watersmeet's wider use for council activity

4.4.5.1 Watersmeet is currently used for a variety of council run events including, community engagement events, film screenings and the election count. The flexibility of having a venue at the disposal of the council at such close proximity to the council's head office would also be lost.

4.4.6 Reputational risk

4.4.6.1 Outsourcing such a visible and much-loved public venue would carry significant reputational risk for the council. Twenty years ago, Watersmeet was closed and then operated by a Trust which failed within a year and ultimately was brought back in-house and reopened. Despite being two decades ago, this is still

referenced by local people, demonstrating that decisions surrounding Watersmeet are remembered for a long time. If a commercial operator made programming changes, made significant increases to ticket prices or displaced local community groups the council would likely face public criticism and reputational damage that would far outweigh any marginal potential savings made.

4.4.7 Social value

- 4.4.7.1 Watersmeet's operating model currently supports volunteering, local employment for young people and work experience opportunities, all activities that are not captured in financial performance. A commercial operator would prioritise profitability and the volunteer model would likely present a considerable challenge for a commercial operator, as continuing with it limits a hard sell approach to secondary sales, but also in contrast, saves significant amounts in staff costs.

4.4.8 Cinema specific operator

- 4.4.8.1 Watersmeet currently operates a diverse programme, which includes cinema (screening around 50 films per year), flat floor community events, live theatre, hires and a popular pantomime. As a single plex cinema, profitability would be significantly limited for a commercial cinema operator as they would be restricted with the number of films that could be screened each day. An option could be to remodel the interior to create several smaller spaces but that would remove the venue's versatility and ability to present live theatre and other large events, displacing many local business users and community groups and making the space solely dedicated to cinema. The remodelling would attract significant costs and based on proximity to Watford would put Watersmeet in direct competition with two well known cinema operators.

4.4.9 Summary

- 4.4.9.1 Transferring Watersmeet to a commercial operator would:

- Deliver negligible or zero financial benefit
- Undermine community access and local identity
- Create significant potential reputational risk for the council
- Remove a valued cultural asset from direct public accountability

4.5 Amendment 3 proposed:

- 4.5.1 To add under 'Support and enable sustainable communities' in the of the Leisure and Natural Infrastructure Service Delivery Plan:

- 4.5.2 *Urgently deliver a rescue plan to save Rickmansworth Aquadrome, including but not limited to:*

- re-opening the Woodland Pathway
- restore and re-open the Ebury Play Area
- *revisit and revise the asbestos management plan to allow the holding of a Rickmansworth Festival of equivalent size to that before 2024.*

4.6 Officer response

- 4.6.1 The Aquadrome Programme is focused on delivering a sustainable solution for the site to ensure there is a balance between the site's main function as a flood plain and public access for leisure and recreation purposes. To ensure the sustainability of any solution implemented, this must be led by science to ensure that there is no adverse effect on the wider catchment area of the River Colne. At present, the estimated cost to deliver this programme is £5million. This is a significant level of funding and if successful in their bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), will enable the Council to deliver from April 2027 onwards. These timescales are dictated by the NLHF and the council must adhere to the processes behind the bid submission. The NLHF requires a significant development period of the project, to ensure that whatever they agree to is both sustainable, science led and will result in a positive investment of their funds.
- 4.6.2 It is worth noting that despite these timescales, ongoing maintenance and improvements to the site continue, with substantial expenditure made in just the last 6 months, as outlined in the Aquadrome Programme Update report, presented to the Climate Change and Leisure Committee on the 15 October 2025.
- 4.6.3 The woodland pathway is structurally unsafe due to flood damage and that any interim repairs or remediation would be costly and likely to be temporary, due to the natural flooding of the River Colne in this section of the site. The council has a duty to use public funds wisely and to prioritise safety. As has been previously advised, the council is committed, through the Aquadrome Programme to ensure a long-term sustainable solution for this section of the site and that this will be led by science through the Hydrological Report, detailed design work and with stakeholder engagement. Any work to this section of the site will require approval from the Environment Agency by way of a Flood Risk Activity Permit, which has a current timescale of 6-9 months. The EA will only approve the FRAP based on hydraulic modelling, which can only be completed following the detailed design phase of the project. This is due to the proximity to the chalk stream, the Aquadrome being a flood plain and ensuring there are no adverse effects to flooding elsewhere within the catchment. All of this is already a consideration and a priority within the Aquadrome Programme.
- 4.6.4 Officer recommendation is that this addition is not necessary as the woodland pathway forms part of the Aquadrome Programme, which is already listed as a project within the Natural Infrastructure Service Plan.
- 4.6.5 The council is working with the contractor on a remediation plan to re-open Ebury Play area. This will only take place once the Japanese Knotweed has been successfully removed from the site.
- 4.6.6 Officer recommendation is that this addition is not necessary as the Aquadrome Programme is already listed as a project within the Natural Infrastructure Service Plan.
- 4.6.7 The duty to manage asbestos is set out in regulation 4 of the 'Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012' and is a key part of the council's requirements for HSE (Health and Safety Executive) compliance. As the council are aware of the existence of asbestos at the Aquadrome site it is required to have a plan to manage the site in accordance with the relevant legislation and regulations. Any decision relating to the festival taking place is, and remains, with the festival organisers and not the council.

4.6.7.1 It would therefore be irresponsible and negligent to revise the Asbestos Management Plan as outlined above.

4.6.7.2 Officer recommendation is to reject the inclusion of this within the Leisure and Natural Infrastructure Service Plan.

