

At a meeting of **COUNCIL** held at Penn Chamber, on **Tuesday 22 October 2019** from 7.30pm to 9.45pm.

Present: Councillors Paula Hiscocks (Chair), Keith Martin (Vice-Chair), Matthew Bedford, Sara Bedford, Marilyn Butler, Joanna Clemens, Stephen Cox, Steve Drury, Donna Duncan, Peter Getkahn, Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Alex Hayward, Margaret Hofman, Tony Humphreys, Raj Khuroya, Joan King, Chris Lloyd, David Major, Joy Mann, Shanti Maru, Alex Michaels, Sarah Nelmes, Reena Ranger, David Raw, Michael Revan, David Sansom, Alison Scarth, Andrew Scarth, Roger Seabourne, Stephanie Singer, Dominic Sokalski, Jon Tankard, Martin Trevett, Alex Turner, Alison Wall and Phil Williams.

**CL41/19      APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Stephen King, Debbie Morris and Kate Turner.

**CL42/19      MINUTES**

Minutes of the Council held on 16 July 2019 were agreed and signed by the Chair of the Council.

**CL43/19      RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Councillor Sara Bedford moved, duly seconded, the recommendation from the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 22 July 2019, with regard Minute PR15/19 Member Training.

On being put to the Council the motion was declared **CARRIED** by the Chairman the voting being unanimous.

**RESOLVED:**

Council agreed that annual training for Members on the Licensing and Regulatory and Planning Committees, any newly appointed Committee Members and any named substitute Members be mandatory from May 2020 or before and that the Terms of Reference of the Committees be amended accordingly.

Councillor Sara Bedford moved, duly seconded, the recommendation from Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 2 September 2019, with regard Minute PR28/19 Council Meeting Calendar 2021-2022.

Councillor Joanna Clemens requested the Calendar take into account school holidays in London as well as Hertfordshire. The Leader of the Council responded that the Council had Councillors with children attending schools in Buckinghamshire, Church Schools, Academy Schools (who were able to select their own dates) in addition to various religious festivals that had to be taken

into consideration. The Council had a schedule to stick to when preparing for the budgetary process (for which there was a statutory deadline) in both October and February so tried to fit the dates as best they could.

Councillor Reena Ranger suggested the Council avoid the last two weeks in October and two weeks in February that cover the majority of half term holidays.

Councillor Joanna Clemens moved, seconded by Councillor Reena Ranger, an amendment to the recommendation that the Calendar takes into account school half term holidays in London and Buckinghamshire in addition to school half term holidays in Hertfordshire.

Councillor Roger Seabourne advised that the Council had no choice on the date of the February Council meeting as this was dependent upon the precepts set for the Police Authority and the County Council which nearly always fell during the Hertfordshire school half term.

The Leader of the Council added that this year there would have been no Tuesdays in October to hold the Council meeting due to religious festivals falling on the first two and half term on the three final Tuesdays.

On being put to the Council the amended Motion was declared LOST by the Chairman the voting being 11 For, 24 Against and 1 Abstention.

On being put to the Council the original recommendation was declared CARRIED by the Chairman, the voting being 34 For, 1 Against and 1 Abstention.

RESOLVED:

Agreed that the Calendar of Meetings for 2021/22 be approved subject to details being provided on the future Hertfordshire school holiday dates for 2021/22.

Councillor Matthew Bedford moved, duly seconded, the recommendation from Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 2 September 2019 Minute PR30/19, Budget Management 2019/20.

On being put to the Council the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chairman the voting being 24 For, 0 Against and 12 Abstentions.

RESOLVED:

Council agreed that the following revenue and capital budget variations be approved and incorporated into the three-year medium-term financial plan:-

<b>Variance</b>	<b>2019/20</b> <b>£</b>	<b>2020/2021</b> <b>£</b>	<b>2021/2022</b> <b>£</b>
Revenue - (Favourable)/unfavourable	(58,960)	21,240	22,600
Capital - Increase/(Decrease)	59,680	(276,823)	226,823

Councillor Alex Hayward declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in this item and left the meeting.

Councillor Sara Bedford moved, duly seconded, the recommendation from Extraordinary Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 7 October 2019, Minute PR42/19 on Local Development Scheme.

