

Questions from Members 14/07/2026

Questions from Members to Full Council
14 July 2026

Questions from Members

Priority 1
1. Question for the Leader of the Council Stephen Giles-Medhurst from Mike Sims
I witnessed members of the public present their petitions to full council or to the relevant committee and see them walk out of chambers in disgust as they felt that they hadn't had the chance to be heard properly. Petitions take a great deal of time and effort to put together and the public deserve to be heard. I feel that the current constitution has created a democratic deficit. So why can't you table an amendment to the constitution to allow the chair of the council or relevant committee to be able to grant councillors if they wish a maximum of 15 minutes to debate the petition?
I do not agree that the petitions process has resulted in a "democracy deficit". All petitions are reviewed once they are formally submitted. The process for hearing a petition is explained to the petitioner by officers in advance of the meeting. However, I have also requested that the Chair of any committee meeting explains the process to members of the public at the start of the meeting. This means that the Lead Member responsible will outline what the next stage is — normally an officer report or an investigation, with feedback provided in due course. A debate on a petition at the point of receipt could lead to Members taking a decision without an officer investigation and report, or without understanding the financial or operational implications.
2. Question for the Leader of the Council Stephen Giles-Medhurst from Chris Mitchell
We have agreed that the Council should establish a formal asset transfer process with parish and community councils, in line with DHCLG guidance issued on 25 July 2025 and the principle of subsidiarity. This work is now urgent. The move to unitary government will be disruptive, and there is a risk that local priorities and asset transfer opportunities will be overlooked for many years. Despite discussing this in March, no progress has been made. We are therefore bringing forward a motion on this issue. If the motion is not reached at the meeting, will you commit to starting this work immediately by inviting expressions of interest from all parish and community councils in Three Rivers for assets that could be considered for transfer?
The Council established its Transfer of Assets Framework at the Policy & Resources Committee meeting on 25 January 2016. This remains the Council's governing policy for considering any potential asset transfers. Policy and Resources Committee - 25 January 2016 Three Rivers District Council At my regular meeting with Parish Councillors on Monday 1 July, I asked that any Expressions of Interest for asset transfers to TRDC be submitted by 31 July, so they can be considered in line with this Framework and the recent DHLCG guidance issued on 25 July. Although current government guidance on pre-LGR disposals states that councils undergoing reorganisation should avoid major decisions that could constrain the future unitary authority—particularly decisions involving assets or long-term finances—it is clear that some authorities, including those in Hertfordshire, have already agreed or are considering transfers at Best Value. It would therefore be inappropriate for TRDC not to at least consider such requests. Officers have indicated that, depending on the number and nature of Expressions of Interest received, additional officer time, resources, and reallocation of capacity may be required to consider such requests properly.

3. Question for the Lead Member for Resources, Regeneration and Economic Development Louise Price from Joan King

What efforts, if any, has this authority made to assist with the letting of the remaining shop units facing Prestwick Road which remain empty, thus reducing still further retail opportunities as a result of the South Oxhey Initiative?

The vacant retail units overlooking the Market Place in South Oxhey are the responsibility of Vistry, formerly Countryside Partnerships who were the developers of the South Oxhey Regeneration scheme. The council is aware that Vistry have agents instructed to seek occupiers for these units.

The council is no better positioned than Vistry to find suitable occupiers for their vacant premises. There has been no request for, or any offer of help made, in connection with these premises.

4. Question for the Leader of the Council Stephen Giles-Medhurst from Vicky Edwards

Conservative councillors have been asked by Liberal Democrat Lead Member Jon Tankard to use their knowledge and professional skills to contribute to the evidence base to show that local fields are not 'Grey Belt'.

Such evidence would be in direct contradiction to the "off-the-shelf" Arup Stage 4 Green Belt Review commissioned by and supported by the Liberal Democrats. That review reduced Green Belt protections for these fields by designating them as provisional 'Grey Belt'.

That was opposed by Conservative councillors, who noted several ways that the designation as 'Grey Belt' could be resisted, but were ignored. Conservative councillors are already supporting residents' groups in this capacity, including on the evidence that would prove it is not Grey Belt.

