THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

Three Rivers House
Northway
Rickmansworth
Herts WD3 1RL

General Public Services and Community Engagement Committee MINUTES

Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Tuesday, 8 September 2026 from 7.30 - 9.51 pm

Present: Councillors Steve Drury (Chair), Paul Rainbow, Christopher Alley, Ian Campbell, Kevin Raeburn, Stephen Giles-Medhurst OBE, Narinder Sian and Oliver Cooper

Also in Attendance

Councillors Andrea Fraser and Lisa Hudson

Officers in Attendance:

Shivani Dave, Partnerships and Inclusion Manager
Sarah Holohan, Bereavement Officer
Emma Lund, Senior Committee Officer
Jennie Probert, Environmental Services Officer
Tom Rankin, Principal Sustainable Travel Planner and Transport Officer
Kimberley Rowley, Head of Regulatory Services
Emma Sheridan, Associate Director for Environment

External in Attendance:

Peta Mettam - CASTR (Citizens' Advice Service Three Rivers)

53 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Shelley Gormley, Cheryl Stungo, Krutika Patel and Joan King.

The substitutes were Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst for Councillor Shelley Gormley; Councillor Narinder Sian for Councillor Cheryl Stungo; and Councillor Oliver Cooper for Councillor Krutika Patel.

54 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the General Public Services and Community Engagement Committee held on 23 June 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

55 NOTICE OF URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

56 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

57 PETITIONS RECEIVED UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 18

57a GREENBURY CLOSE PARKING

Owen Edis, the Lead Petitioner, presented a petition which requested that the Council extend permit parking around the perimeter of the green spaces within Greenbury Close in Chorleywood, and that such permits be required between 12 noon and 1pm.

The Chair, Councillor Steve Drury, and the Lead Member for General Public Services, Councillor Paul Rainbow, responded as follows:

"Thank you for the submission of this petition for parking restrictions on Greenbury Close in Chorleywood. The Council has previously proposed a design for a Permit Parking Area, and in a 2022 consultation this proposal was rejected by a majority of respondents. Whilst your request will be added to our parking management request list, this will be scored against other existing requests which have not been assessed or consulted on before and these may take precedence."

58 ANNUAL CASTR UPDATE

The Chair welcomed Peta Mettam, CEO of Citizens' Advice Service Three Rivers (CASTR) to the meeting. Peta Mettam presented the CASTR annual update covering the financial year 2025/26.

Areas covered during the presentation included: the role of CASTR in helping people to find a way forward and solve problems, and in challenging practices which may be unfair; the types of help provided, ways in which it can be accessed, and the financial benefit to clients and the public more widely arising from the support given; the main issues for which help was sought in the district over the preceding year; a case study; the research and campaign work with which CASTR had been involved over the year; strategic priorities for 2026/27; and future issues for the service.

The slides used can be found here: Our impact in 2025/26 The difference we make in Three Rivers .

In response to a question, Peta Mettam advised that whilst the Abbots Langley office was currently closed on Fridays as part of a trial (with opening hours on Fridays correspondingly being extended at the Rickmansworth office), clients were still able to access services at any of the other CASTR offices in the district; care was taken to ensure that sufficient appointments were available on the other days of the week; and extended hours were to be offered on Wednesdays in order to be open with the Healthy Hub so that a broader range of support was available to attendees. There was currently very little footfall at the Abbots Langley office on a Friday, which had led to the implementation of the trial, and many clients found the extension of the opening hours at Rickmansworth to be more helpful, especially with regard to issues such as housing where input from the Council may be required. However, the situation would be kept under review. Additionally, CASTR continued to work with the Council to look at ways in which clients could be signposted to the services available at the Abbots Langley office.

In response to a question about the impact of the Renters' Rights Act, Peta Mettam advised that housing issues generally had been rising over the preceding few years and continued to be one of the most frequently raised issues. This had led to the appointment within the service of a dedicated housing caseworker. Additionally, training on the Renters' Rights Act had been provided to all staff. There had been a small increase in enquiries ahead of the implementation of the legislation; however, the full impact remained to be seen.

Committee Members commended CASTR for their valuable services and thanked Peta for the presentation.

59 PARKING MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Principal Sustainable Travel Planner and Transport Officer presented a report which recommended the adoption of a new Parking Management Policy to formalise working practices within the parking team and adjust previously set Parking Management Programme scoring criteria. The policy presented guiding principles for conducting parking consultations and designing parking schemes, as well as the handling of parking requests and petitions, and the approach to installing advisory H bar markings, vehicle crossovers, verge hardening, and advisory disabled parking bays.

The Committee heard that the policy was not exhaustive but focused on the areas which were considered to be the most important to address. In developing the policy officers were also seeking to potentially influence any future policy with a newly established authority under local government re-organisation (LGR), although it was noted that the position in respect of LGR had changed since the publication of the agenda.

