
POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**MINUTES**

Of a virtual/remote meeting held on 15 June 2020 between 7.30pm and 8.58pm.

Councillors present:

Sara Bedford (Chair) (Local Plan)
Matthew Bedford (Resources and Shared
Services)
Stephen Cox
Steve Drury (Infrastructure & Planning
Policy)
Alex Hayward
Paula Hiscocks
Stephen Giles-Medhurst (Transport and
Economic Development)

Chris Lloyd (Vice-Chair) (Leisure)
Andrew Scarth (Housing)
Reena Ranger
Roger Seabourne (Community Safety and
Partnerships)
Alison Wall (for parts of the meeting)
Phil Williams (Lead Member for
Environmental Services & Sustainability)

Others Councillors in attendance:

Alex Michaels and Sarah Nelmes

Officers Present: Joanne Wagstaffe, Chief Executive
Geof Muggerridge, Director of Community and Environmental Services
Alison Scott, Interim Director of Finance
Claire May, Head of Planning Policy and Projects
Charlotte Gomes, Leisure Development Manager
Kimberly Rowley, Head of Regulatory Services
Sarah Haythorpe, Principal Committee Manager

PR01/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

PR02/20 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 9 March 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

PR03/20 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Community Interest Company report had been deferred until July.

PR04/20 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

A Member said that he was the owner of two memorial benches, in the unlikely event it constituted an interest.

PR05/20 MEMORIAL BENCHES, TREES AND PLAQUES POLICY

The Leisure Development Manager presented the report, which was an updated version of an existing policy relating to memorial benches in parks and open spaces. The key points were included within the appendices to the report.

A number of Member questions followed, relating to:

The number of trees that could be planted on site, with particular reference made to Leavesden Country Park; the cost of benches, and some proposed style of benches being more expensive for some locations; suitability and sustainability of the materials to be used for the benches with particular reference made to wood and metal; should have more sustainable recyclable plastic benches, exclusivity of ownership; appropriate wording on the memorial plaques, sending details to the owner of an existing plaque on a bench when another member of the public wishes to have a plaque on that bench; when there may be a neighbour dispute; having more than one contact details for the memorial; marketing options and legacy issues; having more benches in the Aquadrome; Ward Councillors being contacted about the memorials; and would there be anything different for Conservation Areas with regard to the type of benches.

The Leisure Development Manager said in response to the number of trees mentioned in the report this was recommended by the Tree Officer, but this could be clarified. Officers could be more flexible on the limit for the number of trees. There were two options for benches at Leavesden, and consideration was given not just to sustainability of materials used for the benches but also resistance to vandalism, however ensuring products are sourced sustainably from relevant companies would be included in the policy wording. The marketing of memorial items would be online and via social media, although it was appreciated this was a sensitive matter. Officers will take 2 contact details for each memorial request. The people purchasing a plaque on an existing bench would be made aware at the point of purchase that they could be 1 of up to 3 plaques on the bench. Should they wish to be the only plaque, then they would need to purchase their own bench exclusively. Officers would not recommend contacting other plaque owners due to GDPR issues.

In response to a question regarding whether Ward Councillors could be part of the process, as well as the Lead Member, the Leisure Development Manager would take advice from the Committee on this. On having more seats in the Aquadrome it was felt there were already sufficient benches, but this could be considered as part of the review process.

The Head of Regulatory Services referred Members to the Streetscape report to be considered at next week's meeting of the Infrastructure, Housing and Economic Development Committee. With regard to benches outside of the parks we do not know at this time where benches are required on cycling and walking routes, or where new routes may be, but we would take the type of bench and location into account including whether the site was within a Conservation Area. Officers would also need to consider whether the bench would be targeted with ASB. It would be down to Officers in consultation with the Lead Members on where the bench could be sited/located and the style of bench.

A Member said trees planted as memorial features must be native, preferably to the Chilterns, and it was confirmed they would be.

In response a question about rough sleepers being able to use the benches the Leisure Development Manager said the style of benches proposed for the parks were DDA compliant and may have armrests.

Cllr Paula Hiscocks proposed that the recommendation be amended to include consultation with Ward Councillors, as well as Lead Members, as part of the approval process, which was duly seconded by Councillor Chris Lloyd.

