

LEISURE, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

*Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth on
Wednesday 15 March 2023 between 7.30pm and 9.01pm.*

Councillors present:

Chris Lloyd (Lead Member for Leisure)

Stephen King

David Major

Chris Mitchell

Debbie Morris

Roger Seabourne (Lead Member Community

Safety and Partnerships)

Phil Williams (Lead Member for
Environmental Services, Climate Change

and Sustainability)

Ciarán Reed

Jon Tankard

Rue Grewal

Other Councillors Present:

Councillor Lisa Hudson

Officers present:

Ray Figg, Head of Community Services

Emma Sheridan, Interim Head of Community Partnerships

Sally Riley, Finance Business Partner

Charlotte Gomes, Landscapes and Leisure Development Manager

Jess Hodges, Community Biodiversity Officer

Alex Laurie, Principal Tree and Landscape Officer

Lorna Attwood, Committee Manager

Councillor Roger Seabourne in the Chair

LEC21/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Anne Winter.

LEC22/22 MINUTES

The minutes of the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee meeting held on 23 November 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair of the meeting.

LEC23/22 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

None received.

LEC24/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

LEC25/22 BUDGET MONITORING - PERIOD 10

This report covered this Committees financial position over the medium term (2022 – 2025) as at Period 10 (end of January)

The Period 10 comprehensive Budget Management report has already been presented to the Policy & Resources Committee at its meeting on 13 March 2023 which sought approval to a change in the Council's 2022 - 2025 medium-term financial plan.

On capital – there was a variance of £797,240 which related to projects that were being rephased into the next financial year and included: South Oxhey playing fields, Watersmeet electrical, Scotsbridge waste recycling vehicles, energy performance certificates and replacement grounds maintenance vehicles.

On revenue – there was a favourable variance of £245,958 mainly due to salary realignment. On Kerbside recycling, an extra income had been received of £117,856 but there had been a recent change in market conditions and the Council were now paying to recycle.

In response to a Member question on staff vacancies and how the report had stated there was no service impact, they wondered how this could be. It was advised that in the main these were newly advertised posts therefore no impact to service.

The Head of Community Services gave an update on the vacancies since the report had been produced as follows:

Loaders – two vacancies and recent applications were being assessed

Street Cleaning Operative – Appointed

Waste and Recycling Administrator – this would be advertised in April to coincide with the end of the temporary staff contract

Grounds Maintenance Operative – Advertised

Grounds Maintenance Trainee Operative – Advertised

HGV drivers – No vacancies

Watersmeet Front of House Manager – Post offered subject to references

A Member questioned the budget fluctuating on Kerbside and the income received and wondered how it would be managed going forwards. The Head of Community Services explained that there were three main income lines around recycling/residual waste. The Alternative Financial Model (AFM) which was paid by Hertfordshire Council which would cease at the end of this financial year, recycling credits (income) from Hertfordshire County Council for reductions in landfill and lastly the dry recycling contract which most authorities within Hertfordshire had signed up to. Until around the end of the year the Council was receiving an income on this contract, however, the Council were now paying to dispose of the recycling. Even though the market for glass remained good, there had been a drop in prices for other commodities such as mixed papers, plastic bottles and steel cans. The market continued to fluctuate, although it was regularly being reviewed.

RESOLVED:

Noted the contents of the report.

LEC26/22 COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT (SLA) EXTENSION

The Interim Head of Community Partnerships presented the report on community based services, which were provided to vulnerable residents within the district under Service Level Agreements, for which the Council contributed funding.

The Committee was asked to approve the proposed extensions of the identified Service Level Agreements for a further 3 years together with the associated expenditure. The expenditure was accounted for within existing Community and Leisure budgets; to approve the continuation of support for the Community Support Service and Domestic Abuse Caseworker Service, the expenditure for which was accounted for within existing Community and Leisure budgets; and approve the proposed expenditure and extension of the existing Service Level Agreement with Citizens Advice Service Three Rivers (CASTR).

