

Questions from Members 24/02/2026

Questions from Members to Full Council
24 February 2026

Questions from Members

Priority 1

Question to the Lead Member for Leisure, Chris Lloyd from Narinder Sian

Funding new posts on the green in Croxley Green

Now Croxley Green parish council has made the decision that the boulders should be removed and replaced with a number of posts in key locations, can you ensure that there is sufficient funds in the budget for next year to place new posts. The green is still owned by Three Rivers Council, and we should therefore ensure we have the funds to carry out this essential work to protect the green from unauthorised parking

This is covered in our budget proposals and would be subject to any required agreements, including in my view, public support, and any necessary planning permission.

Question to the Leader of the Council Stephen Giles-Medhurst from Oliver Cooper

On 29th January, the Leader of the Council posted in his capacity as Leader of the Council below a Facebook post by Three Rivers District Council claiming that, "Officers have clearly advised that we have a sound [Local] Plan."

However, the council's officers advised the exact opposite, saying at paragraph 3.21 of their report to the Extraordinary Council Meeting of 27th January, "The Officers are concerned that this puts the plan at risk of being found unsound... as such the plan is likely to be thrown out at examination." They then conclude that this "could well mean the whole standard method target of 12,480 dwellings being imposed on the district."

Will the Leader retract his false statement, apologise to officers for using his office to falsely represent their position, and confirm that officers think the plan is likely to be found to be unsound at Examination?

As is usual Cllr Cooper is only quoting in part the officer report. Officers were pointing out that the Local Plan Sub-Committee recommended sites number of 7,027, - which Cllr Coper and his Conservatives supported at the time was 5,000

dwellings short of the standard method being 56% of the housing target. The risk related to the housing number, not that the evidence would be found unsound.

I have every confidence in our officers that we have along with the evidence from external sources that have evidence and fully support the decision by Council on the Local Plan. The government may disagree of course.

I note that Cllr Cooper had proposed, with no evidence, a much lower figure of just over 5,000 dwellings.

The question now is will Cllr Cooper and his colleagues back the Council, like other groups including the Three Rivers Joint Residents' Association in defending a plan that the majority of us think is the right one for Three Rivers and protects the majority of our Green Belt.

In their report to the Policy and Resources Committee on the 26 January and Full Council on the 27 January Officers highlighted the risk that a Local Plan only meeting 56% of the standard method target could be found unsound by a government inspector and therefore was likely to be thrown out at examination. If the plan were to be thrown out, it would then most likely lead to the full 12,480 dwellings being imposed on the council, is this what Cllr Copper wants?

Question to the Leader of the Council Stephen Giles-Medhurst from Rue Grewal

Following the Policy and Resources Committee report on HMOs, and noting officers state the Council is currently considering a six-bedroom HMO licence application in Carpenders Park, will the Leader confirm by what date the Council will implement the agreed transparency and engagement steps, specifically:

- i. notifying Ward Councillors and neighbours when an HMO licence application is received,
- ii. adding the address of any property applying for an HMO licence to the Council's public HMO register, and
- iii. setting out a clear process for residents to submit relevant evidence on licence conditions through the forthcoming HMO Licensing Policy?

These steps will be implemented within the council's forthcoming House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing Policy. This Policy is currently being drafted by Officers and will be presented to the Policy and Resources Committee for discussion and adoption as soon as practical.

In the interim period, should any Councillor wish to discuss HMOs or any HMO license that may have been received by the council that is currently being considered by Officers, please contact the council's Strategic Housing Manager.

Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Louise Price from Stephen Cox

What action is this council taking in respect of enforcement of the lease at the former Pavilion public house in Green Lane given it remains empty, forlorn and the only development has been the erection of unwelcome bollards and fences?

Officers have attempted to engage with the leaseholder to address the issues that the Councillor raises, particularly in relation to potential breaches of the lease terms – including the erection of fences without the landlord's consent. Officers are in the process of setting up a meeting with the leaseholder to systematically address all of the current issues affecting the site.

The Councillor will appreciate that it is not appropriate to disclose proposed actions in a public meeting, but I am happy to arrange a confidential briefing in Part II.

