

LEISURE, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Wednesday 27 November 2019 from 7.30pm until 9.45pm.

Councillors present:

Councillors Chris Lloyd (Lead Member Leisure)	Phil Williams (Lead Member Environmental Services)
Roger Seabourne (Lead Member Community Safety and Partnerships)	Alison Scarth
Stephen King	Jon Tankard
David Major	Kate Turner
Donna Duncan	Alison Wall

Also in attendance:

Paul Shaw, Chairman - Citizens Advice Service Three Rivers (CASTR)
Marion Seneschall, Director - Citizens Advice Service Three Rivers (CASTR)
Ray Figg – Head of Community Services
Nigel Pollard – Section Head Financial Planning and Analysis
Andy Stovold – Head of Community Partnerships
Kelly Barnard - Leisure Contracts Officer
Charlotte Gomes - Leisure Development Manager
Malcom Clarke - Waste and Environment Manager
Jennie Probert - Environmental Strategy Manager
Kimberley Rowley - Head of Regulatory Services
Josh Sills - Watersmeet Venue Manager
Rebecca Young - Strategic Partnerships and Policy Manager
Jo Welton - Committee Manager

Councillor Chris Lloyd in the Chair

LEC 17/19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor David Sansom.

LEC 18/19 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee meeting held on 16 October 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

LEC 19/19 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items of other business.

LEC 20/19 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

The Chairman referred to an email that had been sent to all Members of the Committee relating to fees and charges, and specifically those Councillors who were school governors.

The Chairman and Councillor Phil Williams declared non-prejudicial interest in Agenda 10 as they were both School Governors but would be able to stay to debate and vote on the item.

LEC 21/19 CITIZENS' ADVICE SERVICE IN THREE RIVERS ANNUAL REPORT

The Head of Community Partnerships introduced the report and highlighted the performance of the Citizens' Advice Service in Three Rivers (CASTR) during the financial year 2018/2019.

The Chairman of CASTR, Paul Shaw and Marion Seneschall, Director, were welcomed to the meeting.

The Committee was provided with an overview of the service in Three Rivers during 2018/19. CASTR had received over 19,000 enquiries – 6% up on the previous year.

Details emphasised to the Committee were the service accessibility as a one-stop-shop and its contribution to the local economy. Last year it gave back to the community £5 for every one pound Three Rivers had provided.

Councillor Donna Duncan attended the meeting at 19.40.

The main issues dealt with related to benefits entitlement. One specific issue was where a client had missed out on £20,000 owed in backdated allowances. Other key issues were debt, housing, relationship breakdown and ill-health, which were often a consequence of other factors. CASTR also represented clients in court, and was the only agency accredited by the Financial Conduct Authority to provide debt advice.

Members raised the following points:

The Council and CASTR often spent a lot of time and resources on the same cases and it was asked how this could be changed. The Chairman suggested meetings be organised between the Council and CASTR to go through case's where the Council was looking to remove a tenant due to ASB and CASTR was providing advice to assist the tenant to stay. Rather than this just being a blanket statement of time and resources or where a conflict might occur for example.

A Member was impressed with the statistics and thanked CASTR staff for their hard work. Reference 400% more debt being written off in the past year, it was asked whether that was down to much greater debt being incurred or greater efficiency. It was explained that the write off was down to the full roll out of Universal credit and the five week wait before claimants received it. It was possible to obtain an advance loan, but that was deducted by at least 20% from

future monthly Universal credit. It was then very hard to clear those arrears, clients were taught how to budget their monthly income.

A Member asked if residents of Maple Cross went to South Bucks to visit CASTR instead of coming into Rickmansworth as it was more accessible. It was advised that CASTR had undertaken a trial outreach service at the Maple Cross Club but the vast proportion of the Maple Cross residents used the Rickmansworth CASTR Office.

It was stated that CASTR had run a Maple Cross outreach session for a year funded from their core grant. The Chorleywood Outreach was funded by the Parish Council.

