

---

**FULL COUNCIL**  
Tuesday, 20 February 2024

**QUESTIONS TO LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND LEAD MEMBERS UNDER  
PROCEDURE RULE 14**

---

**17a) Question to the Leader, Councillor Sarah Nelmes, from Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst**

I have seen a recent leaflet that claims Rickmansworth local Remembrance Sunday Parade was almost cancelled due to Three Rivers Council. Is this true?

**Written response:**

Hertfordshire Constabulary have withdrawn their resources to traffic manage Remembrance Day closures and, as such, Local Authorities can no longer raise orders to close the road under Town Police Clauses Act (TPCA) as it requires the Police to enforce it. Instead for Remembrance Parade events, and similar events, Hertfordshire County Council are raising Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTRO) under The Road Traffic Regulation Act and are approving the proposed routes and road space.

HCC are not responsible for providing the traffic management or the hiring of a competent traffic management company. As with all road works and events, that responsibility falls with the works promoter/applicant who source their own traffic management company.

Three Rivers DC provided advice on these changes as soon as they became aware of them.

**17b) Question to the Leader, Councillor Sarah Nelmes, from Councillor Keith Martin**

For the three Full Council meetings held in 2024 for the 2023-4 Council year, Carpenders Park councillors had an overall attendance rate of 22.2%, or an absence rate of 77.8%. Have Carpenders Park residents been adequately represented at Full Council?"

**Written response:**

This attendance rate is by far the lowest of any of Three Rivers' thirteen wards. With only one of the three Carpenders Park councillors attending two meeting and none at all attending October's Full Council, the residents of Carpenders Park have very obviously not been represented at Full Council. Three Rivers is a representative democracy, with councillors elected by residents to represent them and indeed all of the people living in Three Rivers. If you do not turn up you cannot represent anyone.

17c)

**Question to the Leader, Councillor Sarah Nelmes, from Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst**

Freedom of information requests offer a range of significant benefits for individuals, communities and democracy as a whole. However, the potential downsides are the costs of processing them, officers time and the potential for misuse to invade privacy or disrupt local government operations. Can you provide, for the last 3 years, the number of FOIs received from councillors and non-councillors, the cost per year to process and approximately the amount of time it takes for an officer to process?

**Written response:**

The number of FOI requests received in the past 3 years are shown in the table below:

FOI Requests	2021	2022	2023
Councillors	5	6	20
Other	432	550	756
<b>Total</b>	<b>437</b>	<b>556</b>	<b>776</b>

The time and cost of processing FOI requests has not been recorded. However, since 1 February 2024, the time taken to process and complete each FOI request is being recorded, so this information will be available in the future.

17d)

**Question to the Leader, Councillor Sarah Nelmes, from Councillor Ciaran Reed**

Three Rivers District Council spent thousands of pounds on a consultant to rewrite its constitution. This project turned into a farce, with the sub-committee presented with a 'tracked changes' document that was not tracked against the current constitution. This led to widespread confusion and recent constitutional sub-committee meetings being cancelled. Will the administration acknowledge that their refusal to allow parties, other than the Liberal Democrats, to spend time with the consultant before the proposals were presented (despite being asked for access) contributed to these failings and will they in future, on cross-party projects like the constitution, commit to allowing others access to council-funded consultants?

**Written response:**

It is unlikely that allowing other parties to have spent time with the consultant would have made a material difference to the constitution sub-committee meeting. Although some of the changes were tracked it was clear others were not which is why the Chairman decided not to proceed further. As Cllr Reed aware in the past, we have had informal leaders meeting on such items, but the approach taken by your current leader made this an issue. I intend to have such meetings in future before further member led changes are brought forward.

**17e) Question to the Leader, Councillor Sarah Nelmes, from Councillor Lisa Hudson**

Will the council allocate a budget to the Seniors Forum to ensure access to the forum and to provide refreshments at offsite visits or events?

**Written response:**

The forum is well attended, and no access issues have been raised according to the Chairman and he is not aware you have raised any with him. The Chairman also seeks to provide refreshments where possible. Your group has not raised this as part of budget process when it could have been considered and officer comments and those of the forum considered. There is no provision within the budget being proposed elsewhere on the agenda.

**17f) Question to the Leader, Councillor Sarah Nelmes, from Councillor Chris Mitchell**

The Green and Stones Orchard.

We discussed the issue of the future ownership and control of the Green and Stones Orchard in Croxley Green. As you know the Parish Council does most of the maintenance at no cost to Three Rivers, however they have to pay us to carry out any events. The Parish Council has requested this is looked into seriously for over 12 years now. When we met in July last year, you agreed to see who best from Three Rivers could meet with the Parish Council to discuss the options going forward. Please can you confirm this as soon as possible so a meeting can be set up?

**Written response:**

I have no particular recollection of a request for a discussion on this subject, I am always happy to talk but am not aware of any circumstances that have changed since the subject was last discussed. I therefore think it unlikely that a different response than that given to previous approaches would be forthcoming.

**17g) Question to the Leader, Councillor Sarah Nelmes, from Councillor Roger Seabourne**

How many Freedom of Information requests have been submitted by sitting Councillors in the period covering the current and two previous Council years? Who are the three Councillors who made the most requests and how many were each of those three individually responsible for?