On being put to the Council the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chairman the voting being 31 For, 0 Against and 4 Abstentions.

RESOLVED:

Agreed the Local Development Scheme as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

Councillor Alex Hayward returned to the meeting.

Councillor Matthew Bedford moved, duly seconded, the recommendation from Extraordinary Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 7 October 2019 Minute PR43/19 Proposed Delegation of Compulsory Purchase Powers to Watford Borough Council in Respect of Land at Watford Business Park Falling within the Administrative Area of the Council. He confirmed that none of the properties paid NNDR to TRDC so there would be no loss of business rates to the Council.

On being put to the Council the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chairman the voting being 35 For, 0 Against and 1 Abstention.

RESOLVED:

Agreed to delegate its powers of compulsory acquisition under Section 226 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (TCPA) to Watford Borough Council using section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 in order to acquire the 3 plots of land (6, 7 and 17) shown on the plan attached at the Appendix. That the Council enters into an Agency agreement with WBC in the terms attached (provided below via the weblink) and that the final version of the Agency Agreement be agreed by the Solicitor to the Council in consultation with the Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services.

#### **CL44/19 RECOMMENDATION OF THE LEISURE, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE**

Councillor Roger Seabourne moved, duly seconded, the recommendation from the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee meeting held on 16 October 2019 on Animal Activity Licensing Fees Review.

On being put to the Council the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chairman the voting being 35 For, 0 Against and 1 Abstention.

RESOLVED:

Agreed that the proposed fees for Animal Activities Licenses attached to the report at Appendix 2 be approved; and

That the proposed fees commence with immediate effect to ensure all licensed operators are included in the increase.

#### **CL45/19 COMMITTEE CHANGES**

Council noted the following Committee changes:

Councillor Joanna Clemens to replace Councillor Alex Hayward on the Infrastructure, Housing and Economic Development Committee

Councillor Shanti Maru to replace Councillor Alex Hayward as a named substitute Member on the Planning Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee changes be noted:

**CL46/19 TO RECEIVE ANY PETITIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 18**

None received.

**CL47/19 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 15**

None received.

**CL48/19 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman's Quiz had been extremely successful raising over £2,000. She thanked Mike Simpson for his help and for doing the scoring and Sarah Haythorpe and Sherrie Ralton for their help setting up. She also thanked the quiz master Brian Dukes who gave his services for free. Thanks went to all the businesses and individuals who donated to the raffle as well as all those who attended and further thanks went to Councillor Sarah Nelmes and all those who helped clear up on the night.

She had attended speech days at Clement Danes, Parmiters and the Royal Masonic Schools and had spoken to pupils at Harvey Road, St Marys and Joan of Arc Schools. She would also be visiting the Reach Free School and Maple Cross School. She had an interesting evening with the Chorleywood Brownies and Guides talking about leadership and the political system. She attended the open day for Hertfordshire Scouts at Cuffley where she met some local groups. She had sailed at the Aquadrome whilst visiting one of her chosen charities, the Colne Valley Special Sailors (CVSS) and witnessed the joy the disabled people were experiencing through sailing. She had attended the Janmashtami Hindu Festival at the Bhaktivedanta Manor, had dinner at the Lion's Club, laid the wreath at the Battle of Britain service at St Lawrence's Church and attended the Abbots Tough Ten races. She had a wonderful time Mencap's Electric Umbrella performance at Watford Palace Theatre.

Having attended the Homestart AGM, she mentioned the invaluable support of the volunteers and trustees to local families. A further mention went to the Citizen's Advice for saving residents over £1.5 million as highlighted at their AGM. She congratulated our special constables at the Three County Awards in Dunstable.

She was proud to present prizes the under 21 category at West Hyde Youth Club. Friends of Stockers Lake and Sarratt Post Office had also won awards at the Rural Living Awards. She had attended Civic Services in Welwyn and St Albans and would also be attending the Hertsmere Civic Service.

A day of meeting local businesses at Warner Brothers was very rewarding as was meeting many artists at the local Hertfordshire Year of Culture.

She raised points on the Chairman's travel outside the District and personal safety attending events in the evening with the Chain of Office.

