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**POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE****MINUTES****THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**At a meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Monday, 10 June 2024 from 7.30 - 8.33 pm**

**Present:**

## Councillors

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst (Chair)  
Councillor Matthew Bedford (Vice-Chair) (Resources)  
Sara Bedford (Housing and Public Health)  
Oliver Cooper  
Andrea Fraser  
Phillip Hearn  
Chris Lloyd (Leisure)  
Chris Mitchell  
Sarah Nelmes (General Public Services)  
Louise Price (Infrastructure & Economic Development)  
Reena Ranger  
Andrew Scarth (Community Safety & Partnerships)  
Jon Tankard (Sustainability and Climate Change)

**Officers in Attendance:**

Joanne Wagstaffe	Chief Executive
Stephen Rix	Associate Director, Legal & Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer)
Alison Scott	Director of Finance
Deborah Allen	Housing Operations Manager
Charlotte Gomes	Head of Leisure and Natural Infrastructure
Jess Hodges	Natural Infrastructure Programme Manager
Anita Hibbs	Committee Officer
Sharon Keenlyside	Interim Democratic Services Officer

**PR1/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Stephen Cox.

**PR2/24 MINUTES**

The Chair reminded Members that minutes were not expected to be a verbatim account of the meeting and requested that required changes be communicated to the Chair and Committee Officers in advance of the meeting. All meetings were live-streamed and were a continuous

record of the whole meeting and part of the minute writing policy, enabling minutes to be more succinct.

A vote was carried out for the adoption of the minutes. 6 Members voted For, 4 Members Against and 2 Members Abstained.

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair of the meeting.

The Chair read out the following statement: "We are in a pre-election period, formerly known as Purdah, for the general election on 4 July. We are therefore in a heightened state of political sensitivity, and I kindly remind Members that they should avoid making political statements or comments which could potentially influence voters in the general election".

### **PR3/24 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no items of other business.

### **PR4/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest

### **PR5/24 BUDGET OUTTURN 2023/24**

The Committee considered a report presented by Alison Scott, Director of Finance.

The report set out the financial position of the Council's revenue and capital budgets for the year ending 31 March 2024.

It was noted that there was an improvement in the overall position due to both interest earned on investments and a rebound in recycling income.

Due to the pre-election period, the Director of Finance would respond to any questions by Members via email, before the Full Council meeting.

Councillor Matthew Bedford, Lead Member for Resources, informed Members that the overall positive variance was primarily due to extra investment income and the other service variances net out to approximately zero.

Members asked for line numbers to be added to each item in future reports for ease of referencing.

Members requested an update on the tree works that had been due to be undertaken by the end of February but had not been carried out due to weather conditions and bird nesting season. The Director of Finance would investigate and report back to Members. Members also enquired about Major Incident Planning reduced expenditure at year end to bring within budget. The Director of Finance explained that the Council managed budgets but had there been a major incident, the Council would not have come in on budget. In answer to queries raised regarding Council copier costs, the Director of Finance explained that the Council's copiers were also scanners, not just copiers, which increased costs.

Councillor Matthew Bedford, Lead Member for Resources, reminded Members that the scrutiny of the budgets as set out in the 'Outturn by Service' section in the report, should take place at the relevant committee meetings.

Members enquired about the previous budget for the purchase and installation of CCTV equipment and whether this had taken place. Officers would update Members by email.

Members thanked officers for the wise investments that had resulted in the Council remaining financially buoyant.

Councillor Matthew Bedford proposed to move the Officers recommendations, and this was seconded by Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst.

A vote was carried out where 9 Members voted For and 4 Members Abstained.

**RESOLVED: that the Policy and Resources Committee recommend to Council:**

- i. That the favourable revenue end variance after carry forwards of £0.419m be noted.**
- ii. That the capital year end position as summarized in paragraph 2.11 and Appendix 3 be noted.**
- iii. To approve to carry forward the unspent service budgets from 2023/24 to 2024/25 which total £0.277m to enable completion of projects as detailed in Appendix 2.**
- iv. To approve the rephrasing of capital projects from 2023/24 to 2024/25 detailed in Appendix 4.**

## **PR6/24 THREE RIVERS BIODIVERSITY POLICY & BNG UPDATE**

The Policy and Resources Committee had considered a report on the Three Rivers Biodiversity Policy and a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) update. The purpose of the report was to outline the updated legislative duties of the Council under the Environment Act, including strengthened biodiversity duty and BNG.

Charlotte Gomes, Head of Leisure and Natural Infrastructure, presented the report and explained to Members that this area was very new, and the Council was required to deliver the Biodiversity Policy under the Environment Act legislation.

Maple Lodge was a Section 106 (S106) agreement secured before the BNG came into effect. Sites were to be identified that would increase species rich grassland. An assessment would need to be undertaken but several sites have been identified which could deliver the S106 agreement. These sites were currently being managed for biodiversity.

Councillor Jon Tankard, Lead Member for Sustainability and Climate Change, explained that BNG was a moving target, and the situation would need to be reviewed in 6-12 months to ascertain how it could be accommodated.

The Council did have available land, but the land would be 'tied up' for up to 30 years which was causing some difficulty. Landowners were reluctant to commit to that.

Jess Hodges, Natural Infrastructure Programme Manager answered queries regarding the potential sites for Maple Lodge and explained that a change in land use on those sites was not being proposed rather an enhancement of the management practices currently undertaken.