Priority 2

Questions to the Leader of the Council Stephen Giles-Medhurst from Chris Mitchell

As has been discussed, please can you commit to set up a meeting of Councillors who have an interest in possible transfer of assets to Parish and community councils.

Despite the Government stating we should not do this, I and other councillors consider that this is essential to ensure that public assets are in the best hands to serve our residents. If we do not do anything now, officers and ourselves will soon be in the depths of the transition and this issue will be left on the back burner for many years once the Unitaries come in. Better that we resolve the fundamentals now whilst the officers have the capacity.

The purpose of meeting is to agree what parameters we are looking for, and the reasons why more local control over assets is beneficial. Also, we can agree a strategy and process to be started in May to include all parish councils that consider there are assets in their area that should be transferred.

Please can we get a date agreed for March before Pre-election period.

As I have told the Parish Councils at my regular events and at the recent engagement on Local Government Reform, TRDC cannot commit to transfer asset responsibilities that will be transferred to a unitary council. Indeed, the government has made that clear we will not be permitted to do so. Should LGR happen and shadow authority elected I would assume at this stage the Parishes could make such applications and will be considered accordingly.

As I have indicated privately, I am happy to arrange an early meeting with our senior officers to go through the issues, problems and the constraints on this.

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

In 2021, when the council's first strategy to reach Net Zero by 2045 was adopted, Conservative councillor Paula Hiscocks raised concerns about the cost, noting that the budget was just £30,000 a year and warning that the cost would overwhelmingly fall on residents.

BNP Paribas – the council's viability consultants on the draft Local Plan – estimate that just element XA of the climate change policy in the Local Plan would reduce land values by 10% and add over £10,000,000 every year to the cost of houses, meaning £10 million less that can be secured for local infrastructure. And that's just one paragraph in one policy in one subject.

Does the Lead Member have a total figure for how much he estimates the policy of Net Zero by 2045 will now cost to pursue, and how much would the council have to forecast it costs before the council reviews its policy?

Since the adoption of the council's first Net Zero by 2045 strategy in 2021, the council has undertaken a full review of its approach. This updated strategy was recently considered in detail by the Policy & Resources Committee and subsequently approved by Council. This ensures that our direction of travel remains evidence-based, proportionate and aligned with both local priorities and national policy.

Progress against the strategy, including the costs associated with delivering specific actions, is reported to members on a six-monthly basis. These regular updates ensure transparency around delivery, resourcing and outcomes and allow committees to make informed decisions about next steps and future investment.

The council has also increased its budget allocations for climate change and sustainability over a number of years. We now invest significantly more than the £30,000 referenced, reflecting both the scale of the challenge and the council's commitment to playing its part in supporting the district's transition to Net Zero.

However, it is important to be clear that achieving Net Zero for the district by 2045 cannot be delivered by the council alone. While we will continue to lead, enable and influence, the majority of the emission reductions required will depend on actions by others at local, regional, national and indeed international level, much of which sits outside the control of this council. Our strategy recognises this, focusing on areas where we can have the greatest impact while collaborating with partners, businesses and residents to encourage wider change.

Question to the Leader of the Council Stephen Giles-Medhurst from Ian Morris

Now that the Local Plan is in Regulation 19 consultation (planned Friday 6 February to Friday 20 March 2026), will the Leader set out in plain English what happens next for residents once the consultation closes, including:

1. when the Council will publish the Regulation 19 representations it receives and the Council's response to the main issues raised;
2. the key steps and dates from the close of consultation through to submission and examination by the Planning Inspectorate, and how residents can stay informed about and take part in, the examination process; and
3. for the Oxhey Lane allocations that directly affect Carpenders Park, including CFS13 (Land at Oxhey Lane, Watford Heath) and CFS14 (Land north of Oxhey Lane, Carpenders Park) when the Council will publish a site-by-site infrastructure "requirements and triggers" summary (highways and parking impacts, drainage/flood risk, school and health capacity, and construction management), so residents can see what must be in place and how it will be secured through the planning process and developer contributions

The Minister of State for Housing and Planning has written to the council to place a holding direction on the Local Plan, stopping us from progressing to Regulation 19 consultation at this stage. They wish to consider the council's evidence and whether its approach of meeting 56% of the government's housing target is justified. Once the Minister has made their decision, the council will be informed of whether it can proceed to Regulation 19 consultation.