However, the request by Cllr Tankard shows that the Lib Dems now recognise that it was an error on their part to approve the Stage 4 Green Belt Review, when it clearly excluded factors that Lead Members now realise are important and that they want Conservative councillors' help in identifying.

As such, will this Council commission a new Green Belt Review that fully engages with the legal tests, including the physical and visual landscape of the district, to show that it is deserving of Green Belt protections, rather than leaving it all to residents and opposition councillors?

Clarification on the Abbots Langley fields and the Green Belt Review

You are of course referring to the Abbots Langley fields when you refer to "the Fields".

The Stage 4 Green Belt Review was undertaken by impartial, independent consultants who are recognised as one of the leading consultancies in this field. The review clearly states that it is not the role of the consultants to designate land as *grey belt*; that designation is a matter for the Council as part of the plan-making process.

For development management decisions, the review can assist in forming a view, but the specifics of an individual site may differ from the parcels assessed in the review. As such, it is for the Council to reach its own position on whether a site is considered grey belt. This is a matter of planning judgement, based on the policy tests in the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance. These are not legal tests.

I find it regrettable that in your question you characterised the Arup report in derogatory terms, suggesting it was "off the shelf".

Officers, in their report, clearly stated publicly that it is for Councillors to take into account not only the review but also that:

“Ultimately the final decision on whether the site is grey belt is for the Council to make based on planning judgement considering the NPPF policy and PPG guidance.”

At the Committee meeting on 26 January, the decision - which you did not support - was that the site is Green Belt, an area of Fundamental Importance, and that releasing it would undermine the Green Belt on grounds of its contribution to purposes (a), (b) and (c). That remains my view, and the view of Cllr Jon Tankard, as well as others including the Abbots Langley Association and Abbots Langley Parish Council.

It is therefore a pity that our MP has so far refused to raise this very point in Parliamentary debates despite repeated requests to do so.

Given the Ministerial Direction, commissioning a new Green Belt Review in order to achieve a particular outcome would almost certainly result in the evidence being challenged, with significant ramifications for the Local Plan at examination.

The Council has been directed by the Minister of State for Housing and Planning to proceed to Regulation 19 consultation by the end of July, and to submission by the end of November.

Priority 2

5. Question for the Leader of the Council Stephen Giles-Medhurst from Mike Sims

Officers have stated publicly that they have had to take a certain course of action as they do not wish to be held personally liable in a court of law and are not prepared to put themselves quite rightly in that position. It is unacceptable that officers can feel this way so I ask, does TRDC have sufficient insurance cover for these instances and should a case like this arise shouldn't the officer seek immediate approval of the potentially litigious action by committee or council so that particular decision is not theirs and therefore it is the decision of councillors, thus avoiding the personal liability route?

The Council carries full insurance for Public Liability and to provide legal support to officers accused of offences whilst carrying out their duties. Insurance would not protect officers from criminal charges arising from negligence or failure to carry out duties. Officers could still be prosecuted under Health and Safety and Corporate Manslaughter Legislation and their professional duties cannot be absolved.

6. Question for the Leader of the Council Stephen Giles-Medhurst from Chris Mitchell

You recently instructed officers to restart the Community Governance Review relating to the parish boundary between Croxley Green and Sarratt. Could you please provide an update on the actions taken to date and set out the proposed timetable for the review, including key milestones and anticipated completion dates?

Following the instruction to restart the Community Governance Review, Officers have undertaken an initial review of the previous work completed. A detailed project plan and timetable are now being developed to ensure the review is undertaken in accordance with the relevant statutory requirements and guidance. Officers are currently identifying the key stages of the review, resource requirements and statutory consultation periods. A proposed timetable, including key milestones and anticipated completion dates, will be reported to Members. This will include the timetable with key milestones and completion dates. There will be an urgent report to Full Council on July 14th covering this and other Community Governance Reviews.