**Written response:**

The names of people submitting FOI requests is personal data and therefore cannot be disclosed. The table below shows the number of FOI requests submitted by sitting Councillors in the current and previous 2 municipal years.

<b>FOI Requests</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>
Councillor 1	2	3	11
Councillor 2	3	5	4
Councillor 3	0	1	0
Councillor 4	0	1	0
Councillor 5	2	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>

**17h) Question to the Leader, Councillor Sarah Nemes, from Councillor Sara Bedford**

The areas of strategic planning and development management are two vital public-facing areas of the council's responsibilities. What is the reasoning for proposing to remove the post of Associate Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Planning?

**Written response:**

The Council has needed to make savings for the financial year 2024/25 and beyond. One of the principles agreed has been to review vacant posts. This post has been vacant since April 2023. The Property Planning and Infrastructure elements have been well covered by current officers and the proposed change in reporting line would facilitate greater development of the Economy part of the brief.

**17i) Question to the Leader, Councillor Sarah Nemes, from Councillor Sara Bedford**

Does the plan of the council to remove the 'chief planner' role demonstrate a downgrading of the functions of strategic planning and development control?

**Written response:**

This role is not that of 'Chief Planner'. There is no requirement for the officer in this role to be qualified as a planner.

**17j) Question to the Leader, Councillor Sarah Nemes, from Councillor Sara Bedford**

How would the functions of strategic planning and development management be carried out in the absence of a professional planner at AD level?

**Written response:**

This role has been vacant since April 2023 and the functions will continue as they are now and are covered by the Head of Regulatory Services.

**17k) Question to the Leader, Councillor Sarah Nemes, from Councillor Sara Bedford**

Has there been any public democratic involvement in the process to remove the post of AD Economy, Infrastructure and Planning?

**Written response:**

This is a delegated function within the constitution.

**17l) Question to the Leader, Councillor Sarah Nemes, from Councillor Sara Bedford**

If there has been any democratic involvement in the decision to remove the post of AD Economy, Infrastructure and Planning when was it?

**Written response:**

Proposal has been discussed at the Joint Leadership Team on 29th January 2024 and also within the Liberal Democrat group on more than one occasion.

**17m) Question to the Leader, Councillor Sarah Nemes, from Councillor Sara Bedford**

If there has been any democratic involvement in the decision to remove the post of AD Economy, Infrastructure and Planning, who was involved?

**Written response:**

As above to the earlier question, the Proposal has been discussed at the Joint Leadership Team and also within the Liberal Democrat group.

**17n) Question to the Leader, Councillor Sarah Nemes, from Councillor Sara Bedford**

On how many occasions and when has the post of AD Economy, Infrastructure and Planning been advertised externally?

**Written response:**

None

**17o) Question to the Leader, Councillor Sarah Nemes, from Councillor Sara Bedford**

On how many occasions and when has the post of AD Economy, Infrastructure and Planning been advertised internally?

**Written response:**

Once

**17p) Question to the Leader, Councillor Sarah Nelmes, from Councillor Sara Bedford**

Is it appropriate for a vital post such as an Associate Director to be deleted under officer-delegated powers without any open democratic discussion?

**Written response:**

Constitutionally and legally the Head of Paid Service is responsible for the appointment and dismissal of officers (except the statutory officers) and for the officer structure. It is therefore appropriate for the Chief Executive to decide to delete a vacant post.

The Proposal has been discussed at the Joint Leadership Team and also within the Liberal Democrat group.

**17q) Question to the Leader, Councillor Sarah Nelmes, from Councillor Sara Bedford**

What steps is the council currently taking to fill the post of AD?

**Written response:**

None

**17r) Question to the Lead Member for Planning Policy and Economic Development, from Councillor Keith Martin**

Can the lead member give us an update of the responses to the Local plan consultation that finished in late December?

**Written response:**

Officers are working their way through the responses. Early analysis shows strong support from residents for the Council's approach to lower growth and not meeting the standard method housing target. It should be noted that the consultation is not a referendum, and the independent Inspector will be considering the plan against national planning policy and will give significant weight to comments from statutory consultees even if they go against the majority of responses. I have included more details in my report and maybe able to update more verbally at Council.

**17s) Question to the Lead Member for Planning Policy and Economic Development, from Councillor Chris Lloyd**

A recent Conservative leaflet claims that the Conservatives 'will close a Lib Dem loophole that lets developers off the hook' , have you any idea what this about?

**Written response:**

I have no idea what this means all. The one loophole that does developers off the hoof is the one allowed by this Conservative government mainly viability assessments. This offered allows the developer in lay person terms claim they will not make enough profit from the scheme and thus do not have to provide say affordable homes and not have to amenity space standards. The other loop holes that this Conservative government has brought are around developments of under 10 units not having to provide benefits for the local area , i.e. Community Infrastructure monies etc and of course the more recent change about allowing additional floors on high-rise developments.

17t)

**Question to the Lead Member for Planning Policy and Economic Development, from Councillor Sarah Nelmes**

Given the recent Chorleywood South and Maple Cross council by-election the Conservatives badged this ac vote for or against this Councils "reckless proposals for our local area", which included the proposals for the Local Plan what is your view of the result given the Lib Deem vote increased by 4%?