The Committee heard that the policy would not affect the application of any existing or forthcoming regulations or statutory guidance: these would apply separately to the policy.

A local resident spoke against the policy, and raised objections principally in relation to the approach to parking petitions which it was considered would hinder residents' abilities to have their voices heard on parking issues.

Councillor Andrea Fraser also spoke on the item, highlighting that whilst the principle of a clear policy was welcomed, there were concerns about the proposed governance arrangements, particularly the loss of meaningful local Ward Member involvement. Concerns were also raised about the proposed scoring system, the removal of recognition of Ward Councillor support and the introduction of officers' discretion to adjust the score between minus 5 and plus 5 points. Three safeguards were proposed: firstly, that Ward Councillors must be consulted on significant schemes (not 'generally consulted' as set out a paragraph 11.3 of the draft policy); secondly, where Ward Members and the Lead Member materially disagreed or there was a significant local opposition, there should be a mechanism for the decision to come back for member consideration; and thirdly, where a scheme was progressed outside the normal scoring prioritisation process, there should be a clear published justification.

In responding to the points raised by the first speaker, the Principal Sustainable Travel Planner and Transport Officer clarified that the policy did not overrule the Council's Constitution in relation to the hearing of petitions. Instead, it sought to regularise how those petitions would then be processed within the parking team. The intention was not to prevent people from challenging a very recent traffic regulation which had been implemented and had had an undesired effect. The reference legislation and associated guidance was clear that local authorities must have a policy where there was the right to challenge parking policies through a petition or through requests to make a change to traffic orders. Accordingly, a petition would not be rejected if it related to a recent change (an example of this was the Rickmansworth West scheme). However, there was a need to have a policy with regard to the processing of petitions more generally, particularly those which were being submitted regularly, in order to manage workload and assess which schemes were suitable for progression.

In respect to the points raised by the second speaker, it was clarified that whilst the policy may not reflect it, local Ward Members were involved in all major and significant schemes throughout the design process. The only cases when Ward Members may not be consulted was in relation to purely administrative traffic regulation orders or very minor schemes. In those cases, councillors were notified but not generally consulted because they covered a large area and normally involved quite a small and insignificant change. It was suggested that

paragraph 11.3 could be amended to clarify that *'local Ward Councillors will be considered consultees within the progression of parking schemes and will be provided the opportunity to respond and influence designs throughout. The exception to this will be very minor schemes such as junction protection or purely administrative traffic regulation orders.'*

A Committee Member expressed the view, in relation to petitions, that the policy failed to comply with national guidance as the latter specified that decisions on the local authorities' response to a petition should be made by those who were accountable to the local electorate (i.e. councillors) and not be delegated to officers or to a single Executive Member (or Lead Councillor). Additionally, decisions should be made in a publicly accessible forum where the petitioner had the opportunity to witness the discussion and defend their challenge, and so it was suggested that where a scheme was not progressed then petitions should be brought back to committee for debate and decision. Other points raised included that there was no definition in the policy of 'vexatious'; the scoring system set out that petitions would increase the score by the maximum 10 points but officers then had discretion to adjust the score up or down by up to five points; and only the Lead Member and officers had the ability to allocate points towards the prioritisation of a scheme (or veto a scheme).

Officers responded that further consideration would be given to the points raised. However, there was an issue which needed to be addressed in that an increasing number of petitions for parking schemes was being received, meaning that those schemes jumped to the top of the priority list. This was to the detriment of properties or roads which had very few residents, or where there was an acute issue affecting just a few residents, as these schemes were not able to generate sufficient signatories to a petition. It was also to the detriment of individual requests. The current way in which petitions were scored meant that schemes were being prioritised where local residents were more vocal, as well as those which were situated in areas where there were more residents. The Parking Management Programme already operated on a two-year cycle and bringing all petitions back to committee for debate and decision would slow the process further, resulting in schemes not being implemented effectively or efficiently. It was considered that the process was, and would continue to be, transparent: most petitions related to requests for the introduction of a scheme and were heard by the committee before being added to the programme. Where there was significant public objection and/or petitions received during the scheme development, where necessary these would brought back to the committee (as had been the case with the Rickmansworth West scheme) rather than the decision being delegated to the Lead Member. However, it needed to be remembered that parking was an emotive issue, and that some schemes would remain contentious. It was also clarified that additions to the programme by the Lead Member were made on an exceptional basis, and only where there was strong justification for doing so.

Officers undertook to give further consideration to the comments made and to bring the draft policy back to the next meeting with any amendments. However, it was highlighted that any changes would still need to take account of the limitations of the two-year programme and address the currently disparity with regard to the scoring allocated to petitions.

RESOLVED:

That officers should give consideration to the comments made, and that the Parking Management Policy should be brought back to the November meeting of the Committee.