1. It is not therefore possible to confirm when representations will be published, however, a consultation statement summarising the main issues raised would be published at the time the council submits the plan to the planning inspectorate for examination in public. It should be noted that

representations received during the Regulation 19 consultation will only be considered if they relate to the soundness of the plan and/or legal compliance.

2. The next key date would be submission itself. Between the closing of the Regulation 19 consultation and submission the representations are collated and summarised and the submission documents are prepared.
3. Most of these issues would be considered at planning application stage rather than Local Plan site allocation. School requirements are considered through the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, which will be published alongside the Regulation 19 Local Plan.
4. The specific housing site allocation policies within Part II of the Local Plan set out any on-site infrastructure requirements for the respective site, such as community facilities and health care facilities etc.

Question to the Leader of the Council, Stephen Giles-Medhurst from Joan King

Given that the agreed local plan contains a housing number below the target of the former Conservative government and this one, what does the Leader believe would have been its fate if the number of homes it contained was considerably lower, as argued by the Conservative Group, whilst they were also simultaneously and incoherently claiming the figure of 7,027 was too low to pass examination in public?

You are quite right and its total hypocrisy of the Conservatives to attack and undermine the agreed Council's Local Plan number of 7,000 when they have proposed a lower number even on listing on occasions previously developed sites or ones actually with planning permission. They have provided no justification for so doing. Putting forward such a plan with zero evidence as they have suggested would have led straight forward direct intervention by the government and having the government's housing target of 12,480 imposed on the district rather than the current situation where we have been given the opportunity to provide the evidence justifying the 7,027 figure.

Priority 3

Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Infrastructure and Economic Development, Louise Price from Cheryl Stungo

The fees for hire of grounds table was slightly changed for 2026, and in the December P&R clause 3.8 was agreed that states "A discount is offered to charitable organisations on the Hire of Grounds fees.' Unfortunately, a not for profit was charged £550 compared to £89 in previous years. Please confirm that the interpretation of "Charitable originations" is "not for profit", and the not for profit fees will be as last year.

I have asked Officers to review this matter.

Question to the Lead Member for Leisure Chris Lloyd from Andrea Fraser

Officers have told councillors that works on the Ebury Play Area, by the Aquadrome, will not take place until negotiations and/or litigation are concluded with the contractor, and that the council is negotiating a risk management strategy with the contractor. Residents and councillors have received radio silence since then, with the cancellation last month of the only briefing we have been offered.

This is the wrong way around. As well as meaning a long delay in re-opening, it will likely also reduce the damages this council is able to recover from the contractor due to a failure by this council to take reasonable steps to mitigate its losses: including preventing the further spread of knotweed, the further decline of the play area, and the loss of its use by residents, their children, and grandchildren.

As such, will the council commit to restoring and re-opening the play area immediately and then pursuing compensation against the contractor afterwards?

Thank you for your question. I would like to clarify a number of points to ensure that councillors and residents have an accurate understanding of the actions officers have taken regarding the Ebury Play Area.

First, officers have not advised councillors that the council is negotiating a *risk management strategy*. What officers have set out consistently is that the council is negotiating a remediation plan with the contractor to address the issues on site. This is fully in accordance with legal advice. To follow the course of action suggested here would have been not only fool hardy but most likely result in legal action against the Council from the contractor for not following contract law. Plus, almost certainly the expenditure of considerable sums of money with little likelihood of receiving that back from the contractor or at the very least a detailed and lengthy dispute with them over the money the council paid on resolving the issue. Therefore, your claim in a recent leaflet that the council should reopen it ASAP and only then “haggle” with the contractor would have most likely been in breach of contract law. This could potentially have allowed for a claim of maladministration against the Council. It’s a pity as elected councillor you think it’s right to do so.

It is also important to be clear about the contractual framework governing this aspect of the project. The contract in place requires the Council and the contractor to follow a formal dispute-resolution process before any other steps can be taken. Departing from that process would place the Council at significant risk of breach of contract, which in turn could undermine our ability to protect the Council’s financial and legal interests. Following the dispute-resolution procedure has therefore been

essential to safeguarding those interests and ensuring the Council is in the strongest possible position as matters progress.