**Written response:**

Whilst there may be many reasons to vote for a particular candidate and indeed this administration's approach to the Local Plan and the opposition to the wholly negative and misleading Conservative campaign may have been a factor, what is clear that is that the Conservative misinformation – one could use stronger words – was not believed. I am delighted that respected and hard working local Chorleywood resident Harry Davies was elected and is already fulfilling his election pledges to stand up for his local area.

It is also clear from the interim results of the Local Plan consultation that residents in Chorleywood and elsewhere have whole heartily backed the Local Plan proposals including the proposed brownfield sites in that area.

17u)

**Question to the Lead Member for Planning Policy and Economic Development, from Councillor Harry Davies**

It's been mentioned in the media that despite the Council roundly rejecting development at the Catlips Farm site off Shepherds Lane that would cause "high harm" to the Green Belt the owners may bring forward a planning application anyway. What is your view?

**Written response:**

The Local Plan and planning applications are separate processes. The site has been rejected from the Local Plan however the site promoter can put in a planning application if they wish. Any planning application will be considered on its own merits against the current Local Plan and national planning policy. As the site falls within the Green Belt this means the applicant would need to demonstrate that either what they are proposing is NOT inappropriate development in the Green Belt as set out in the National Planning Policy

Framework or that there are Very Special Circumstances that outweigh the harm of the development on the Green Belt.

17v)

**Question to the Lead Member for Planning Policy and Economic Development, from Councillor Keith Martin**

In January 2024 the Conservative Party distributed a leaflet bearing the headline "HANDS OFF THE GREEN BELT!" The leaflet urged people to join a demonstration outside Three Rivers House prior to February's Full Council, despite the site that is the subject of the leaflet not appearing on the Full Council agenda. The leaflet identified some Conservative District Councillors.

1. Given that a specific site is identified in the leaflet, can Conservative councillors be said to have predetermined it, even before a formal planning application has been submitted?
2. Could, as a result of the Conservative leaflet, Three Rivers be in jeopardy in respect of any decision made by the Planning Committee in respect of any application on green belt land? This would include the low-harm green belt sites approved as part of the Local Plan process by every Residents Association within Three Rivers, as well as the Joint Residents Association;
3. If an allegation of predetermination by Conservative councillors could be made by those for or against any given application, what are the potential financial and reputational consequences for Three Rivers District Council?

**Written response:**

That is an interesting set of questions and of course I have no responsibility for the conduct of Conservative councillors. However should in future a planning application be submitted on identified sites where the named councillors have clearly taken a public stance against a development / site allocation in advance of due consideration at a planning committee and then part take and vote at the said planning committee it could be case that not only that decision would be the subject of a legal challenge to be overruled on grounds of pre-determination, and costs awarded against the council if that was upheld but the powers of this authority to make a decision on the said application(s) could be removed and thus locally elected councillors who had made no such comments or echo public views would equally be deprived as would residents of democratic oversight.

It could be and it would need to be discussed with the Monitoring Officer at the time that members might be advised not to be present at such meetings where such applications are considered but that is not a matter for me that would be matter for them given above.

Given at least one of the named councillors has attended the planning training and been advised on the issues of pre-determination I am surprised that they allowed their name to appear on the leaflet and as thus as detailed above put the council potentially at risk.



**17w) Question to the Lead Member for Planning Policy and Economic Development, from Councillor Sarah Nelmes**

Could the lead member for planning policy outline what might occur if a councillor on a planning committee, having already gone public in opposition to a development prior to that meeting, then voted against it?

**Written response:**

There would be a risk that the councillor would be accused of having had a closed mind and thus being predetermined when considering the application at planning committee. As I have detailed above this could lead to committee decision to be the subject of a legal challenge to be overruled on grounds of pre-determination, and costs awarded against the council if that was upheld but the powers of that authority to make a decision on the said application(s) could be removed and thus locally elected councillors who had made no such comments or echo public views would equally be deprived as would residents of democratic oversight.

**17x) Question to the Lead Member for Planning Policy and Economic Development, from Councillor Oliver Cooper**

To ensure a distribution of Community Infrastructure Levy and similar money across the Three Rivers, will the Council provide an annual allowance to each councillor to spend on supporting small-scale local infrastructure projects within their ward, as many other councils do?

**Written response:**

Governance arrangements for the spend of CIL were agreed at Full Council on 23 May 2023. I do not recall any opposition to it at the time or since these arrangements were agreed to ensure spend of district CIL on strategic infrastructure across the District.

TRDC allocate between 15-25% of CIL monies for development in a parish area to that parish. The Parish Council has discretion how to spend those CIL monies and individual Councillors could make a bid for monies from that pot for their own suggested infrastructure. There is a twice-yearly opportunity for councillors and organisations to forward bids to use CIL monies, but it must meet CIL criteria for spend and be assessed by officers. Like others Cllr Cooper is at liberty to discuss potential projects with officers.

Officers tell me they are unaware of any Council that allocates Community Infrastructure Levy monies to individual councillors to allocate as they wish and indeed doing so may not be legal.