## **CL49/19 REPORTS AND QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER AND LEAD MEMBERS**

### **LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

The Leader of the Council thanked all the staff, together with the team carrying out the changes to the Council offices for their patience over the last few months with the changes to the IT, working environment and telephone system. They all had a very positive attitude to the changes.

She wished to thank two members of staff who had recently left the Council, Kay Fitzgerald, Biodiversity Officer, for all her hard work over the years, and said that her time here was well regarded and recognised. She had left the Council to relocate to be nearer her family. Also to Jess Hodges, Park Ranger at Leavesden Country Park, for the terrific work she did at Leavesden Country Park and wished her well in her new role.

She mentioned the work carried on Mental Health Day, to improve and support mental wellbeing which was vital to the ethos and sense of belonging to staff at Three Rivers. Thanks was given for the work carried out by HR, Community Partnerships Team, Mental Health First Aiders and other support throughout the organisation which results in very low sickness absence rates and very high staff morale. The work was carried out by staff, for staff, in their own time and was greatly appreciated.

She had attended the Shree Jalaram Mandir Temple in Greenford, where a number of residents were members. She learnt that St Jalaram's mission was to feed those who needed to be fed. Members of the temple go out every day of the week to feed people, most of whom are not part of the community or share their faith.

The official opening of the temporary accommodation at the Bury had taken place. The first residents moved in in September and the place was very quickly full. The Council had made a commitment to move as many residents into temporary accommodation within Three Rivers as quickly as possible.

PC Honor Greaves, a member of the Safer Neighbourhoods Team in South Oxhey, was congratulated on being awarded the Student Constable of the Year for her work in supporting vulnerable teenagers away from crime and back into education. Also thanks were sent to Sergeant Dan Amos for supporting Honor.

Councillor Alex Hayward asked whether the Leader of the Council was able to claim mileage when attending functions outside the District. Councillor Bedford confirmed that she was.

*Questions to Councillor Sara Bedford, Leader of the Council, from David Sansom*

*What did all the new office furniture in Three Rivers House cost, where was it sourced from and what are the carbon costs?*

Councillor Sara Bedford said the furniture for Three Rivers House cost £132,000, this was well within the budget that was laid down for the transformation fund.

*Why was the old furniture skipped and where is it now?*

Councillor Sara Bedford said only the furniture that was really worn, damaged or was no longer health and safety compliant had been skipped. Any furniture that could be used had been donated to schools, nurseries and charities. Anything that could not be donated had been offered to staff for a donation to the Chairman's charity.

Councillor David Sansom asked a supplementary question stating that having declared a climate of emergency a month or so ago, was it really worthwhile to replace all the desks for new trendy ones? Was it worth the money and carbon cost?

Councillor Sara Bedford said there was no move to replace the desks in the Penn Chamber. Other desks had been replaced to fit in with the new way of working which was moving to be efficient rather than trendy.

*Question to Councillor Sara Bedford, Leader of the Council, from Councillor Alex Hayward*

*In these days of public scrutiny of social media, can I ask that Councillors enter any administration involvement in community social media forums, even at arm's length, on their declarations of interest?*

Councillor Sara Bedford replied no.

Councillor Alex Hayward said in these times when politics and politicians were seen as dirty and all the anger being shown are we being responsible by not being transparent and showing our involvement?

Councillor Sara Bedford replied that the administrator of a Group was visible for all to see. The Monitoring Officer had advised that it was not seen as a registerable interest. A number of Members had been advised by the Police to be very careful about what they have on Social Media and who was allowed to follow them.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE, HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst reported he was delighted to have Chaired the Three Rivers Business Forum at Warner Bros on 23 September. The Forum was a great success and had discussed key issues facing businesses in the area. He thanked Dan Dark, CEO of Warner Bros for allowing them to have the venue and Gurinder White and her team for the excellent organisation.

He was pleased that Three Rivers had become the first Council in the County to have free standing solar power street lights installed. Four of these had been installed in a previously unlit path in Leavesden Country Park. They were the first of their kind in the UK, with unique solar panels that were part of the light column. They were manufactured in Austria but installed by a local Rickmansworth company.