4.7 Amendment 4 proposed:

4.7.1 To add under 'Provide responsive and responsible local leadership' in the Waste and Street Cleansing part (p4) of the Waste and Environmental Protection Service Delivery Plan:

4.7.2 Mitigate the impact of the cuts proposed by Hertfordshire County Council to the service at its waste sites, especially the prohibition on unsorted black waste and charges for DIY waste.

4.8 Officer response

4.8.1 Officers are not aware of any evidence to support the statement that there will be a rise in fly tipping levels as a result of changes imposed by Herts County Council at their Household Recycling Centres. HCC can provide papers and research reports that demonstrate no-evidential link between any demand management measures at HWRCs and residents resorting to en-mass fly-tipping.

4.8.2 A report from WRAP (Waste and Resource Action Programme) conducted in 2021 also concluded that "comparison of fly tipping rates does not show that those local authorities that have introduced charges for some HWRC have higher fly tipping rates than those without charges. There is no reasonable interpretation of available evidence in Hertfordshire of historic changes in service provision at HWRC and an increase in fly tipping, e.g. reduction in opening hours, restriction of the amount of certain waste brought to the HWRC's."

4.8.3 Officers also feel that sorting of black bag waste is a positive step in ensuring that as much waste as possible is recycled and diverted away from landfill or incineration at higher cost to the tax payer.

4.9 Amendment 5 proposed:

4.9.1 To add under 'Expand our position as a great place to do business' in the Waste and Street Cleansing part (p4) of the Waste and Environmental Protection Service Delivery Plan:

4.9.2 *Improve the attractiveness of the Three Rivers' commercial trade waste service to increase take-up of the service and improve waste disposal in town and village centres.*

4.10 Officer response

4.10.1 TRDC already offers a trade waste and recycling service in line with Simpler Recycling requirements and best practice, including the recent introduction of food waste collections. Sufficient resource is already allocated to ensure that the service remains competitive and is a "service supplier of choice" in a waste collection market that is able to offer alternative services such as skips and compactors. It should also be noted that, should the Council's trade base increase there will, at some point, be a saturation tipping point, at which time significantly more revenue and capital funding would be required for new rounds,

which would take a considerable time to recoup. In addition, there may not be enough extra business to make this a viable option.

- 4.10.2 The Councils' two Environmental Enforcement Officers can, and do, visit businesses to ensure they have correct waste disposal arrangements in place and can take action against any business who do not.

5 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications

- 5.1 The recommendations in this report are not within the Council's agreed policy and budgets.

- 6 This report is not associated with any specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

7 Financial Implications

- 7.1 The recommendations in this report are not linked to any specific budget allocation. Each proposed amendment has budget implications and would therefore, require additional budget discussions and approvals.

8 Legal Implications

- 9 None specific to this report. However, each amendment should be reviewed individually to determine the necessary legal implication should they be approved.

10 Equal Opportunities Implications

- 10.1 None specific to this report - an Equalities Impact Assessment should be undertaken dependent on the amendments if agreed.

11 Staffing Implications

- 11.1 None specific to this report – the individual proposed amendments would need to consider any staffing implications.

12 Environmental Implications

- 12.1 None specific to this report – a Sustainability Impact Assessment should be undertaken when required.

13 Community Safety Implications

- 13.1 None specific to this report.

14 Public Health implications

14.1 None specific to this report.

14.2

15 Customer Services Centre Implications

15.1 None specific to this report.

15.2

16 Communications and Website Implications

None specific to this report.

17 Risk and Health & Safety Implications

17.1 The Council has agreed its risk management strategy which can be found on the website at <http://www.threerivers.gov.uk>. In addition, the risks of the proposals in the report have also been assessed against the Council's duties under Health and Safety legislation relating to employees, visitors and persons affected by our operations. The risk management implications of this report are detailed below.

17.2 The subject of this report is covered by 4 of the service plan(s). Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and, if necessary, managed within this/these plan(s).

| Nature of Risk | Consequence | Suggested Control Measures | Response (tolerate, treat, terminate, transfer) | Risk Rating (combination of likelihood and impact) |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| Service Plan delivery is delayed if amendments are approved due to financial constraints and further discussions necessary. | Work on other service requirements is on hold while amendment discussions continue including impact on the current budget. | P&R agree recommendation not to include proposed amendments. | Tolerate | 3 |

17.3 The above risks are scored using the matrix below. The Council has determined its aversion to risk and is prepared to tolerate risks where the combination of impact and likelihood scores 6 or less.

| | | | | |
|--|-----------------|--------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Very Likely Likelihood Remote | Low 4 | High 8 | Very High 12 | Very High 16 |
| | Low 3 | Medium 6 | High 9 | Very High 12 |
| | Low 2 | Low 4 | Medium 6 | High 8 |
| | Low 1 | Low 2 | Low 3 | Low 4 |
| Impact Low -----> Unacceptable | | | | |

Impact Score

4 (Catastrophic)
 3 (Critical)
 2 (Significant)
 1 (Marginal)

Likelihood Score

4 (Very Likely (≥80%))
 3 (Likely (21-79%))
 2 (Unlikely (6-20%))
 1 (Remote (≤5%))

- 17.4 In the officers' opinion none of the new risks above, were they to come about, would seriously prejudice the achievement of the Strategic Plan and are therefore operational risks. The effectiveness of the management of operational risks is reviewed by the Audit Committee annually.

Data Quality

Data sources:

Data sources are specific to each amendment from the officer.

Data checked by:

Heads of service for each of their relevant proposed amendments.

Katie Stacey and Rebecca Yooung for the overall report.

| | | |
|---|------------|---|
| 1 | Poor | |
| 2 | Sufficient | X |
| 3 | High | |

Background Papers

APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS

- I. Amendments to item 6b Final Service Plans Tables