7. Question for the Leader of the Council Stephen Giles-Medhurst from Stephen Cox

Does the Leader agree that electors rightly expect those who put themselves forward for election to do so honestly, openly and refrain from standing for this authority under self-confessed knowingly false colours and in the process duping voters and demeaning themselves?

Thank you, Councillor Cox. I assume you are referring to the Reform candidate for South Oxhey, who has openly stated on social media and in the press that even *before* the election he was planning to defect to Restore, and has now done so. Standing under one

label while planning, if elected, to immediately change parties is not only misleading but, in my view, dishonest and deceitful.

8. Question for the Lead Member for Resources, Regeneration and Economic Development, Louise Price from Oliver Cooper

The Court, a listed building on Rickmansworth Road, burned down in mysterious circumstances in February 2025.

Last month, the council boasted about (rightly) securing enforcement action against the loss of trees. However, residents were perplexed by this boast, as no action had been taken regarding the building itself beyond a temporary stop notice to prevent further works last year.

I have asked several times since then for a Listed Building Enforcement Notice to be issued compelling the landowner to rebuild it brick-by-brick, to no avail. The most recent question was simply ignored.

The council is legally allowed to do this, and many councils have done so in similar circumstances, and had such Listed Building Enforcement Notices or Enforcement Notices upheld.

However, the longer the period between the damage to the listed building and the notice, the less likely it is to be upheld.

Will the council commit to issuing a Listed Building Enforcement Notice urgently to require The Court to be rebuilt brick-by-brick?

Following unauthorised works to The Court in July 2025, the Council has taken the following steps to date:

- Served a Temporary Stop Notice which was in effect for 56 days until 15 September 2025
- Following an application for an injunction at the High Court, obtained a Consent Order from Mrs Justice Hill (King's Bench Division) on 9 September 2025

Since the service of the TSN and Consent Order, no new reports have been received regarding further unauthorised works at The Court. All plant and machinery has been removed from the Site in accordance with the requirements of the Consent Order.

In order to serve a Listed Building Enforcement Notice, there must have been a breach of planning control, i.e that the fire and subsequent acts of demolition / damage constituted a breach of section 9(1) or (2) - offences under the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990.

Officers note that in situations involving a fire damaged building the Secretary of State has found that where a listed building has been damaged by acts outside of the owner's control and not planned or instigated by him/her, there cannot generally have been a contravention of listed building control. The Police have confirmed, *"due to evidential difficulties this investigation is now closed with no further action being taken. As with any investigation if new evidence comes to light, then this can be reviewed."*

Officers continue to review their position on the building. Officers are currently in discussions with the owner and heritage specialists about securing temporary protection measures, although at this stage it is unclear whether this can be practicably possible and officers are awaiting further details following site visits. The council's conservation officers are also currently assessing the current heritage significance of the building which will be reviewed and discussed with officers before considering next steps.

Priority 3

9. Question for the Leader of the Council Stephen Giles-Medhurst from Mike Sims

The council is out of stock of garden waste wheelie bins. Considering this is 'an extra' paid service, I do not accept it is good enough for residents to wait nearly two months and counting, for a simple bin change. It would help if the bin collection teams were not so

heavy handed, rolling them so fast they fall over and break the lids! Making a racket at 6am. Why is this stock issue so bad?

The Waste and Environment Service is aware of the inconvenience and frustration caused by the delay in residents receiving garden bins, particularly as this is a paid-for service, and has apologised to residents for this.

Bins are ordered at intervals throughout the year as the Council has limited storage capacity. Orders are made based on projected demand and, while every effort is made to forecast requirements accurately, demand can sometimes be higher than expected. This can lead to stock being temporarily unavailable before the next delivery is received. When this happens, requests are placed on a waiting list and deliveries are prioritised as soon as new stock becomes available. At present, the Council's supplier has also reported a delay in production, which has extended the usual delivery window by 6–8 weeks.

Many of the Council's bins have been in use for a considerable number of years, meaning replacements are now more frequently required. Where bins are stored outside without cover, they can become brittle over time.