The two Officers dealing with parking issues (among their other tasks such as responding to the Heathrow consultation) had seen a busy few months. New items that were added to the work programme such as the motion at the end of the meeting would take their turn as he would not wish to see the outcomes of the three recent parking consultations delayed any further.

He had that day signed off the implementation of 10 different traffic orders on various roads across the District that would see some safety waiting restrictions

(yellow lines) installed. These had all been the subject of public consultations. The Oxhey Hall Councillors would be pleased to learn that this included Silk Mill Road. It was anticipated that the onsite works for each of these would be in place before Christmas.

The detailed design, following public consultation, for the enhancement of the environment at the Delta Gain shopping parade was well advanced. There would be some further work to do on the proposed surfacing material as requested by residents but he was confident that the scheme would still be implemented this financial year.

He was reviewing proposals for a new Shopper Bus for the Three Rivers area that could, if brought in, provide a community bus scheme for residents to go shopping between Monday and Friday providing door to door transport for people who find public transport difficult or impossible to use. Officers believe this could be contained within the current budget.

Councillor Alex Hayward asked how many businesses had been invited and how many had attended the Three Rivers Business Forum on 23 September. A written reply would be provided.

***Post Meeting Note:***

*Three Rivers invited 110 businesses from across the District, 35 delegates attended the Business Forum.*

Councillor Michael Revan said the signature for the landlord had not yet been obtained although it had been approved in principle. He had been told that some trees needed to come down causing further delays and wanted to know why trees would delay building work. The Lead Member for Transport and Economic Development said he thought it was to do with issues with the paving but would check with Officers and provide a written response.

***Post Meeting Note:***

*There are no specific delays in the project to refurbish the Delta Gain shopping parade as a result of trees. Following consultation on the initial refurbishment design there have been comments from the Tree and Landscape Officers regarding the retention of specific trees, and also public comments have been received requesting additional trees are provided. These comments, along with other general comments received, are assisting in the preparation of a final design. This work has been commissioned and will be presented to Ward Councillors in due course.*

*Questions to Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Lead Member for Transport and Economic Development from Councillor Reena Ranger*

1. Local Councillors are aware of an increased amount of air traffic over the District and have been contacted by residents who have reported the same. Traffic appears to include commercial aircraft, helicopters and light aircraft past 11pm and before 6am on weekends. What action can and will this Council take to investigate the traffic and its origins?
2. What can this Council do to ensure residents are afforded maximum protection in ensuring that hours and flight heights are within acceptable ranges and any changes will be notified to this Local Authority?
3. What has been this Council's response to the Heathrow Consultation? When was the last interaction with the consultation process?

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst responded to the three questions as follows:

1. With regards to the noise from aircraft, complaints should be made to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) <https://www.caa.co.uk/Consumers/Environment/Noise/Noise/>

If the noise was in relation to aircraft flying over our District then this would be the route. Three Rivers District Council had no powers to address this issue. The Government website confirms this - <https://www.gov.uk/noise-pollution-road-train-plane/aircraft-noise> If it was in relation to aircraft landing in our District then there maybe controls on the site via planning consent or this could be looked at as a potential nuisance. However they would need information and evidence to support any investigation.

2. With regards to any changes to flight paths this was again the remit of the CAA, there was a consultation expected on the proposed changes to the flight paths and airspace in 2022 and the CAA will consult with Local authorities with flight paths over their Districts.

The last information he had on the consultation engagement was what was contained in previous reports.

4. In relation to the Heathrow consultation, our most recent response, a formal objection, was sent and acknowledged on 17/10/19. The full letter outlining the Councils objections would be published in the next Members' Information Bulletin.

Councillor Reena Ranger said that although she appreciated you can complain to the CAA she was sure the District Council could make representations on behalf of the residents. She did not believe this issue was only affecting residents of Moor Park and Eastbury and that other Councillors would have had similar complaints. A more cohesive voice would have more sway. With point 2 were there not concerns that Three Rivers would become a flight path if no cohesive response was made in 2019 /20?

