

Climate Change and Leisure Committee MINUTES

Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Wednesday, 11 March 2026 from 7.30 pm - 8.53 pm.

Present: Councillors

Chris Lloyd (Co-Chair in the Chair), Jon Tankard (Co-Chair), Raj Khiroya, Reena Ranger OBE, Mike Sims, Cheryl Stungo, Christopher Alley (In place of Abbas Merali), Louise Price (In place of Tom Smith)

Also in Attendance:

Councillor Chris Mitchell

Officers in Attendance:

Charlotte Gomes, Head of Leisure and Natural Infrastructure
Joanna Hewitson, Climate Change & Sustainability Strategy Officer
Emma Sheridan, Associate Director for Environment
Anita Hibbs, Committee Officer

36 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Abbas Merali (Substitute Councillor Christopher Alley) , Tom Smith (Substitute Councillor Louise Price) and Joan King.

37 MINUTES

The minutes of the Climate Change & Leisure Committee held on 14 January 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair of the meeting.

38 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items of other business.

39 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mike Sims declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 4 – To Receive a petition under council procedure rule 18, as a member of the Rickmansworth and District Residents' Association.

40 TO RECEIVE A PETITION UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 18

The Chair outlined the process for petition presentation, specifying that the presenter will have three minutes to speak. The Committee Officer confirmed to time the presenter. The Chair

emphasised that after the presentation and subsequent response, no further discussion on the petition will occur.

Mr. Paul Harding presented the petition, which requested the reopening of the Ebury Playground.

The Chair clarified that assumptions and statements made by the petitioner were inaccurate.

The Chair and Lead Member, Councillor Chris Lloyd's response was as follows:

"Thank you for your petition.

This matter is of importance to all of us Officers and Councillors and myself. Officers are working very hard to resolve the complex matter. Council staff and contractors have been out on-site last week and this week.

We are at the final stages of complex negotiations to get the issues resolved and start work as soon as possible to get the site opened. We expect to provide a detailed update and hopefully a timeline well before the end of the month. Due to legal and contractual constraints, I regret that I cannot give any more details at this stage.

It is a play area I have known since childhood, and I look forward it reopening and taking my grandson."

The Chair reiterated that there will be no debate on the petition at this time. It was noted that the petition had been received, and updates will be provided when more information becomes available.

The Chair advised that he was changing the order of the agenda and requested that the Climate Change & Sustainability Strategy Officer prepare to present the Climate Change and Sustainability Action Plan Update, and the Budget Management Report will follow after.

41 BUDGET MANAGEMENT REPORT P10 - CC&L

The Associate Director for Environment introduced the report.

Members raised concerns about the possibility of Watersmeet benefiting from mandatory charitable business rates relief, highlighting that similar theatres transferred to charitable trusts have saved significant costs. The rising operational expenses, particularly due to increased gas and electricity costs and aging equipment are emphasised. The officer acknowledged the complexity of business rates relief and advised that they will refer to the Director of Finance for a detailed response. They also noted that Watersmeet's profitability has improved post-COVID. The Chair expressed strong commitment to maintaining Watersmeet for local residents and praised the team's efforts despite venue challenges.

Members also enquired about the reasons behind the £20,000 overspend and projected £50,000 overspend on the Aquadrome budget. The officer explained that overspends often related to health and safety investments and emergency works, authorised under budget monitoring protocols by senior officers. Some costs may be offset by external funding, and all expenditures are monitored carefully.

Members expressed concern over the Council's spending, noting that the current expenditure of £104,000 exceeds the approved budget of £64,000, and emphasised the need for Council approval on expenditures and requested a detailed breakdown of the budget to understand the overspending. The officer responded by explaining that the majority of the excess spending is due to utilities costs for the buildings at the Aquadrome, which are unavoidable and outside their control, as these utility bills must be paid.

In response to a request regarding National Lottery funding information, the Head of Leisure and Natural Infrastructure provided detailed amounts, stating that £736,500 has been received for the current stage, with an additional £180,000 received previously. Furthermore, an additional half a million pounds received from the HS2 Additional Mitigation Panel.

Councillor Chris Lloyd moved the recommendation as set out in the report.