60 PARKING MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

The Principal Sustainable Travel Planner and Transport Officer presented the report, which reviewed the progress of the current Parking Management Programme and proposed additions to the programme for the financial years 2026/27. The Committee heard that following a budget increase there had been additional recruitment to the parking team, in order to allow some of the schemes to be expedited. Eight schemes remained on the programme following the last report to the Committee in January; a further two schemes (Bedmond and

Kindersley Way) had been added by the Lead Member in the interim; and two new items were proposed (Various Schemes and Review of Chorleywood Bottom) as set out in the report.

Committee Members welcomed the programme and the proposed additions. Officers were also thanked for their work in progressing the schemes as outlined in the report, particularly given that prior to the recruitment of additional officers there had been limited resources within the parking team.

Committee Members commented on the schemes within their individual wards. Discussions included the following:

- A Committee Member suggested that improved use of GIS mapping may be beneficial, both in terms of identifying problem areas and targeting consultations. Officers responded that they continued to look at GIS solutions, for example, in mapping out parking management requests. However, GIS mapping had been used for the LCWIP consultation and had not proved to be intuitive, so that consideration was also needed towards the ease of use by members of the public, as well as the ease of use by officers in collating the data.

- Time was needed for the Chorleywood Bottom scheme to 'bed in' before review, to allow for any potential issues to become apparent. The timescale for the review to start was therefore 6-12 months.

- Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) were focussed on public safety. It was considered to be very difficult for the Council to meet the threshold for public safety to be considered to be impacted by parking, and therefore PSPOs were not generally considered to be a suitable mechanism for parking control. A Committee Member suggested that there were other ways in which anti-social parking could be criminalised (such as a Community Protection Notice) and this may be suitable for situations such as the pavement parking outside the garage in Bedmond.

- Restrictions had been reviewed on Garden Road and Breakspeare Road and a report had been sent to the Ward Councillors and the Lead Petitioner. That project had therefore closed. However, officers had separately committed to doing a site visit with Councillors and the Lead Petitioner (and potentially other residents). Any further concerns would now be treated as a new request.

- A Committee Member requested that Greenbury Close parking, which had been the subject of a petition earlier in the meeting, be looked at quickly so that the outcome of the review could be included in the next report to the committee in February. Whilst it was noted that there had been a review relatively recently, a notable change in circumstances had arisen from increased commuter parking charges. Officers undertook to give this consideration but commented that the general approach was that schemes were not revisited within 3 years of a review in order to ensure that there was capacity to look at those schemes which had been on the request list for longer.

The Chair moved the recommendations as set out in the report and on being put to the vote these were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That:

1. Members note the report and approve the proposed additions, as detailed in section 7 of this report, to the Parking Management Programme;

2. Officers continue to develop the Parking Management Programme as outlined in this report into financial year 2026/27 with a further full report being bought in early 2027 to determine the 2027-2029 Parking Management Programme;

3. once the programme has been set it shall be adhered to as the current Parking Management Programme, with any significant additions being limited to exceptions to the prioritisation procedure requested by the Lead Member, to be delegated to the Director of Finance;

4. the programme will be progressed in line with all relevant current practice, policy and standards; and

5. decisions on schemes, including the consideration of objections to Traffic Regulation Orders developed through this programme of works and to any items remaining from earlier programmes of works, be delegated to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Lead Member.

61 CEMETERY RULES AND REGULATIONS UPDATE

The Environmental Services Manager presented the report which summarised the outcome of a review of cemetery rules and regulations and proposed revisions in order to improve clarity, reflect current working practices, and support the effective management of the Council's cemeteries. Members were also invited to support sensitive tree works and removal of redundant or unsafe memorial benches. Overall, the proposals were intended to improve safety, accessibility, consistency, and sustainable management of the council's cemeteries.

Councillor Lisa Hudson spoke on the item. Points and questions raised included whether families would be approached to repair or replace benches which were at end of life at their own expense; if benches are not replaced, what provision would there be for bereaved people to sit when vising the cemetery once all the benches had gone; what assessment has been made against the current guidance to protect against drainage and groundwater issues; and concern about graves increasingly being positioned close to cemetery boundaries.

In response, the Associate Director for Environment confirmed that families were contacted to ask if they would like to replace benches when they reached end of life, and there was a formalised process for new requests for memorial benches. Any plaques which were removed from benches were kept within the service's safes and there was also alternative provision for them to be displayed on the memorial wall should families wish. Information about drainage and groundwater issues had already been provided in response to a Freedom of Information Act request.

In debate, further clarity was provided that the trees referred to in the policy were those which had been placed on graves, or had self-seeded, and had become overgrown over the years. The proposal intended to both address the existing situation through sensitive tree works, and also to proactively prevent future issues by tightening the regulations to prohibit the planting of trees or shrubs.