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst said that if there was evidence that could be submitted to officers they could look at a Council response, but this was the first time this had been raised at Council and we had no legal basis within this. We can raise issues with the CAA, but could only make a submission to them if there was written evidence detailing the flight paths and noise nuisance. We would be consulted in 2022 regarding the flight paths.

*Question to Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Lead Member for Transport and Economic Development, from Councillor David Sansom*

What is the level of the new parking deficit and what is the reason?

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst said the total parking budget income to the end of September was £18,264 which was more than the previous September. There was no parking deficit.

Councillor David Sansom said he believed that Councillor Giles-Medhurst had mentioned a deficit that was cleared and then came back.

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst said he had reported the actual fact up until September, there was a budget monitoring report that did not cover the parking deficit, just the parking accounts. This was reported to the Policy and Resources Committee.

*Question to Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Lead Member for Transport and Economic Development, from Councillor Alex Hayward*

Removing the parking bays at Kings Langley will be at a financial cost, can you please advise what this figure is?

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst said the removal of the Station Road bays at Kings Langley had cost £1,250.34.

Councillor Alex Hayward asked what lessons had been learnt from that.

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst said lessons did need to be learnt. The scheme was consulted on with the Police and the Highways Authority at the County Council and both signed the scheme off as designed by the consultant as did the local Ward Councillors in terms of an actual map. Clearly when the bays went in, particularly those closest to the road junction, there were issues. You would have expected Highways, the Police or the consultant to have spotted this beforehand. Lessons would be learnt and in future schemes like this would need to be physically looked at, on site, and be mapped out in advance. This was discussed at the IHED Committee.

*Question to Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Lead Member for Transport and Economic Development, from Councillor Donna Duncan*

Our next Pensioners Forum is 8 November, is it right that we invite Pensioners to attend and make them pay for parking? Would it not be better for this Council to invite them and issue a parking voucher for those attending?

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst said the Council did not have a parking voucher scheme so bringing one in would cost officer time and financial resources. There were no designated permits available in any of the long/short stay car parks. He was unaware, as was the Pensioners Champion, of any request to do so and in the many years that the Forum had operated this matter had not been raised or requested. He did not see the need to change current policy.

*Question to Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Lead Member for Transport and Economic Development, from Councillor Stephen Cox*

Why does Three Rivers District Council charge for Blue Badge holders to park in its car parks?

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst said because it's the law as covered by the Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) that cover the car parks and goes back to at least 1994.

Councillor Stephen Cox said in terms of Blue Badge holders, disabilities took various forms and those with physical disabilities were likely to take longer to walk to places. Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst said Blue Badge holders can park for three hours on single or double yellow lines where there was a no loading restriction. There were also disabled bays outside the Northway car park.

Under the Equalities Act (2010) there was not a justifiable reasonable adjustment to offer free parking for holders of disabled Blue Badges. Holders of disabled Blue Badges were able to park for free on the highway, this was a national position which had been subject to an equality impact assessment.

In Three Rivers we go a bit further and install free of charge advisory Disable bays outside resident's homes where they are requested and they hold Blue Badges. There are also on street Blue Badge parking spaces close to our car parks.

The equality perspective was that every disability was different and it was not possible to consider all of the variants of protected characteristics regarding parking. Some

Blue Badge holders were entitled to benefits, however, the Council does not provide discounted parking for any other benefit recipient. A consistent approach to our car parks is the most appropriate approach to enforce and for different groups to understand.

For a Blue Badge holder to park for 3 hours (as allowed for on the road) costs £2.50 – the first hour being free. They are thus treated as every other resident in the District.

Councillor Steve Drury, the Lead Member for Infrastructure and Planning Policy, thanked Officers for getting him up to speed on his new role. He advised that an email had been sent to all Councillors inviting them to attend a Part II Local Plan Workshop on Wednesday 6 at 7pm and Thursday 7 November at 10am.

The Chorleywood Neighbourhood Plan had now been reviewed and following further amendments would go out for a second public consultation. The Council would appoint a public examiner to examine the plan against basic conditions and would recommend whether to proceed to referendum. Any amendments recommended would be discussed with Chorleywood Parish Council. The referendum would be arranged, at which point residents would vote on whether to adopt the plan. If residents did vote to adopt the plan Council would be asked to ratify this decision.