It is recognised that bins can sustain wear and damage after several years of use, and we understand how frustrating this can be when a bin is no longer suitable for regular collections. To manage public resources responsibly, the Council replaces bins on a needs basis, rather than routinely replacing all bins currently in use. Some other councils charge residents for replacement bins.

Collection crews are asked — and regularly reminded — to handle bins carefully. However, bins can be difficult to manoeuvre, particularly when they are heavy or when surfaces are uneven. Inevitably, some wear and damage will occur over time through regular use and repeated lifting by the vehicle's bin-lift equipment, especially where bins are overfilled.

Please be assured that we will work to fulfil outstanding requests as quickly as possible once stock is replenished, which is currently anticipated to be towards the end of July.

As set out in our Terms and Conditions (section 11) for garden waste — available here: <https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/services/waste-and-recycling/garden-waste-collection> — residents are entitled to a partial refund under certain conditions, which can be arranged upon request.

10. Question for the Lead Member for General Public Services Paul Rainbow from Narinder Sian

Unauthorised parking on The Green in Croxley Green continues to be a concern for residents.

We previously discussed bringing forward a parking-related Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) report to committee to address this issue.

Can the Lead Member provide an update on progress, confirm when the PSPO report will be presented to committee, and indicate when residents can expect enforcement measures to be implemented?

Croxley Green – PSPO considerations and current position

At present, there remains limited unauthorised parking on The Green at Croxley Green with to the installation of boulders. PSPO work has not been formally agreed or programmed. Officers undertook some initial investigation into whether a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) might be appropriate, but indicated that this is a very long and complex process. The earlier initial review suggested there was not sufficient evidence to meet the statutory threshold for a PSPO, prior to the presence of the boulders.

I think it would be helpful to outline what is required for a PSPO, as this may be the fix it is not necessarily quick:

- Statutory evidence test — The Council must demonstrate that the behaviour is persistent, unreasonable, and has a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those

in the locality. This is the most challenging requirement; general complaints are not enough.

- Consultation requirements — The Council must consult the police, the PCC, affected communities, and other relevant bodies. Weak consultation is a common reason PSPOs are challenged.
- Legal drafting — The order must be drafted precisely. Over-broad wording risks being unlawful; overly narrow wording risks being unenforceable.
- Enforcement practicality — A PSPO is only effective if officers can realistically enforce it. Without clear enforcement arrangements, the order becomes symbolic rather than operational.
- Risk of judicial review — PSPOs are frequently challenged. The Council must be able to defend the evidence base and demonstrate proportionality.

In addition to the above — all of which require officer time, particularly around evidence gathering — there would also be costs associated with implementation and enforcement. At the very least, if the boulders are removed, the Council would need to observe the impact — in terms of the criteria above — before even considering a PSPO. In addition, while the Council has allocated extra resource to dealing with the current list of outstanding parking issues (some of which are safety-related and therefore higher priority), it has faced difficulties not only with staff losses but also with recruitment. I trust you understand that these matters must remain the higher priority.

I am happy to keep this under review, particularly regarding any proposed changes to the current boulders or any other measures that may be considered for The Green.

11. Question for the Lead Member for General Public Services, Paul Rainbow from Stephen Cox

What schemes are presently being worked upon, or are under consideration to alleviate the chronic lack of parking across the whole of South Oxhey and what guarantee can they give regarding installation of more verge hardening/car parking bays within the next two years, near the junction of Kilmarnock Road and Newport Mead and other locations across South Oxhey.

In 2026 the council completed new verge hardening on Barnhurst Path in response to a petition and requests from Ward Councillors. Additionally, the Gosforth Lane scheme is planned to be implemented in July to better manage parking demand for residents and visitors. Due to the imminent South Oxhey parking study, no further parking schemes are currently in development in the area. This is to ensure the study results are not distorted but a parking scheme being implemented and to ensure that all schemes align with the wider recommendations of the study.