The Committee noted and commented on the report.

RESOLVED:

That members note and comment on the contents of the report.

42 CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Climate Change & Sustainability Strategy Officer presented the report.

Members raised concerns about the quality and longevity of cavity wall insulation, emphasising the need for proper installation to avoid costly removals. Officers responded by explaining the building control regulations and maintenance requirements to ensure insulation effectiveness, and mentioned insurer involvement to align with their recommendations. Members also highlighted challenges related to project viability, capacity constraints, and the need for cost-benefit analysis to ensure taxpayer value. In response, officers spoke about ongoing collaboration with Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP), sharing best practices, data standardisation efforts, and the importance of regional cooperation. The conversation also covered the success of community engagement events like the Careers Fair, and the feasibility of solar canopy projects, with financial and practical constraints limiting implementation, but new technologies and grants offering potential. The committee discussed the Hertfordshire Retrofit Strategy, including tools like the Fairer Warmth app for residents and funding secured to support retrofit workforce development. In addition, the view on achieving net zero by 2045 was addressed, with emphasis on the decarbonisation of the electricity grid, the promotion of solar energy and air source heat pumps, and the critical move away from gas to meet emissions targets.

The Chair requested that paragraphs 3.13 to 3.17 from the report be listed under the recommendation, and also proposed an amendment to paragraph 3.17 as follows: *“We will continue to work with Watford Borough Council on future careers event.”*

Members highlighted significant progress in sustainability projects over the past year, focusing on community benefits. Key achievements include the installation of solar panels on sport centres that are self-sustaining and help maintain affordable access for lower-income groups. The success of these projects has inspired other organisations, such as the Sea Scouts in Rickmansworth, to pursue similar initiatives using grants like the warm homes grant. Efforts to promote these grants through healthcare channels have increased uptake, including among small businesses, helping stabilise their operational costs. The discussion also covered detailed technical considerations around insulation, fire safety, and building design to ensure social housing remains habitable and efficient.

Further discussion included the need for detailed cost breakdowns for each policy and project within the climate change strategy. Councillor Christopher Alley, seconded by Councillor Reena Ranger, proposed an amendment to the recommendation requiring cost estimates for policies and projects and potential financial impacts on residents or businesses exceeding £50,000. Officers responded by explaining that cost information is already provided through annual budgets, business cases and committee reports, highlighting that some funds come from external sources beyond taxpayers. The Chair explained that without a written amendment submitted in advance, the proposed amendment will not be accepted during the meeting.

The Chair emphasised the importance of air quality strategies, and encouraged Members to participate in related consultations.

Members expressed concern about resource limitations affecting the completion of initiatives, particularly emphasising the importance of recycling food waste from flats, which is expected to increase over the next decade. Members enquired why food waste collection from flats has not progressed as planned since May 2024. Officers responded by confirming that food waste collection from flats does take place in the district, noting that communal collections did experience logistical difficulties but that service provided in Three Rivers was advanced compared to other Hertfordshire local authorities. Some challenges remain in participation and managing collections effectively in flats. Regarding capacity, officers acknowledged limited staff and budget resources, explaining that project timelines are flexible and can be adjusted based on external funding opportunities. The team has effectively utilised recent increases in capacity to accelerate projects and secure external funding.

Councillor Chris Lloyd moved the recommendation with the proposed amendment to 3.17 of the report; *“We will continue to work with Watford Borough Council on future careers event.”*

On being put to the committee, the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair, the voting being For: 6, Against: 0, Abstention: 2.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

- i. Notes the progress made in delivering the strategy.
- ii. Agrees to the addition of new actions as outlined at paragraph 3.13 to 3.17.

3.13 Work with Grand Union Community Energy to offer Sustainable Streets to residents as a means of supporting sustainable behavioural change.

3.14 The Environmental Forum has now been renamed as the Environmental Network and new Terms Of Reference was recommended by CCLC 14 January 2026 to 6 progress to Full Council 24 February 2026. The March meeting took place in South Oxhey with a focus on energy. The next meeting is scheduled to take place on 28 March 2026, the time and location is to be decided, with transport the planned topic of discussion.