Councillor Andrew Scarth, Lead Member for Housing, reported that the Temporary Accommodation in Bury Lane, Rickmansworth was now open. The Council had asked Watford Community Housing to put up signage naming the premises “15 Bury Lane”. He thanked Officers for the time and effort they had put into the project. He knew that the people residing in the 17 homes were absolutely delighted.

Councillor David Sansom asked how long the project was delayed and why Ward Councillors were not informed of the opening as promised?

As the project had begun before the Lead Member for Housing was in post he would provide a written reply.

***Post Meeting Note:***

*There was a 50 week delay for 15 Bury Lane being completed, it was due to be completed on 14 September 2018 but practical completion was achieved on 30 August 2019. In summary, the main reasons for this delay was as a result of failure by the contractor, Ashby & Croft to deliver both the design details in a timely fashion preventing the on-site construction progressing to programme, poor management of the build process in the factory resulting in late delivery of the units to site and inability to schedule delivery of key build components to site in a timely manner e.g. access stairs and balcony walkway.*

*The Council did not hold a formal opening ceremony of 15 Bury Lane as this was not deemed necessary.*

Councillor Joan King asked how long it was anticipated that the people would be in the temporary accommodation, when would it be released for other people to return to the community?

It would be difficult to answer that question, out of the 17 units one person had already found permanent accommodation and the Officers were working hard to find accommodation and were having some success.

Councillor Alex Hayward asked for confirmation of how many of the 17 units were for people who were outside the District and brought back in.

The Lead Member would provide a written reply.

***Post Meeting Note:***

*For the initial lets of the 17 units at 15 Bury Lane, the breakdown of where residents were residing prior to moving into 15 Bury Lane was as follows:*

- *8 residents were previously in temporary accommodation outside of the district (one resident was in Bushey, all others were in Harlow, Essex)*
- *3 residents were previously in temporary accommodation in the district (one of which needed the wheelchair-accessible flat).*
- *6 residents moved into temporary accommodation for the first time.*

## **LEISURE, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY**

Councillor Chris Lloyd, Lead Member for Leisure, reported that the bridge to Croxley Common Moor and the steps to Croxley Hall Woods had had been opened. Croxley Councillors had received an email but he invited anyone who would like to attend the opening of the Cassiobridge Play Area on the following Thursday. The work on the Swillett Play Area was progressing and Members would be advised of the official opening.

He passed thanks on to Kay Fitzgerald for her work on the Environmental Forum, the Canal Festival and Croxley Common Moor and said many of the volunteer groups within the District had appreciated the excellent work she did for this Council. She would be missed. They would be getting the recruitment process in place this month.

One of the speakers at the Environmental Forum in March would be Mr John Shaw who would be talking about local history and the environment. They had been asked to look for sites for trees to be planted. The South Oxhey Leisure Centre was progressing on time.

Councillor Stephen Cox asked did the Lead Member agree that woodland areas and trees should not be sold off without adherence to the correct procedures.

Councillor Chris Lloyd referred the question to Councillor Matthew Bedford.

Councillor Matthew Bedford said he was aware of this specific case and the correct procedure had not been followed in consultation with himself as the Lead Member or the Ward Councillors. He understood that Councillor Cox had raised a complaint which was with the Chief Executive. He agreed it should not have happened and now awaited the result of the investigation.

Councillor Alison Wall asked that the North Chorleywood and Sarratt Councillors be advised when the Swillett Play Area opened. Councillor Chris Lloyd advised that he would pass on the request to the Officers.

Councillor Phil Williams, Lead Member for Environmental Services and Sustainability, thanked Officers for briefing him on his new Lead Member role. He thanked past Councillor Phil Brading and Councillor Alex Michaels for handing over such a fantastic portfolio. He welcomed the new Waste and Recycling Officer, Elen Roberts who would be working alongside Jennie Probert. Her role included education, outreach and campaign work. She would be our representative on Herts Waste Aware and had started work on the Christmas Herts Waste Aware Campaign. The Council were arranging visits to all the sites that waste went to including the composting sites, the anaerobic digester in South Mimms, the recycling centre in St. Albans and the Energy from the Waste Plant in Didcot. Anyone wishing to go on a visit should contact him or Officers.