RESOLVED: That Members noted the contents of the presentation.

LEC 22/19 SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT FOR THE CITIZENS ADVICE SERVICE IN THREE RIVERS 2019-2022

The Committee was asked to review and approve the draft Service Level Agreement for April 2019–2022 for the Citizens Advice Service in Three Rivers.

A new business plan from CASTR had been received which was included within the report.

A Member said although Three Rivers would not want to reduce funding it was subject to Government decision and could not rule it out in the future.

The Committee wished to pass on its thanks to Marion and her team for all their hard work.

A Member said that in the CASTR client survey, a respondent had said Rickmansworth was not accessible, but this should not sway Members' opinions as they felt the CASTR was accessible.

The Committee was advised that CASTR holds an evening service in South Oxhey but was not heavily used. They also offer advice by phone, via webchat and e-mail.

On being put to the Committee the recommendation was declared CARRIED the voting being Unanimous.

RESOLVED: That the Committee agrees the draft Service Level Agreement 2019-22 for the Citizens Advice Service in Three Rivers.

LEC 23/19 BUDGET MONITORING (PERIOD 6)

This report had been presented to the Policy & Resources Committee at its meeting on 4 November 2019 where approval was agreed to a change in the Council's 2019-2023 medium-term financial plan.

The Section Head of Financial Planning and Analysis introduced the report. Highlights relevant to the Committee were the favorable revenue budget of just over £4,000 as detailed in Appendix 1. The Garden Waste section had no overall cost to the Council. There was an increase of Capital Budget of £48,000. However, most of this is funded from the Council's Section 106 reserve.

The Section Head Financial Planning and Analysis and his team were thanked for all their work.

On being put to the Committee the recommendation was declared CARRIED by the Chairman the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED: Members noted and commented on the contents of the report.

LEC 24/19 STRATEGIC, SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING 2020-2023

This report enabled the Committee to comment to the Policy and Resources Committee on the strategic priorities, the Committee's draft service plans, and the growth bids to support them for the three years commencing on 1 April 2020.

Leisure and Landscapes Draft Service Plan

A Member asked if staff had yearly appraisals to look at succession planning and career aspiration. The Leisure Development Manager confirmed that staff do have yearly appraisals and also 6 month reviews and regular one to one briefings where they were asked about career aspirations and any support the Council could give for training and development.

A Member said there seemed to be different stages of development with the growth bids. The Head of Community Partnerships said that Heads of Service and Managers took responsibility for drafting the growth bids. There were some growth bids on this agenda which Officers had written but were not just within their service remit. Officers were trying to respond to the policy position of the Council.

The Head of Community Partnerships said on the growth bids it would depend on the nature of the project and whether other departments were involved and needed to make comments. Some growth bids were entirely within one service area and it was less likely there was a need to consult. The process was currently under review but the growth bids were in line with the recommendations of the peer challenge.

Oak Processionary Moth and Tree Health Growth Bid

A Member asked whether felled trees would be replaced. The Head of Community Services said trees would only be felled when advised to do so by the Forestry Commission, and those felled would be replaced with like for like.

A Member asked whether voluntary groups like the Friends of Croxley Common Moor were amongst those involved in the project and whether the Council were working with other voluntary groups. The Head of Community Services said once sites were identified, the Council would be happy to involve voluntary groups when guidance was provided by the Forestry Commission.

The Chairman said when the Council employed a new Biodiversity Officer such matters would be covered at the Environmental Forum.

A Member asked if the public would be encouraged to let the Council know of problem trees. The Head of Community Services advised that they would be

encouraged to report instances of affected trees. With reference to the Biodiversity Officer position, the first set of interviews had been held and it was hoped to have a new appointee in place by January.

Watersmeet External Roof Access

The Watersmeet Venue Manager said the issues had been picked up on a condition survey and through a fire risk assessment. What was required was the installation of two separate staircases, one on the Basing House side of Watersmeet and one on the other side nearest the Church.