Officers are presently evaluating the submission from 4no. Traffic & Parking Surveying firms regarding the post-development parking study, approximately 1km from the centre of the South Oxhey Regeneration area. Once instructed, the results of the study are expected later this summer/early autumn and will be used to inform targeted parking alleviation schemes in the area.

12. Question for the Lead Member for Leisure Chris Lloyd from Andrea Fraser

A former council officer responsible for engaging the public on matters related to the Aquadrome reported that they had left their post after concerns that public communications did not accurately reflect the reality on the ground.

In their own words, "Public messaging continued in a way that did not reflect the reality on the ground. The disconnect is something that deserves scrutiny."

At the same time, the report considered by the Climate Change & Leisure Committee states that community engagement was undertaken regarding the Aquadrome proposals. However, three of the planned engagement sessions did not take place, without meaningful prior notice, and due to the cancellations and distrust of the council, several of the sessions that did proceed attracted limited attendance.

Furthermore, the council's communication department used taxpayers' resources to make the nakedly political announcement before the election that the Leader had asked officers

to re-open the Woodland Walk (despite him not even sitting on the relevant committee). However, after the election, the council announced it would remain closed indefinitely. Does the council recognise that its communication on the Aquadrome has been widely seen – including by some of its own staff responsibly – as misleading and – due to the cancellation of sessions – incomplete, and will it commit to undertaking further consultation before making decisions based on its limited engagement?

The council does not accept that communication on the Aquadrome has been misleading. A comprehensive programme of communication, engagement and consultation has taken place and continues as the programme to deliver the management plan for the site develops.

“Talk to Me” – Drop in Sessions

The initial public engagement sessions referred to were the “*Talk to Me*” sessions organised to allow residents to “drop in” and find out more about the overall Aquadrome project and to discuss options/ideas for the Activity Plan, which is planned to be delivered if successful in the funding application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. These sessions were led by the Aquadrome Community Engagement Officer and ran from December 2025 to March 2026 and ended when the main public engagement on RIBA Stage 2 was taking place. Social media posts were shared when, due to the departure from the organization of the officer leading, the sessions could not take place. Residents were informed as part of this, that they could still share comments and feedback via the *Have Your Say* platform.

RIBA 2 Public Engagement

Separate to the “Talk to Me” was the main public engagement on the RIBA Stage 2 concepts for the project. This included:

- an online survey running from 12 February 2026 – 17 March 2026
- Face to face engagement at a public drop in event on Saturday 7 March
- Engagement with the Aquadrome Steering Group – including Councillor representatives from local wards, key stakeholders, such as the Environment Agency, Three Rivers Museum, Canals and Rivers Trust etc.
- Engagement with groups on site: Bury Lake Young Mariners, Uxbridge Rovers Angling and Conservation Society.

The engagement period was widely publicised via onsite notices, information in My Ricky News, online social media posts, website information and 124 letters hand delivered directly to residents along Uxbridge Road, adjacent to the River Colne.

During the engagement period, 157 people responded to the online survey, after 1,635 people viewed the information and upwards of 160 people attended the drop-in session.

Alongside this, a separate online Accessibility survey with a focus on pan-disability. This survey provided 46 specialised responses and alongside the main Accessibility Audit, undertaken by Inclusion and Accessibility UK will inform the way in which the accessibility of the Aquadrome can be further enhanced through the project.

Marketing and Communications

During the period November 2025 – May 2026, the following marketing and communications have been sent out in relation to the Aquadrome:

- The programme’s communications plan continues to make use of onsite Storyboards, copies of which are also accessible on the council website. Currently the site displays information boards on the Woodland walk, Ebury Play Area and the National Lottery funding phases. Over Easter, the site also displayed a board promoting local play opportunities and holiday activities.
- The Aquadrome programme has been widely communicated to the community and other stakeholders through a variety of media channels as part of a NLHF approved Communications Plan.