**17y) Question to the Lead Member for Planning Policy and Economic Development, from Councillor Oliver Cooper**

What assessment has Three Rivers District Council made of the impact on demand or revenue of increasing planning pre-application fees?

**Written response:**

There is no current proposal to increase planning pre application fees. These fees are set by this Council and are based on cost recovery.

If we were to increase pre-application fees further, based on a cost recovery exercise, Officers are mindful a point will be reached where the fee is in excess of or so close to the statutory planning application fee that applicants may chose to forego the pre-application process and submit a full planning application. This will have consequences for pre application demand and subsequently a reduction in income and potentially an impact on the quality of the planning applications received (and potential for an increase in the number of refused planning applications).

However, with the increase in statutory planning application fees came the abolition of the 'free go' which was often used by applicants in place of pre-application advice. The impacts of the new statutory planning application fees on applicant behaviour and demand for preapplication are not yet clear, with the new fees only in effect for 2 months.

The Government encourages the use of pre-application advice to enable prospective applicants to receive detailed advice on their potential planning applications before submission, to ensure any areas of concern or complexity are dealt with as far as possible prior to the statutory planning process commencing. The LPA are entitled to charge for this service, which requires time from various professional officers including planners, tree and landscape officer, conservation officer and officers at the County Council.

**17aa) Question to the Lead Member for Public Services, Councillor Paul Rainbow, from Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst**

What is the latest position on the Conservative Herts County Council Local Cycling & Walking Plans that residents were consulted on?

**Written response:**

HCC has had the most responses of any current LCWIP in the County with a large number objecting to the suggested routes - specifically across the Common, Shepherds Lane and at Chorleywood Bottom. It is disappointing they have not yet come back to Three Rivers with an overview of the consultation responses and analysis so we can consider our position. You know my views, we will not support unacceptable routes or closures and I hope that HCC take this on board and drop ideas that we do not back.

**17bb) Question to the Lead Member for Public Services, Councillor Paul Rainbow, from Councillor Rue Grewal**

Residents in Carpenders Park face chronic issues with inconsiderate pavement parking and green verges being churned up. Narrow pavements are often blocked by parked cars, forcing residents – including those with pushchairs and mobility scooters – to walk in the road. Very often, two people

cannot pass each other. Existing measures like police intervention haven't proven effective. What targeted enforcement measures, awareness campaigns, or alternative parking solutions could Three Rivers implement to address this ongoing issue and ensure safe and accessible pavements for all residents, whilst also caring for the grass verges and returning them to the valuable asset that they are to the community?

**Written response:**

Pavement parking is currently only prohibited in London. Central government are looking into potential changes to the position outside London (consultation carried out in 2020, results yet to be published).

The majority of verges in this location are the responsibility of HCC and any damage should be reported to them. TRDC can only enforce where there are existing restrictions (with the exception of dropped kerbs), other than this, matters of obstruction are the responsibility of the Police.

**17cc) Question to the Lead Member for Public Services, Councillor Paul Rainbow, from Councillor Debbie Morris**

The Lead Member informed me in December 2023 that the new parking restrictions on Sandy Lodge Way, Northwood should be introduced "within a couple of months". What is the updated timescale for these?

**Written response:**

Consultants are finalising the formal consultation report (expected by 9 February) in which they will make final recommendations. The Lead Member will then make a decision on whether to implement the scheme. If decision is taken to implement the scheme then it's anticipated to come into force in March 2024.

**17dd) Question to the Lead Member for Public Services, Councillor Paul Rainbow, from Councillor Debbie Morris**

Residents of The Woods, Northwood continue to complain about the absence of double yellow lines around some of their driveways as lawful parking obscures drivers' vision when egressing causing safety concerns. I was informed last year that a priority assessment would be made on the introduction of new parking schemes throughout the district because of staff shortages. Has the small but much-needed scheme at The Woods made the priority list and if so, what's the time frame for work on it?

**Written response:**

Officers are aware of the previous request, and it has been added to the Parking Management Work Programme. This Programme is usually reviewed every 2 years but due to the absence of a Senior Transport Planner it has not been reviewed since 2020 (2020-22 Programme was extended and is being progressed). The Programme is expected to be reviewed later this

year. However, the request list is prioritised according to an agreed list of criteria and there is no guarantee this scheme will be progressed. Members have been advised that if this is a safety concern then it would need to be directed to Hertfordshire County Council.

**17ee) Question to the Lead Member for Public Services, Councillor Paul Rainbow, from Councillor Andrea Fraser**

What monies has Three Rivers District Council received from Hertsmere Borough Council as part of the agreement to monitor and enforce restrictions in our car parks and controlled parking zones?

**Written response:**

None. Three Rivers DC have delegated their parking enforcement service to Hertsmere BC (HBC). TRDC pay HBC for this service.

**17ff) Question to the Lead Member for Public Services, Councillor Paul Rainbow, from Councillor Narinder Sian**

Please can you give an update on the Status of the Beryl Bike scheme and confirm that you have liaised with Croxley Green Parish Council and other stakeholders on the locations of the docking stations. Are you able to give a date when the scheme in Croxley Green will become live.