The Chairman said the revised growth bid was £8,000 cheaper than an earlier bid and was satisfied with this option, and would be happy to recommend it.

Watersmeet Stage Lighting Replacement with LED

The Watersmeet Venue Manager said this growth bid related to theatre stage lighting, specifically the upgrading of existing filament bulb lighting fixtures to LEDs. Many existing fixtures were over 30 years old and the bulbs were no longer manufactured.

A Member asked if any other Council buildings, such as Basing House, needed lights replacing. The Head of Community Services said the Facilities Manager had plans in place to update the Council buildings, including lighting, motion sensors etc.

Community Partnerships Service Plan and Anti-Social Behaviour Casework Management System Growth Bid

The Head of Community Partnerships introduced the Service Plan.

A Member said they were delighted that the Healthy Hub had opened recently, and asked if there was any feedback. The Head of Community Partnerships said promotional material was still to be provided by County, and an official launch was due to take place in January.

The growth bid related to an Anti-Social Behaviour management system to address the gaps left by changes to the remit of SafetyNet. Research had been undertaken on this, and the system proposed was less expensive than that used by other authorities. However the procurement exercise may identify a cheaper product.

Police Community Support Officer Growth Bid

This bid related to the funding of PCSOs. Three Rivers provided funding for two although this was match funded by a further two from the Police resulting in four additional PCSOs being employed in the District. The Police were looking for a greater contribution from the Council to bring its funding contribution in line with pay increases over the last 8 years. There were currently four PCSO vacancies in Three Rivers, of an establishment of 21 PCSOs and central funding was set aside for 91 new Police Officers in Hertfordshire.

The Head of Community Partnerships said it was a matter of either increasing the budget or reducing the number of PCSOs. He said this issue was not more important than other area of work in the department that needed funding.

A Member said it was difficult to see how the numbers stacked up in terms of the Government's target for police recruitment. They had concerns over a dropping of standards.

A Member said recruitment of PCSOs should be a top priority, and the Head of Community Partnerships clarified that recruitment of PCSOs was important, but not at the expense of other areas, such as Domestic Abuse intervention work which provided better value in monetary terms.

Environmental Protection Service Plan

The Environmental Strategy Manager presented the service plan to the Committee.

Regulatory Services Service Plan (*items relating to Licensing*)

The Head of Regulatory Services said EH commercial which included the food hygiene/standards was delegated to Watford on 1 May 2019 which resulted in a change in Pls. The service provided had been good to date.

Corporate climate change officer Growth Bid

The Head of Community Partnerships said this growth bid was in its early stages, as climate change affected many areas and it was not yet known where the role would sit within the Council.

A Member asked whether it had been established what carbon neutral actually meant for the Council, and which areas of the authority were involved? The Head of Community Partnerships said the Council had a climate change action plan in place but an Officer was needed to take this forward. Climate change affected many departments, but a specialist was required to give an overview.

A Member asked what, in the context of Carbon Neutrality, is Three Rivers? Did it relate to buildings, contracts, roads? The Head of Community Partnerships said the commitment to being Carbon Neutral was made by Councillors, and not officers but the intention would be to engage with and seek the support of the local population, measuring what's attributable to the Council.

A Member said the Council should have considered the implications before announcing a carbon neutral target by 2030 for the District. It was asked if it related to the whole District or just the Council. In spite of the efforts caused by the M25, the target could still be achieved with the planting of trees. The Head of Community Partnerships said the Council had announced its carbon neutral target but there were different interpretations of Carbon Neutrality.

A Member asked whether it would be cheaper to outsource the work rather than employ a full-time resource. The Head of Community Services said the Council would also require some external support and this would be looked at in the future. The Council had received presentations from outside agencies, and this was just the start of the process.

The Chairman thanked Officers for their work on the Service Plans and growth bids.

RECOMMEND:

Noted the scoring and agreed to recommend to the Policy and Resources Committee.