A Member asked why the Council were not proposing to increase funding going forwards. The Interim Head of Community Partnerships said that the sums had been agreed in the Council budget. The Member also asked about funding other external agencies. The Interim Head of Community Partnerships said that other agencies were funded.

On being put to the Committee the recommendations as detailed in the report were declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being by general assent.

RESOLVED:

The Committee is requested to agree to the extension of the existing SLAs for a further 3 years (2023-2026) and agree, subject to the terms of the SLAs and future years Council annual budget approval, associated expenditure for the services as outlined in this report to:

- Roundabout Transport at a cost to the Council of £6,000 per annum
- Services for Young People at a cost to the Council of £2,000 per annum.
- Homestart Watford, Three Rivers and Hertsmere at a cost to the Council of £4,800 per annum.
- Citizens Advice Service Three Rivers at a cost to the Council of £259,290 per annum.
- The Committee is requested to agree, subject to the terms of the SLAs and future years Council annual budget approval, to commit to the continuation of match funding contributions for a further 3 years (2023-2026) to provide:
- The Community Support Service at a cost to the Council of £8,700 per annum.
- The Domestic Abuse Caseworker Service at a cost to the Council of £5,000 per annum

LEC27/22 ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report presented details on revised Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Environmental Forum for comment and approval.

The Interim Head of Partnerships presented the report, and advised this was the first review of the Terms of Reference previously agreed in (in 2021). Some minor amendments were proposed to them including the addition of a Vice Chair and that all meetings be held virtually.

A Member asked if the Environmental Forum agenda could be published further in advance to give people time to consider any questions they wanted to ask. Another Member also suggested a deadline could be given as to when questions could be submitted. It was agreed that questions could be submitted 10 days in advance.

On being put to the Committee the Environmental Forum Terms of Reference were declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being by general assent.

RESOLVED:

The Committee approved the proposed new Terms of Reference for the Environmental Forum.

LEC28/22 DRAFT CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

The Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy was adopted by committee March 10 2021 and by Full Council 25 May 2021. This was followed up by an Action Plan which was agreed at LEC 13 October 2021 and has been reviewed at LEC bi-annually since.

The purpose of this report was to present an update to the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy with the draft strategy detailed at Appendix 1.

The report was introduced by the Interim Head of Community Partnerships. The Committee were asked for initial feedback and permission to consult with the public.

A Member asked about page 11 and the ward was incorrectly named as Moor Park and should be Moor Park and Eastbury. The Community Carbon calculator did not take everything into account and was not completely accurate. They wondered if the strategy should take into account the difference between the urban and rural areas of the district.

The Interim Head of Partnerships said the community carbon calculator was, as stated in the report, based on assumptions and estimates and would provide an indication only.

A Member asked if the Fire Service could be added as an organisation to contact on page 23. It was agreed that this could be added.

Councillor Phil Williams moved the recommendation, seconded by Councillor Chris Lloyd.

On being put to the Committee the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being by general assent.

RESOLVED:

That the Strategy be noted and agreed that it can be put to public consultation.

LEC29/22 THREE RIVERS NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY

The purpose of this report was to summarise the content and implications of the Three Rivers Nature Recovery Strategy, and recommend that the final version of the Strategy was adopted by Three Rivers District Council.

The strategy was presented by the Community Biodiversity Officer. Amendments to the strategy had been made following the consultation.

A Member pointed out in the sustainability impact assessment on page 2, that there was an error in some of the figures. Officers agreed to check the figures.

A Member asked if grassland should merit a section on their own due to having its own value that woodland may not have. Also could Parish and Community Councils be added to the document. The Community Biodiversity Officer advised that grassland had been considered for its own section but it was not considered appropriate for the strategy.