**Written response:**

Implementation of the scheme is continuing to be progressed. Croxley Green Parish Council and Ward Councillors were consulted on the proposed locations of the 'virtual' docking stations on 2 February. Public engagement on these 'virtual' docking sites will be carried out for a period of 14 days week commencing 12 February. It is anticipated the scheme will launch by 1 April 2024 subject to licencing agreements from HCC and public consultation feedback.

**17gg) Question to the Lead Member for Housing, Public Health and Wellbeing, Councillor Andrew Scarth, from Councillor Joan King**

What impact upon the availability of social housing does the loss of social or affordable housing have on Three Rivers' nomination rights caused by Thrive Homes selling of their stock for shared ownership when it becomes empty?

**Written response:**

There is no covenant within the 2008 stock transfer agreement with Thrive Homes that prevent them from selling a property that has been refurbished if it is not economically viable for them to re-let following these works.

As per the stock transfer agreement, Thrive Homes are permitted to dispose of these properties on the open market without paying any disposal clawback,

provided they use the proceeds to cross subsidise new social housing or community benefit within the District. However, Thrive Homes are aware that selling these properties on the open market would result in lost social housing stock, therefore, have committed to retaining these properties as shared ownership.

With regards to properties developed by Thrive Homes since 2008, any planning permission secured would have been done by condition on the number of affordable housing units provided and the tenure mix of the development. Thrive Homes are bound to maintain the tenure mix of these developments and would not be permitted to convert any social or affordable rented unit to a shared ownership unit, as this would be a breach of planning. Nominations Agreements between the Council and Thrive Homes for the affordable housing units on these developments are completed pursuant to the grant of a planning permission.

**17hh) Question to the Lead Member for Leisure, Councillor Chris Lloyd, from Councillor Debbie Morris**

Is it correct that of the 17 or 18 grounds maintenance team employed by this council, only one works full-time at the Aquadrome?

**Written response:**

All Grounds Maintenance staff are based at and work from the Rickmansworth Aquadrome depot.

**17ii) Question to the Lead Member for Leisure, Councillor Chris Lloyd, from Councillor Oliver Cooper**

Given the lead member conceded at last full council that he "had no idea" if the new Aquadrome bridge would be funded, was it right for TRDC to press release that it was funded and was "set to be replaced"?

**Written response:**

A CIL bid for part of the cost of a 4m bridge( the minimum width required by Sustrans) has already been made and approved. A further bid will be brought forward now that Sustrans funding is not available. It is very disappointing that Government funding for Sustrans - sustainable transport - has been cut to such a level that grant funding for such a scheme will not be available.

**17jj) Question to the Lead Member for Leisure, Councillor Chris Lloyd, from Councillor Narinder Sian**

Leisure activities benefit young people to develop their emotional, intellectual, social, creative and physical skills. Young people should enjoy and have access to a range of social, educational and recreational opportunities, including activities in the local community. Sadly, despite the growing need, the 10 January meeting of the Climate Change, Leisure and Community

Committee was cancelled as there was nothing substantive to report on or to discuss.

What do you see as the main priorities and when will they be coming to the committee?

**Written response:**

The work programme for the Climate Change, Leisure and Community Committee is published and available at:

<https://moderngov.threerivers.gov.uk/documents/s5512/CCLCC%20work%20programme.pdf>

All Members are welcome to put forward items for inclusion when the work program is discussed at each committee. Priorities for the Leisure Service are outlined in the Service Plan which was considered by the Committee in October and is presented for Member approval alongside the budget later in this meeting. There are range of activities that TRDC support , we also let our land be used for Parkrun and Junior Parkrun. You can also find more out at:

<https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/services/leisure-parks-culture>

Leisure services are for all ages in our community and help people's physical and mental health.

**17kk) Question to the Lead Member for Leisure, Councillor Chris Lloyd, from Councillor Stephen King**

Further to the lead members' response to my question at Full Council in October 2023, can he advise the date on which any necessary work was undertaken to the storm drains between Jubilee Close and Abraham Close and exactly what the work comprised of?

**Written response:**

Grounds maintenance officers have continued to visit the location regularly and the following works have been undertaken; Clearance of the front of the grids, removal of fly tipping from Grid 5, upgrade and/or maintenance of padlocks, making sure that outlet pipes are clear and tree works have been undertaken by grid 5. On all recent inspection visits the drains have been working and performing their function.

**17ll) Question to the Lead Member for Sustainability and Climate, Councillor Jon Tankard, from Councillor Chris Mitchell**

Net Zero.

It is our stated aim that Three Rivers will be net Zero by 2045 and we have signed up to UK100 that supports the most ambitious councils to go further and faster on their Net Zero and Clean Air targets. This is bold and ambitious. The small team we have are doing amazing things and progress is being made. However, to actually meet net zero by 2045 will need far more

resources and progress. I have put forward an amendment to increase resources for the team to support securing funding to continue many of the projects that are currently being trialled as “pilots” e.g. The Retrofit One Stop Shop and Transition Streets, and we will require Officer resource to apply for the external funding needed. I hope this will be approved. Over the next couple of years, what can we do to put in place a plan that will achieve this bold and important objective and provide the resources to achieve the plan?