Councillor Roger Seabourne, the Lead Member for Community Safety and Partnerships, reminded Members of the Joint Community Safety briefing on 12 November and asked that they respond to the Community Safety team on their attendance. It was pointed out that the date clashed with a number of other events.

## **RESOURCES AND SHARED SERVICES**

Report from the Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services (Cllr Matthew Bedford) and questions.

*Question to Councillor Matthew Bedford, Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services, from Councillor Reena Ranger*

The residents of Batchworth are being charged for a high percentage of the running costs of Watersmeet through special expenses as it has been designated as their community centre. Local residents have long been unhappy with this arrangement as the feeling is that Watersmeet does not fit the criteria of a community centre. As Three Rivers are no longer including Watersmeet in their lists of community centres can you confirm that the cost of running Watersmeet (which is a unique asset of TRDC) will be removed from special expenses and returned to general expenses where it belongs?

Councillor Matthew Bedford replied that Councillor Alex Hayward had asked me a very similar question at the July 2018 Council meeting. The situation had not changed and the response that was given then had not changed:

The rules for so-called "special expenses" were laid down by the Government. Where a service was provided in part of the District by one or more Parish Councils, but in part of the District by this Council, the appropriate charge was levied to avoid double-taxation for the same service in the parts where it is provided by a Parish Council.

Watersmeet provided the functions both of a theatre and a community hall. The total costs are split to reflect this.

All the parishes in Three Rivers, with the exception of Batchworth, provide community halls. These provide many of the same functions as Watersmeet including film shows, musical performances (including opera & choral societies) and amateur dramatics. Some possess a stage with lighting and sound systems and have permission to sell alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages.

It was therefore right that the community hall function should continue to be treated as a special expense, allocated to Batchworth parish and the unparished area as these are the two parts of the District that do not have this function provided by a Parish Council. The remaining costs, including all capital charges and the pantomime, are treated as a general expense and allocated to taxpayers across the whole District."

In the current year 2019/20, allocation of the Watersmeet cost centres, including recharges and capital charges, was as follows:

General expense (district-wide)	56%
Special expense unparished	23%

Special expense Batchworth 21%. As 80% is not allocated to Batchworth Parish this is far from a "high percentage" as suggested by the question.

Councillor Reena Ranger asked if the Lead Member would agree that any other Parish would be able to recoup some of that expense by hiring out their community hall for private functions, and parties as they saw fit. The Local Plan sub-committee Minutes for a meeting held on 15 July page 2 bullet point 1 stated *'The community centres detailed in Paragraph 2.66 of the report did not include Watersmeet as it was not a community centre'* so would he agree there would be some ambiguity as to how Watersmeet would be charged?

Councillor Matthew Bedford could not comment on a minute that was presented at a sub-committee meeting. In terms of recouping costs, that was why income that comes into Watersmeet from letting rooms was included and split between the general expense and the special expense as appropriate, so it was taken into consideration in the calculation.

*Question to Councillor Matthew Bedford, Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services, from Councillor Alex Hayward*

Please can this Council be updated as to what figure has been spent on Consultancy work in the past 12 months?

Councillor Matthew Bedford said the amount spent on consultant's fees from 1 October 2018 to 30 September 2019 was £573,000. This figure includes the cost for some property and surveying expertise which the Council purchases in this way instead of directly employing staff to provide this function.

The breakdown by cost centre is as follows:

South Oxhey Initiative	£150,000 (charged to capital)
Miscellaneous income	£105,000 (in respect of over 20 property and other investment schemes)
Benefits New Burden	£94,000 (covered by grant income)
Asset Management team	£89,000
Finance Service	£31,000
Benefits Service	£29,000
NNDR	£25,000
All other cost centres	£50,000 (more than 10 separate cost centres)

Councillor Reena Ranger stated that £573,000 was quite significant even if spread over a wide range of cost centres. The concern was about the properties and referred back to the minutes of the last Council meeting where a figure of £250,000 of public funds would be spent on various joint venture projects. She appreciated that these were commercially sensitive but should there not be a threshold where expense of a figure set needed to come to Council and was not decided behind closed doors. What figure can the Administration spend without consultation?