LEC 25/19 FEES AND CHARGES FOR LEISURE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES IN 2020/2021

The Committee considered the fees and charges set out in the report and in the appendices for Leisure and Community services for 2020/2021 and were asked to recommend accordingly to the Policy and Resources Committee.

A Member asked why the filming damage deposit did not relate to any filming requests under an hour as damage could be caused regardless of length of filming. The Leisure Contracts Officer confirmed that the damage deposit would be amended to relate to all filming requests regardless of the length of filming.

A Member asked about filming in South Oxhey as local Members often had received enquiries from residents in the past complaining about the disturbance it caused them, in relation to parking issues asked why the money was not going to back into South Oxhey. The Head of Community Services replied it would depend on the nature of the filming but if the Member would like to e-mail him then he would take the issues up. It was also confirmed by the Leisure Contracts Officer that on street filming in the District did not need Council approval as these are often in private residencies. However, on street filming that is notified to the Council was dealt with by the Communications team. This Committee was only able to respond regarding filming in parks, open spaces and recreation grounds.

The Head of Regulatory Services also noted that on street filming that required road closures would have been approved by Hertfordshire County Council as this was within their remit.

Councillor Phil Williams moved, seconded by Councillor Roger Seabourne, the recommendation in the report.

On being put to the Committee the recommendation was declared CARRIED by the Chairman the voting being unanimous.

RECOMMEND:

That the proposed increase of 4% to fees and charges as defined in the report be recommended to the Policy and Resources Committee.

LEC 26/19 ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FEES AND CHARGES

The Environmental Strategy Manager said Environmental Protection was generally looking to increase its fees and charges by 4%, except in a few instances as noted in the report.

Councillor Phil Williams moved, seconded by Councillor Stephen King, the recommendation in the report.

The Environmental Strategy Manager was thanked for her efforts and those of her team.

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

RECOMMEND:

That the proposed fees and charges as defined in the report be recommended to the Policy and Resources Committee.

A Member queried if it was necessary to increase the fees to schools and charity shops. In response to the Environmental Strategy Manager explained that the 4% increase had been applied as service costs, such as fuel, were increasing.

LEC 27/19 REVIEW OF LICENSING FEES AND CHARGES

The Committee considered a report on a review of the discretionary fees and charges, with any adjustments to take effect from 1 April 2020.

The Head of Regulatory Services said the fees would be presented to the Regulatory Services Committee and would then go out for public consultation before coming back to Committee in January.

In response to a question on whether the fees were similar to other authorities the Head of Regulatory Services said benchmarking with Chiltern and South Bucks and Watford Councils had been undertaken. There were some variations on the cost due to how the services are provided. The Council was looking at partial cost recovery to be included in the fees. If the Council did get challenged on the fees they would be justified with evidence on how the fees were calculated.

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

RECOMMEND:

That Members agreed Option 1 for the Licensing fees

Authorise the recommendations and agree for Officers to present the licensing fee review to the Regulatory Services and Licensing Committees on 4 December before going out to public consultation in December.

Following the results of the consultation the report will be presented to the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee on 15 January, Policy and Resources Committee on 21 January 2020 and then Full Council on 25 February 2020 with the fees being effective from 1 April 2020 if agreed.

For EH fees Members agree:

The TRDC fees will be set to match those of WBC: £173 for a premises registration and individual practitioners £54.

LEC 28/19 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee reviewed their work programme.

RESOLVED: Noted the work programme.

LEC29/19 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chairman moved the following motion:

“that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined under Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act. It has been decided by the Council that in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.”

LEC30/19 ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES FEES AND CHARGES

The Committee considered Appendix A of the Part I report (item 10 on the agenda)

In response to a Member question on why the appendix was in Part II the Environmental Strategy Manager advised that the information was commercially sensitive.

On being put to the Committee the recommendations were agreed unanimously.

RECOMMEND:

That the proposed increase to the fees and charges as defined in the Appendix A be recommended to the Policy and Resources Committee.

That public access to the Appendix be denied.

CHAIRMAN