Members discussed the possibility of mapping out Three Rivers District Council (TRDC) riparian ownership and duties and possible riparian BNG opportunities. Officers explained that TRDC did not own much riverbank and the responsibility for rivers lies with the County Council (as the Lead Flood Authority), the Environment Agency and other landowners. An element of the Environment Act that was currently being worked on was the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. This was being developed by Herts County Council and TRDC had the opportunity to feed into this. River catchment had been a priority for this strategy. Officers also explained that when there was a loss on a development site under BNG, the gain had to

reflect what had been lost, therefore it was highly unlikely that development would take place on a floodplain or river catchment area.

Councillor Oliver Cooper proposed to table an amendment to Section 4 of the Policy, 'Three Rivers District Council would seek to fully map all riparian rights, duties and BNG opportunities within the district and publish this information freely available online'.

Members discussed the requirement to find out how much it would cost to do this work before it could be agreed and the need to obtain legal advice as to whether it would be the Councils' responsibility. Officers explained that it would be County Councils' responsibility to map all riparian rights and duties and it would be appropriate to feed this into the Local Nature Recovery Process.

Members asked what Herts LEADS referred to in the officers' report and requested that acronyms were spelt out initially with the acronym put in brackets. Officers explained that LEADS stood for Landscape, Ecology, Archaeology, Development and Sustainability.

Officers would review the Three Rivers Biodiversity Policy in 6-12 month's time. Councillor Jon Tankard proposed to move the Officers recommendation. This was seconded by the Chair.

**RESOLVED: that the Policy and Resources Committee Unanimously AGREED the following:**

- i. To note the content of the report.**
- ii. To approve the adoption of the Three Rivers Biodiversity Policy.**
- iii. To approve the use of the Maple Lodge BNG S106 funding being used on Three Rivers District Council owned land as identified in section 6 (including: Beechen Wood, Coombe Hill Road open space, Berry Lane & Mead Place).**
- iv. To agree in principle for Council owned and maintained land to be considered as potential receptor sites with the final decision on individual receptor sites to be delegated to the Leisure, Climate Change and Community Committee.**

## **PR7/24 LEISURE AND NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE CONTRACTS 2024**

The Committee considered a report which sought approval to award and enter into a number of contracts and enter into funding agreements for the financial year 2024/25 for Leisure and Natural Infrastructure.

Appendix B of the report was PART II because it dealt with confidential information in relation to funding agreements and the award of contracts.

As the item was tabled late, the Chair stated that he had agreed to accept the item for consideration at this meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee.

Charlotte Gomes, Head of Leisure and Natural Infrastructure, presented the report which set out the Council approved projects for delivery within Leisure and Natural Infrastructure. The projects were either pre-approved within existing budgets or projects that would be delivered subject to securing additional external funding.

There was an amendment to Appendix A: The BNG project item was to be removed as it had been superseded by the recommendations that were in the BNG report. The projects would be on a case-by-case basis.

The Director of Finance made a slight amendment to the Officers recommendations: the words 'in respect of the additional funding', be replaced with 'equal to the additional funding'.

This was to make clear that the only reason budgets would be increased was when bids were successful externally to the extent of that internal funding.

Councillor Chris Lloyd, Lead Member for Leisure, requested that the officer's recommendations were amended to 'the Leader and Lead Member for Resources and the Lead Member for Leisure'.

The Chief Executive reassured Members that the Council had a project management methodology that was followed with the top twenty projects monitored through the Programme Management Board. If there were further large projects, these would be added. Generally, there were no more than 20 and they were managed appropriately.

It was clarified that all CIL applications go to Full Council, to be debated and discussed and the Policy and Resources Committee agreed the contracting arrangement should the application be approved.

Councillor Chris Lloyd proposed to move the Officers recommendations with the amendments. This was seconded by the Chair.

**RESOLVED: that the Policy and Resources Committee Unanimously AGREED to recommend to Full Council that:**

- i. Where external funding is identified in Appendices A and B that the Director of Finance be authorized to increase budgets equal to the additional funding received.**
- ii. That the Director of Finance, in consultation with the Leader and Lead Member for Resources and the Lead Member for Leisure, be authorised to approve the Council entering into the contracts and the funding agreements listed in Appendix A and Appendix B to this report which are those of a value of £25,000 and above, subject to compliance with the Council's Contracts Procedure Rules (as amended from time to time).**

## **PR8/24 HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY**

The Policy and Resources Committee considered a report of the Housing Assistance Policy which sets out to ensure that the Council meets its' statutory obligations for the delivery of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) for its' residents.

The Policy set out how the Council will provide financial assistance to enable residents to remain independent in their homes, for as long as possible, through disabled adaptations.

Deborah Allen, Housing Operations Manager, presented the report and explained that the report also set out guidance for a discretionary grant which was a 'top up' if the original grant did not cover the full cost. All funding was allocated by Herts County Council on an annual basis from the Better Care Fund.

Councillor Sarah Bedford, Lead Member for Housing and Public Health, explained that the Policy dated back to 2009 and Officers wanted to update it and make it more user friendly. As stated in the report, the use of DFG should reduce the need for residential care, hospital emissions and speed hospital discharge. The additional DSG provided much needed flexibility. There were currently delays in orthopedic inspections being carried out to authorise the work going ahead.

In response to Members questions regarding the administration of the DFG's, the Director of Finance explained that the Hertfordshire Building Control Company was jointly owned by all the districts in the county other than Watford and St. Albans and provided the DFG assessments for TRDC. The Director of Finance would find out information regarding the right to appeal and report back.

The appeals process would be a stand-alone document. Members asked to receive a link to the appeals process.

Councillor Sara Bedford proposed to move the Officers recommendations. This was seconded by the Chair.

**RESOLVED: that the Policy and Resources Committee Unanimously AGREED the Housing Assistance Policy.**

**PR9/24 \_\_\_\_\_ OTHER BUSINESS - IF APPROVED UNDER ITEM 3 ABOVE**

There was no other business.

**CHAIR**