Councillor Matthew Bedford said the budget came to Council for approval. The Administration and Officers cannot spend anything extra without approval from Council so in that sense the answer was one penny. We have a published scheme of delegation which sets out the detail of how that budgeted scheme of expenditure can be approved by Council and how it's controlled, monitored and spent.

*Question to Councillor Matthew Bedford, Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services, from Councillor Alison Wall*

Ferry Road car park in Lower Road, Chorleywood. The Council have sought to deprive access to residents from the car park to their back gates, even though this has been custom and practice for some time. Has the Council any intention to change the use of this car park, or any plans to sell this area of land?

Councillor Matthew Bedford confirmed that the Council had no plans to sell or change the use of any part of that land.

Councillor Alison Wall said this was an ongoing issue for the residents living in the mid terrace houses in Lower Road. Councillors Trevett and Williams had put an amazing amount of work in to support the residents who had been living there for over 12 years, using the back gate so they had access from their garden. Can the Lead Member advise why residents had been told they cannot use the gate and why the Council would be spending money to erect a fence stopping access to the car park?

Councillor Matthew Bedford replied that he was not aware of the specific case and could not comment. If the Ward Councillors were aware of it he would assume they would be dealing with it.

## **CL50/19 REPORTS AND QUESTIONS TO THE CHAIRMEN OF THE AUDIT, PLANNING, LICENSING AND REGULATORY SERVICES COMMITTEES**

### **AUDIT**

Councillor Keith Martin, Chair of the Audit Committee, advised that the Accounts had been signed off on 31 July as required. He understood not many Councils in Hertfordshire had managed that so congratulated the Finance Team. One Audit Committee meeting had been held since then where the audit recommendations had been reviewed. There were no critical or high risk recommendations outstanding. The financial risks were in good shape. One area of concern was Treasury Management where it was felt further skills were required so Councillors Nelmes, Clements and Martin had attended a CIPFA training day which was excellent.

### **PLANNING**

Councillor Sarah Nelmes, Chair of Planning Committee, said there had been some particularly large planning applications and thanked Officers for the smooth way planning matters were handled. She was very pleased with the decision made by the Planning Inspectorate where they upheld a decision taken at Committee on a retrospective car park in the Green Belt area. They specifically commented that the employer should have looked to work on their green travel plan rather than just build more parking spaces.

Councillor Roger Seabourne left the meeting.

### **LICENSING**

Councillor Martin Trevett, the Chair of Licensing Committee, said there was nothing to report.

### **REGULATORY SERVICES**

Councillor Martin Trevett, the Chair of the Regulatory Services Committee, gave an update of how the canvas was going for the new Electoral Register. The target was to get 90% of residents registered. So far we were at nearly 83% across the District. Top was Chorleywood North and Sarratt with over 91% while South Oxhey had only 73%.

He highlighted the new Hackney Carriage Private Hire Policy points system now in place.

Councillor Stephen Cox said he had spoken to the Elections Manager about the South Oxhey return rate. He paid tribute to the Canvassers for their hard work this year with the Canvass.

#### **CL51/19 MOTIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 11**

Councillors Sara Bedford, Matthew Bedford, Marilyn Butler, Alex Hayward, Joan King, Reena Ranger, Sarah Nelmes and Martin Trevett declared a non-registerable pecuniary interest and left the meeting.

*Councillor David Sansom proposed, duly seconded by Councillor Alison Wall, an amendment to his motion which following advice from the CEO the Chairman of the Council refused to allow.*

He moved under Notice duly given as follows:

Understanding the challenges that disabled people face every day, this Council agrees to request that the Infrastructure, Housing and Economic Development Committee carry out a full review around charging Blue Badge Holders for parking in Council car parks and report back to Council with a recommendation.

On being put to Council the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chairman of the Council the voting being 27 For, 0 Against and 0 Abstentions.

RESOLVED:

Understanding the challenges that disabled people face every day, this Council agrees to request that the Infrastructure, Housing and Economic Development Committee carry out a full review around charging Blue Badge Holders for parking in Council car parks and report back to Council with a recommendation.

**CHAIR**