A Member had proposed a series of questions in advance of the meeting and the Community Biodiversity Officer responded to these. With regards to the tree planting, we would be careful to ensure that grassland was not lost for the benefit of tree planting. The Biodiversity Opportunities Audit last year highlighted some good opportunities for tree planting, and these recommendations would be brought forwards. The Hydrological study related to the Aquadrome management to understand the water management on the site. As the site was on a flood plain; a study would assess the water movement to ensure that the impact of the flooding wasn't unnecessarily detrimental and how nature can be used to help with the flooding. Parish and Community Councils, (involvement of all local bodies would be encouraged and welcomed) would be included in the strategy as requested. The full written answer to the questions would be circulated to all Members following the meeting.

Officers were thanked by Members for their work on the report.

Councillor Chris Lloyd moved the recommendation to agree the strategy and this was seconded by Councillor Stephen King.

On being put to the Committee the Chair declared the motion CARRIED the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

Agreed the draft strategy subject to the comments made.

LEC30/22 BIODIVERSITY OPPORTUNITIES AUDIT, ALTERNATIVE GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT AND TREE STRATEGY UPDATE

The purpose of this report was to provide an update on the progress of the Biodiversity Opportunities Audit (BOA), the Alternative Grassland Management (AGM) initiative adopted in March 2022, and the Tree Strategy adopted in January 2022 and to make recommendations for future years. The report was presented by the Principal Tree and Landscape Officer.

The report gave an overview on the progress over the past twelve months. The report recommended several minor changes on the grass cutting programme. Many of the actions on the Tree Strategy had been delivered. Some actions had to be put on hold due to staff absence and other time sensitive work that had to be carried out.

A Member asked what was being done to encourage other agencies such as Thrive, Watford Community Housing etc. The Lead Member advised they would be happy to assist Officers with this work. The Principal Tree and Landscape Officer responded that outreach work could be done to speak with Parish Councils and churches etc.

A Member asked about the annual safety inspection on trees starting in December 2021 and wondered how much had been completed and asked for details on the system for reporting TRDC trees outside of office hours. With regard to protected trees, there were concerns that they had not been reviewed for a while and therefore no new trees had been identified that should also be included.

In response to the questions on tree safety, the Principal Tree and Landscape Officer said all urgent work had been done. Officers were now working on the higher priority work. For Out of Hours enquiries, this had been agreed but the process needed to be

updated. Members of the public would be directed to the Police or Highways in the first instance for reporting on a tree out of hours. On the Tree Protection Order review, this was a large piece of work and would take a lot of time to deliver. It was hoped this would be started this year; but it could take several years to complete due to having over 100 TPO's.

A Member asked about grass cutting in the Eastbury Recreation ground. This was an open area that was widely used for informal sports and picnics etc. In one place there was an amenity cut and some edge management which was supposed to be a wild area, then there was a meadow cut which took up 15% of the area which should all be amenity cut. The Member asked for clarification on this. The Principal Tree and Landscape officer clarified that edge management was woodland edge and cut once a year but cuttings were not removed. On the other side was a meadow cut which was where the grass was cut, collected and taken off site twice a year. The main part of the site was amenity cut which was a regular grass cutting regime. Officers were happy to talk to residents and Members regarding the types of cut as these could be modified if necessary.

A Member asked if hay meadow cutting could be split against conservation cutting. The Principal Tree and Landscape Officer advised that the conservation cut had been removed last year and replaced with hay meadow or woodland cut. The Member asked if interpretation boards could be placed to make members of the public aware. The Landscapes and Leisure Development Manager responded to say there were existing signs and information was also on the website. Interpretation could be considered on larger sites as and when the Management Plans are updated, however there is a need to be careful not to litter sites with additional signage.

The Head of Community Services advised that Officers were more than willing to work with members on the strategy. Minor changes could be accommodated, and they urged Members to agree the strategy and work together going forwards.

Councillor Phil Williams moved the recommendation, seconded by Councillor Chris Lloyd.

On being put to the Committee the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being by general assent.

RESOLVED:

Agreed the Biodiversity Opportunities Audit (BOA), the Alternative Grassland Management (AGM), and the Tree Strategy.

LEC31/22 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee were asked to review and make any necessary changes to the Committee's work programme. There were no updates.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be agreed.

CHAIR