- Website - The dedicated website pages are regularly refreshed to reflect the progress of the programme. Website visitor details for the period November 2025 to May 2026 were 2670, significantly higher than in previous recording periods.
- Following a recommendation from the site Accessibility Audit a new tab has been added to the website to enable people to plan their visit, using better information and imagery.
- Have your Say - The council's dedicated consultation platform was used successfully for public engagement for both the RIBA Stage 2 engagement and the Accessibility Audit. The RIBA engagement has 60 survey submissions and 304 documents downloaded.
- Press Release/videos - This period saw 10 News Stories published covering topics relating to the woodland path, the Masterplan and Ebury Play Area. A video is in production that documents the development of the masterplan over the year.
- YouTube coverage - Three videos have been produced to enhance press release publications. The most recent being the video of the Leader of the council explaining the process of the Development phase. This gained 63 visits with 321 impressions. <https://youtu.be/jupYxJ9WSuM> (published 20 Jan 2026)
- MyNews- Monthly editorial articles are submitted to the My Ricky Newspaper, a hyperlocal media publication. Each month the article covers a topic related to the programme. In the period since the last Committee report topics have included:

• November 2025	• The Master Plan for the Aquadrome
• December 2025	• Appointment of RSK and their role
• January 2026	• Engagement officer – Have your Say
• February 2026	• Come and meet the RSK Experts
• March 2026	• Woodland walk and Path
• April 2026	• Remediation works to Ebury Play Area
• May 2026	• Public Engagement feedback on RIBA Stage 2

- Future articles will include content on the planning process for the project as the plans at RIBA Stage 3 will be subjected to planning approval as part of the NLHF requirements.
- Social media – Regular social media posts continue to be issued across all the council's platforms to share details of the Aquadrome programme; the activities visitors can and can't participate in at the site, as well educate about the wildlife that the site provides a home for. Press releases and videos have also been shared on all council social media platforms as well as proactive messaging encouraging participation on the wide variety of engagement activities that have been available in this period. A total of 113 posts across 3 platforms have been posted in this period with a total reach of 159,253.
- Social media and Have Your Say have also been used reactively to answer direct questions received from residents and visitors regarding aspects of the project.

The above clearly demonstrates a substantial amount of public engagement as part of the project. A full report on the engagement and progress from RIBA Stage 2 through to RIBA Stage 3 will be shared on the council website once complete. Further engagement will take place as the project progresses.

It is regrettable that the councillor has continued to present a misleading picture to residents regarding the Leader's statements, in effect defaming him by misquoting him, and the council's position on the Woodland Walk.

For example, in the 16 March press release, the Leader stated:

“In the light of the recent hydrology report and the ongoing long-term plans for the Aquadrome, including the feasibility of the boardwalk, I have asked officers to undertake a full review of the Woodland Walk to reassess the feasibility of reopening all or part of it, on an interim basis, and any remedial measures that may be required to enable this to occur including likely costs and assessments on health and safety.”

However, the 3 June press release made the position absolutely clear:

“Three Rivers District Council is currently taking action to further secure the Woodland Walk so that this area is safely contained. The council continues to work with the National Lottery Heritage Fund on long-term improvements, including a new raised walkway. The Woodland Walk was originally closed due to the erosion impacts seasonal flooding has at this location. Due to the discovery of high-risk asbestos, residents and visitors are reminded to continue to observe the closure.”

The Leader further stated:

“The council is committed to public health and safety but, at the same time, recognises that the Woodland Walk is well liked and enjoyed by residents. That is why the council remains committed to working with multiple partners on plans for long-term improvements so that the walkway is resilient to future and significant seasonal flooding. I remain committed to reviewing the continued closure.”

Taken together, these statements make the council’s position unambiguous: the path cannot be reopened until the high-risk asbestos is dealt with and the health and safety risks are fully resolved.

It is therefore unacceptable for the councillor to suggest—whether at a recent committee meeting or elsewhere—that the path should be reopened irrespective of the serious health and safety risks associated with high-risk asbestos. Such comments mislead residents and undermine the council’s duty to protect public safety.

I take this matter extremely seriously. Once the required planned action has been completed to address the high-risk asbestos, a further review of the feasibility of reopening the path will take place. Until then, the closure remains necessary and justified.