**Written response:**

A Council approved plan is in place following the approval of an updated Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy by Council in December 2023. This plan will continue to be updated and reported to Members biannually via the Committee process.

**17mm) Question to the Lead Member for Community Safety, Councillor Steve Drury, from Councillor Narinder Sian**

How much funding has TRDC provided to the Watford and Three Rivers Trust in this financial year?

**Written response:**

£40,000 as per annual Service Level Agreement and £12k for Sustainability Grants. This fund is administered by W3RT for charities and community groups to apply for.

**17nn) Question to the Lead Member for Community Safety, Councillor Steve Drury, from Councillor Narinder Sian**

An ageing population presents both opportunities and challenges for local government. Opportunities include engaging older people and maximizing their contribution to local communities. Challenges include promoting healthy ageing, combating loneliness and isolation and ensuring older people receive high quality care when they need it. However, despite a growing need, the 10th January meeting of the Climate Change, Leisure and Community Committee was cancelled as there was nothing substantive to report on or to discuss. Could the lead provide details of what TRDC is doing to address chronic problems associated with loneliness, isolation and the cost of living crisis amongst older people in Croxley Green?

**Written response:**

There is District wide support for digital inclusion through our partnership project with Watford and Three Rivers Trust, sessions have also taken place at GP surgeries to support older people to get on line. Through the Healthy Hubs there have also been a number of initiatives including The Compassionate Cafe's supporting anyone experiencing loss or bereavement, healthy hub pop-ups have also happened in Croxley Green. TRDC has also distributed warm in winter bags that include information on physical activity, local social opportunities for older people, residents were also offered a

wellbeing survey and phone call which result in referrals to other services for support.

Between Q2 & Q3 of this financial year, there has been close to 100% increase in the number of residents from Croxley Green accessing support in relation to benefits and tax credit through Citizens Advice Service (CASTR). We work closely with CASTR to ensure information on onward signposting is available to their staff and volunteers to support the clients they work with.

TRDC is building a working relationship with the Pad Project UK, who accept donations of incontinence pads and health related equipment when no longer needed (e.g. commodes/zimmer frames) to clean, test and redistribute to residents in need, to fill the gap of long waiting times. We have also been administering the Household Fund which supports local residents through additional funding for food or utility bills.

**1700) Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Keith Martin, from Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst**

Given the media coverage of the very difficult state of the finances of many councils across the country, District Councillors are being asked with ever greater frequency about TRDC's financial health. I have been asked by a Carpenders Park resident to provide answers to two questions concerning TRDC's debt servicing. The resident had listened to a Radio 4 programme, The Briefing Room, in which council debts were highlighted as a significant and growing concern:

1. Can the lead member set out the method or methods used by TRDC to service its debts?
2. Can the lead member provide assurance that TRDC has the financial capacity to service its debts without the need to cut services?

**Written response:**

The Council's Capital Strategy elsewhere on this agenda sets out in full how the Council manages its level of debt. There are three relevant parts of this report I would like to draw the Councillors' attention to. The Council only has £8M of external debt. Borrowing in 2023/24 arises predominantly as a result of the major projects and will be repaid in line with repayments made by Watford Community Housing and Three Rivers Homes Ltd. The Council's net cost of capital for 2023/24 as a proportion of its expenditure is forecast to be negative 1.4% meaning the interest it receives on its cash holding is greater than its borrowing costs and this is only forecast to be 0.3% in 2024/25 and remain stable at this level as interest rates fall.

**17pp) Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Keith Martin, from Councillor Ciaran Reed**



Why was the Asbestos Management Plan adopted by council officers without prior reference to the committee that approved the instruction of asbestos experts or full council?

**Written response:**

The AMP is an Operational Management Plan and not a Council Policy. In their agreement of the Aquadrome Management Plan on 12 October 2022, the Leisure Environment and Community Committee agreed to "Enhance and implement [the] asbestos management plan for outdoor spaces and water." Officers delivered on that.

**17qq) Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Keith Martin, from Councillor Oliver Cooper**

Has the Council informed its insurer of the Aquadrome asbestos management plan and on what date?

**Written response:**

A copy of the AMP was provided to Insurance on 18th January 2024.

**17rr) Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Keith Martin, from Councillor Philip Hearn**

Do you anticipate the Asbestos Management Plan will impact the budget for replacing the bridge at the aquadrome?

**Written response:**

The project cost contingencies and financial planning have taken account of the existence of asbestos at the Aquadrome.

**17ss) Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Keith Martin, from Councillor Debbie Morris**

The Asbestos Management Plan considerably increases the responsibilities of grounds maintenance at the Aquadrome by requiring regular walkovers of the 101-acre site and increased checks for asbestos following adverse weather conditions – stipulated to ensure public safety. How can the current grounds team fulfil these responsibilities to ensure compliance with the AMP whilst undertaking their regular duties at this site and throughout the district?

**Written response:**

The "regular walkover" referenced in the AMP is required once a year and will be commissioned externally. All other reviews of the site including following adverse weather form, and have always formed, part of the day to day business as usual regular duties of the team.

**17tt) Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Keith Martin,  
from Councillor Philip Hearn**

Residents who use Chorleywood House Drive are continuing to experience difficulties in understanding from Three Rivers who is responsible for resurfacing the road and how the costs will be allocated. As this road falls within the Chorleywood House Estate, which is managed by Three Rivers, when can residents be given a clear answer on this to allow the much-needed work to take place?