This work is ongoing and remains a necessary part of securing a safe and sustainable solution. Progress has been made and it is now anticipated that works will be able to commence on site at the start of March.

With regard to member briefings, the briefing originally scheduled last month was postponed at the specific request of Cllr Fraser and subsequently rescheduled for 5 February. That briefing proceeded as planned and included information on not just the playground but the wider masterplan for the Aquadrome. Officers remain willing to provide further updates and engagement opportunities to all members. Finally, the Council's commitment to restoring and reopening the play area has never wavered. Despite the considerable challenges of the past eight months, officers have remained focused on achieving a resolution that enables the site to be remediated properly and reopened for the use and enjoyment of residents, children, and families. That continues to be our priority and we will provide further updates as soon as we are able.

Question to the Leader of the Council Stephen Giles-Medhurst from Rue Grewal

As the Council Plan 2026–2029 is being progressed to Full Council for adoption on 24 February, and it includes commitments around community safety / antisocial behaviour, investment in parks and open spaces / walking routes, and clear performance targets and better communication, will the Leader set out the specific, measurable actions that residents in Carpenders Park will see in 2026/27 under those themes and confirm whether the Council will publish a simple ward-level performance update (for example quarterly or half yearly) so residents can track delivery rather than only district-wide headlines?

Once adopted, the Council Plan is the overarching strategic document that sets out the Council's priorities for the district. The individual service plans provide more details on specific actions that are being undertaken which directly contribute to the delivery of the plan.

With regards to community safety/anti-social behaviour, as members of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP), the council work closely with Hertfordshire Constabulary and other partners to develop a CSP action plan to carry out a range of initiatives together, based on local needs. This is in the process of being agreed for 2026/27.

The CSP also have a number of other subgroups including: Community Safety Coordinating Group, the Anti-Social Behaviour Action Group (ASBAG), the Youth Strategy Partnership Group, the Youth Action Panel, the Families First Partnership, and the Three Rivers Information Partnership that all support a key priority of ongoing community safety and action to reduce ASB.

Nature and green space are at the heart of the communities across Three Rivers. The Council Plan will continue to deliver targeted work through our Biodiversity Policy, Local Nature Recovery Strategy, and Tree Strategy. These aim to restore

nature, protect habitats like chalk streams and woodlands, and create more biodiversity-friendly spaces across the district.

Within the Leisure and Natural Service Infrastructure Service Plan for 2026-2029, the service will be developing, consulting and finalising a new Greenspace Strategy, which will set out how all council owned parks and open spaces will be managed and maintained in the future.

For Carpenders Park specifically we are limited due to our land ownership. For clarity, Watford Rural Parish Council are responsible for most parks/open spaces in this area. We retain responsibility for Romilly Drive, where we have only recently completed hedge restoration work.

The Local Area Forums also provide an opportunity to engage local residents and ensure that their concerns are heard and addressed.

In terms of measurable actions, Key Performance Indicators are reported quarterly to councillors via the Members Information Bulletin. There are currently no plans to report at ward-level and this would require considerable extra matrixes to be undertaken, especially as in the near future the wards as we currently know them will cease to exist. However, I will ask officers to see if it might be possible to provide, as resources allow, for a breakdown by parish and unparished areas.

Question to the Lead Member for Resources Louise Price from Joan King

Residents are concerned at the number of vacant shop units facing on to Prestwick Road as part of the new development. Can the Lead Member advise what action can this council take, or is taking, to speed up the letting process in order that South Oxhey had the full complement and range of shops, which in any event, are fewer than was previously the case and if this authority is receiving any financial income form the empty units.

Officers have spoken with Vistry, the leaseholder and developer, regarding the vacant shop premises which form part of ground floor of the central section of the South Oxhey redevelopment. Officers have been advised that the 4no. vacant retail units are currently in the process of being sold to a local investor who will be responsible for lettings. We further understand that the units may already have prospective tenants.

The properties are not yet eligible for business rates payments, but as soon as they are, the council will receive payments.