3.15 Draft net-zero policies for new build energy efficiency standards above current Building Regulations were incorporated into the Regulation 18 Local Plan Consultation in Summer 2025. These draft policies aim to secure highly energy efficient new housing which is more closely aligned with net zero targets than current Building Regulations under the Future Homes Standard.

3.16 Three Rivers District Council have worked closely with local community energy group, Grand Union Community Energy (GUCE), to explore the feasibility of major decarbonisation initiatives such as heat networks fed by aquifers and data centres, and solar canopies in council-owned car parks, as well as delivering projects such as Transition Streets under Fast Followers. The council's collaborative approach to joint projects with GUCE was recognised and Highly Commended by Community Energy England at the Community Energy Awards in November 2025.

3.17 We will continue to work with Watford Borough Council on future careers event.

The Head of Leisure and Natural Infrastructure introduced the report.

Members enquired about the upper limit of the delegation and expressed concern about the need for oversight or committee review even for third-party funded projects. A suggestion was made to amend the recommendation to ensure committee or leadership oversight. The Associate Director for Environment stated that this recommendation has been discussed at the Committee multiple times, and explained that contracts over £100,000 require Full Council approval as per Council Constitution. Procurements over £25,000 are discussed with relevant Lead Members based on project types (leisure, open spaces, finance). Regular scrutiny is provided through the Joint Leadership Team meetings and bi-monthly budget monitoring reports.

Members emphasised the role of Lead Members and Ward Councillors in ongoing communication and oversight, especially for projects like the Aquadrome, where funding often comes with specific conditions, such as National Lottery grants that restrict fund usage to certain community groups. The officer clarified that National Lottery funding must be used as specified, but it is not the sole funding source for projects. Other funding sources allow flexibility beyond grant conditions. Furthermore, relevant Ward Councillors are also briefed on funding opportunities and procurement activities related to management plans.

The Chair suggested background training for Members of the Committee to understand funding and project context.

The conversation also acknowledged challenges in public consultation response rates and the Council's efforts to better promote biodiversity and park activities through improved communications and Member support in sharing information.

Councillor Chris Lloyd moved the recommendation as set out in the report.

On being put to the committee, the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair, the voting being For: 6, Against: 0, Abstention: 2.

RESOLVED:

That the Climate Change and Leisure Committee:

- i. Adopt the new ten-year Management Plan for Prestwick Road Meadows.
- ii. Give delegated authority to the Director of Finance to enter into a contract or funding agreement above the value of £25,000, subject to securing external funding to facilitate works to support the implementation of the Management Plans.
- iii. That public access to the report be immediate.
- iv. That public access to the decision be immediate.

44 WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair requested that the next meeting include a comprehensive work programme for the year, similar to previous reports before the use of Mod.gov. The Associate Director for Environment agreed and explained that the work plan for next year is being clarified, now that the council budget had been approved.

The conversation also covered the item 'Parking on the Green', which is currently listed as 'to be confirmed', due to the lack of communication from the Croxley Green Parish Council. Members felt that the title of this item is unclear and suggested it should be more specific. The officer acknowledged that the phrasing of the item could be improved and agreed that it could be revised to reflect "control of parking on the green", and emphasised that they do not want

to imply support for parking on the green. The Chair agreed that the item will be rephrased as a result of the discussion.

Councillor Mike Sims requested the addition of two items to the work programme; signage to inform the public about alternative play facilities due to the closure of the Ebury Play area, and an update on the Woodland walk. He emphasised the importance of clear signage to prevent families from arriving unaware of the closure, particularly during the Easter holiday. The officer responded that the signage is already being prepared, with approval in the final stages and installation planned before Easter. The signage will provide directions to nearby alternative play areas like Scottsbridge Mill, information on Easter holiday activities at the Aquadrome, and other children's events at Watersmeet. Additionally, the officer also advised that an update report on the Aquadrome programme which includes the Woodland walk is already scheduled for the committee meeting in June.

The Committee received and noted the work programme.

RESOLVED:

To receive the Committee's work programme.

45 OTHER BUSINESS - IF APPROVED UNDER ITEM 3 ABOVE

None

CHAIR