**Written response:**

Following a recent site visit, Officers are not aware that any works are currently required to Chorleywood House Drive. The driveway is subject to written agreements which require the users to share the costs of maintenance and repair with the Council. As far as the Council is concerned, there is no ambiguity regarding these arrangements.

Recent pothole patching works were organised by the Chorleywood House Management Company in October last year and TRDC paid its contribution towards these works.

We understand there have been questions from the Management Company regarding flooding to the road from surface water run-off from Hertfordshire County Councils adopted highway. Mention has also been made regarding whether Chorleywood House Drive should be adopted or submitted for adoption.

The Council's Building Surveyor has been asked to investigate the costs of seeking adoption of the highway. The costs associated with adoption are expected to be substantial and would need to be shared between the Council and the users. There is currently no budget and no plan to have the road adopted or brought up to adoptable standard.

**17uu) Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Keith Martin,  
from Councillor Debbie Morris**

Will new signage refer to the presence of asbestos and the restrictions adopted?

**Written response:**

New signage will be installed across the Aquadrome site as part of the Aquadrome Development Project agreed in October 2022. The precise content and format of this signage has not yet been agreed; however, signage will make reference to any precautions needed.

**17vv) Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Keith Martin,  
from Councillor Debbie Morris**

Will the council take any additional precautionary measures beyond those set out in the AMP for the children's playground and area immediately surrounding it to ensure public confidence in its safety?

**Written response:**

The AMP outlines all the precautionary measures that are considered necessary to safely manage the Aquadrome site. It is a live document and will be updated as and when necessary.

**17ww) Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Keith Martin, Councillor Debbie Morris**

Will there be new signage at all entrances to the children's playground informing visitors of the presence of asbestos and the restrictions adopted consequently?

**Written response:**

New signage will be installed across the Aquadrome site as part of the Aquadrome Development Project agreed in October 2022. The precise content and format of this signage has not yet been determined.

**17xx) Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Keith Martin, From Councillor Andrea Fraser**

Will this Council be paying any money to the Rickmansworth Waterways Trust relating to the cancellation of the Rickmansworth Festival?

**Written response:**

The Council has provided a grant of £30k to the Rickmansworth Canal Trust.

**17yy) Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Keith Martin, from Councillor Andrea Fraser**

If Three Rivers District Council knew in May 2023 that the Aquadrome would have a no dig policy, was air monitoring carried out at last year's Rickmansworth Festival to see if the event was safe?

**Written response:**

Air monitoring has been carried site wide on 21 June 2022 and subsequently at specific locations across the Aquadrome site on 6-8 July 2022, 1 September 2022, 20-23 March 2023, 20 April 2023 and 31 October 2023. On each and every occasion the results are well within the prescribed limits for fibre materials within the atmosphere.

**17zz) Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Keith Martin,  
from Councillor Andrea Fraser**

Does the Lead Member support the public communications in January 2024 which blamed the Rickmansworth Waterways Trust for the Rickmansworth Festival being cancelled?

**Written response:**

We in no way 'blamed' the Rickmansworth Waterways Trust for cancelling the Rickmansworth Festival.

We expressed regret that it was cancelled as it was such a popular event, but fully understand the Trust's decision. The extra measures required to run the event as it has been in recent years, would mean that that already fragile balance between cost and viability for the festival is irreparably tipped into being unsustainable.

Therefore, whilst it is technically possible for the festival to run at the Aquadrome, it is not considered realistically possible.

The Rickmansworth Waterway Trust provides an important range of educational and leisure facilities in the area, as well as volunteering opportunities and, I am sure, will continue to thrive.

**17aaa) Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Keith Martin,  
from Councillor Oliver Cooper**

Will Three Rivers District Council use window sampling to demonstrate that at least some areas of the Aquadrome do not require a presumption of presence of asbestos?

**Written response:**

No

**17bbb) Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Keith Martin,  
from Councillor Oliver Cooper**

How much did Three Rivers distribute to businesses in rates relief under the Covid- 19 Additional Relief Fund?

**Written response:**

The total amount of relief paid out under the ARG was £4,438,993.48.

The total amount of relief paid for the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure was £7,200,000.

Many thanks are due to our officers for the speed at which they developed processes to administer the scheme and distribute the funds so promptly.

**17ccc) Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Keith Martin,  
from Councillor Oliver Cooper**

The lead member last full council replied that extra council tax charged to pay for special expenses for Watersmeet would not be automatically reduced even if it was no longer used as the hall for Batchworth Community Council. That's true, because determining special expenses are explicitly a political decision, not a legally required one. So, will the council's leadership commit politically to reducing special expenses charged to Rickmansworth and Moor Park & Eastbury residents – and the residents of unparished Penn & Mill End, Maple Cross, and Heronsgate – if that change is made?

**Written response:**

Special Expenses are a decision for this Council. I would not be able to predetermine at this time what the council might decide at a later date. Batchworth CC confirmed in this budget setting cycle that there were no changes in any of its functions.