Clarity was also provided that recommendation 4 of the report referred to historical benches which had been placed a significant period of time ago and had become dilapidated. The Council had a Memorial Bench Policy which governed the process for requesting new benches, and which permitted these to be located in many areas within the district rather than at the cemeteries.

A Committee Member recommended amendment to recommendation 4 to clarify that the Council may, in some circumstances, wish to replace a bench in an existing location, and revised wording was suggested as follows, to be circulated to Committee Members for approval following the meeting:

4. approves the removal of redundant and unsafe benches and confirms that in circumstances where the Council wishes to replace a bench in an existing location, replacement memorial benches will be permitted only by the Council and installed only by the Council in accordance with the Council's current policy. The Council will make every effort to contact the family of the memorialised prior to bench removal.

The Chair moved recommendations 1-3 as set out in the report and on being put to the vote these were carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

1. approves the revised Cemetery Rules and Regulations attached at Appendix A;

2. authorises officers to implement the revised Cemetery Rules and Regulations and publish them on the Council's website;

3. approves the removal or cutting back of trees identified as causing damage to memorials or requiring significant maintenance, with works being carried out sensitively and, wherever practicable, following communication with affected families.

62 REVIEW OF BURIAL SERVICE PROVISION AND FAITH BURIAL REQUIREMENTS

Following a motion to the 13 January 2026 meeting, the Environmental Services Manager introduced a report which presented the findings of the Council's review of burial service provision, including the needs of faith and other communities for timely burials. The report summarised the public engagement and benchmarking which had been undertaken, as well as operational staffing and health and safety considerations. Members were asked to note the findings, and to support the continuation of current arrangements with officers continuing to accommodate requests wherever reasonably practical.

A Committee Member questioned whether any discussions had taken place with communities as to what additional costs might be associated with out-of-hours burials, and whether members of those communities whose faith required such burials considered the additional fees to be reasonable. Officers responded that detailed fee discussions had not taken place. This was because cost was only one factor amongst several reasons why an out-of-hours burial service was not considered to be suitable for the district. The other factors, principal amongst which was the unstable nature of the ground at the cemetery, overrode any cost considerations. Where out-of-hours burials were offered, the usual practice was for graves to be dug in advance. However, this was not possible at Woodcock Hill cemetery as the unstable nature of the ground meant that pre-dug graves would collapse before they could be used.

In response to a question about how the consultation process had been undertaken and its robustness given the relatively small number of responses, officers replied that they had approached BW Foundation, which managed the Muslim section of the cemetery, and had requested that they discuss it with the wider community and encourage participation in the consultation. Accordingly, it had been raised at their monthly meeting at the cemetery. The consultation had also been promoted amongst local funeral directors. In spite of the efforts made, the response to the online consultation had not been very high. All but one of the respondents to the online consultation was happy with the service currently offered. It was further clarified that in addition to the online consultation, engagement had also been undertaken, in collaboration with the Council's Equality Team, with other communities whose faith required or favoured timely burials. The online consultation had therefore only formed part of the overall consultation process, which had also included engagement with representation from harder to reach communities.

Two Committee Members commented that they had each independently been in contact with group leaders of the two main faiths which held same-day burials as a religious obligation. These faith group leaders had confirmed their satisfaction with the existing arrangements within the district and had also confirmed that they were content that there was sufficient provision in neighbouring areas (such as Watford and Bushey) which could be accessed for same day burials.

It was recommended that more detailed information about the soil conditions at Woodcock Hill Cemetery be shared with the BW Foundation, as well as the former councillor who was the originator of the motion, so that they were aware of the reasons for not pursuing an out-of-hours burial service.

The Chair moved the recommendations as set out in the report and on being put to the vote these were carried by general assent.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

1. notes the findings of the review into burial service provision;

2. notes the findings of the public engagement exercise undertaken through the Have Your Say Three Rivers platform;

3. notes the findings of the benchmarking exercise undertaken with neighbouring authorities;

4. notes the operational, staffing, cemetery capacity and health and safety constraints affecting burial provision at Woodcock Hill Cemetery;

5. supports the continuation of the current burial service arrangements whilst officers continue to work with funeral directors, faith leaders and bereaved families to accommodate burial requests wherever reasonably practicable; and

6. notes that any future enhancement to service provision, including routine weekend, same-day or out-of-hours burials, would require additional staffing resources, revised operational arrangements and consideration through the Council's budget-setting process.

63 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted and agreed its future work programme, with the following amendments:

- addition of the Parking Management Policy for the November meeting, as agreed earlier on the agenda.

- addition of the Parking Management Programme for the February meeting.

It was agreed that the presentation on Community Safety Priority 1 at the November meeting should focus on burglary, with input from the Police to include statistics and data.

CHAIR