**17ddd) Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Keith Martin,  
from Councillor Chris Mitchell**

Thank you for facilitating the meetings between Three Rivers District Council and Croxley Green Parish Council concerning the future of the Red Cross site in Croxley Green. Please will you confirm that the administration of the council will take the option put forward by the Parish Council seriously and that it will be dealt with on a fair and professional basis before a final decision is made. Please confirm what process will be used to decide the future of the Red Cross site and which committee(s) will be making the decisions.

**Written response:**

The Council has received a letter from Croxley Green Parish Council, dated 31 January 2024 and a formal, written response was provided by this Council on 2 February 2024. The Council has provided the Parish Council with an opportunity to respond and offered to defer an initial planned meeting on 6 February 2024 between the parties, to allow time for the Parish Council to prepare a response and proposal.

The District Council has been in direct discussions and dialogue with the Parish Council over a number of years and those discussions continue.

**17eee) Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Keith Martin,  
From Councillor Sara Bedford**

What is the current status for the appeals by local businesses against their NNDR relaxations by the VOA. When's a decision expected?

**Written response:**

There are still 19 appeals outstanding from the 2017 valuation with an assessed value at risk of £1.2M should all these appeals be successful. The are provided for within the appeals provision for business rates. We do not know when the VOA will make their decision. It should be noted that the right to make appeals against the 2017 revaluation closed at the end of March 2023.

**17fff) Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Keith Martin, From Councillor Sara Bedford**

How many businesses have appealed against their NNDR valuations?

**Written response:**

Please see above regarding the 19 currently outstanding. Analyse Local have identified 666 potential appeals against the 2023 revaluation. These can all be appealed at any time whilst the 2023 list remains open.

**17ggg) Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Keith Martin, from Councillor Sara Bedford**

What is the amount of the total difference between the amount due to paid by these businesses the rateable value times the multiplier) prior to revaluation and when transitional relief ends in 2026? Please exclude any reliefs due.

**Written response:**

The impact of the 2023 revaluation was to increase rateable values within the district from £73,380M to £117,011M an increase of 59.9%. This is our best estimate of the impact of the 2023 revaluation on rateable values before transitional relief.

**17hhh) Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Keith Martin, from Councillor Sara Bedford**

How much extra income from NNDR has the council gained from growth since the previous revaluation in 2017.

**Written response:**

The 2017 net collectable debit was £27,698,995.48 In 2022 this was £28,527,917.26 based on the 40% of growth that Three Rivers is eligible to keep (ignoring any changes in levy amount), this is equivalent to £332k. In addition, we have received additional funding through the Hertfordshire Business Rates Pool.

**17iii) Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Keith Martin, from Councillor Sara Bedford**

What is the total amount that this council could lose if appeals are won, and the safety net applies?

**Written response:**

The safety net is triggered if the Council falls more than 7.5% below its baseline level. For 2023/24 the Councils safety net figure is £1.914M, therefore the maximum amount the authority could lose is £1.7M. LG Futures advice is to make full provision for 2023 appeals in 2025/25 with two years of the new ratable values and at this point the safety net is forecast to increase to £2.013M giving a maximum loss of £0.8M.

**17jjj) Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Keith Martin, from Councillor Joan King**

Can the Lead Member advise why the decision was taken to delay the count for the parish council elections from the day after polling day and it was only held on the following Monday, not on the same day as the district council counts, which surely resulted in higher costs to be borne by the parishes?

**Written response:**

2023 was the first year in which all district seats were counted at the same time, adjustments had to be made to reduce the number of counters per ward and so it was unknown how long this would take. Plus, there were several Parish elections that were multi-seat elections which required the use of counting sheets, again adding time required for completion. It was therefore decided to conduct the Parish count on Tuesday 9 May. The reason for counting on Tuesday was because of the Kings Coronation on Saturday and subsequent bank holiday on the Monday.

**17kkk) Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Keith Martin, from Councillor Stephen Cox**

Whilst it is fully and readily accepted that officers do a sterling job when it comes to voter registration does the Lead Member agree with me that a response rate of only 86.64% in the particularly problematic DCDA polling district (the lowest district-wide) is troubling and what is being done to bring the response rate up presently and in time for the next annual canvass?

**Written response:**

The polling district DCDA contains a large number of flatted developments, and it is difficult for canvassers to gain access to these buildings. Discussions are ongoing to try and identify and agree greater access to these dwellings for canvassing purposes.

There are also a number of properties that are still vacant.

**17lll) Question to the Lead Member for Resources, Councillor Keith Martin, from Councillor Stephen Cox**

Can the Lead member advise how many years the William Morris Labour Club, Henbury Way, South Oxhey has remaining on its lease from this authority and what other leases are held and by whom, the period remaining on said lease for any other nearby buildings with an entrance onto Henbury Way and what plans this council has, or is aware of, for demolition of such?

**Written response:**

There are just over 15 years and 4 months unexpired on the two leases between TRDC and the William Morris Labour Club.

The only other property on Henbury Way which is leased by TRDC is for the Jehovah Witness building on the junction of Henbury Way and Fairfield Avenue. The lease of this property has just over 26 years and 10 months unexpired.

There are currently no plans for the Council to demolish either property and as far as the Council is aware, the Tenants have no plans to demolish these buildings either.