On being put to the Committee the recommendations were declared carried by the Chair the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

Agreed to the new policy for installing memorial benches, memorial bench plaques and memorial trees within parks, open spaces and on the highway and other routes across the district as detailed at point 2.3 and within Appendix D subject to any comments from Leisure, Community and Environment Committee and the Infrastructure, Housing and Economic Development Committee.

Costs will be reviewed annually year on year to take into account inflation, any additional costs and increased costs from manufacturers/suppliers and will be included as part of the Fees and Charges process.

Locations will be reviewed when required, in consultation with the appropriate Lead Member, Ward Councillors and Head of Service.

PR06/20 HOUSING DELIVERY TEST ACTION PLAN

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said the report was an updated version of the previous report and measured against the Government's Housing Delivery Test figures. The Council achieved 63% of the housing target last year and this year's results were 41%. The shortfall highlighted the challenges that exist in Three Rivers, in that it's a Green Belt authority, and there are big issues in terms of affordability. A new Local Plan was therefore needed. The Council was doing as much as it could to deliver the stated targets, and planning applications were turned around in good time. In the past three years 560 new houses had been delivered.

A Member agreed that Green Belt and affordability were huge issues in the District, and that it was very hard for young people get on the property ladder in especially with 77% of the District being Green Belt. A key solution to this was the provision of affordable housing. It was suggested more Brownfield sites be built on. The Member referred to another Councils list of Brownfield sites which could be developed and asked why we had not got more sites and had we considered building over car parks. The Chair said that Brownfield sites were also required for employment land. A Member said that unoccupied buildings were not the responsibility of the Council. If the land had been purchased by a developer, it was for them to develop and submit an application to build on the site. The affordability problem was made worse because the Government's rules allowed developers to reduce the number of affordable houses it builds if profitability was to be adversely affected.

In response to a Member question on the housing mix, the Chair said the housing mix was a problem, with the emphasis currently being on one bedroom units, and that more 2-3 bedroom accommodation was required for families. It was shameful that developers would not provide more affordable housing.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said the Brownfield register was updated yearly, and it was evident that Three Rivers did not have enough Brownfield land available to build on. The Local housing Needs Assessment was due to take place in the next few weeks, and the Government was due to

produce a new Housing White Paper shortly, so it would be a case of wait and see.

A Member outside the Committee asked whether, as Three Rivers was in lower quartile of the number of units delivered versus targets, there had been any dialogue with the Government.

A Member said that the Brownfield sites were not on TRDC owned land and it was not for us to demand that the land be developed it was up to the land owner. On affordable housing the Government had changed the rules on this making it more difficult for the Council to obtain affordable housing.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said the Brownfield Land register had last been updated and published in December 2019. There were not a lot of Brownfield sites coming forward. Priority was to find urban developments in the first instance and to build on these sites providing a mix of houses. With regard to the site in Rickmansworth the Council had written to the developers who had advised that the site would be developed in the next 5 years. Providing affordable housing had historically been an issue with the Government but a new housing white paper was due shortly on this.

A Member outside the Committee asked a question on the ranking of the Council and losing 40% of the appeals.

A Member asked whether the Government Minister had been written to, as had been agreed. The Chair said a letter was sent in February 2019 to Hertfordshire MPs, and in the summer she had met with the Minister of State for Housing. Since that time the MPs had lost their seats, and it was not currently possible to move this issue forward. A Member confirmed that all Members received the Chair letter in October 2019.

On being put to the Committee the recommendations were declared carried, with eight votes for and four abstentions.

RESOLVED:

- Noted the Housing Delivery Test result for 2020;
- Agreed the Action Plan and the series of actions that the Council will seek to implement;
- Agreed to the publication of the Action Plan on the Council's website.

PR07/20 LOCAL PLAN: STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects introduced the report, which sought Members' approval to adopt an updated Statement of Community Involvement. She said there were no major changes, and that it now shows those Parish Councils that had worked or were working alongside the Council on their Neighbourhood Plans since 2017, plus the inclusion of Batchworth Community Council, and had been amended to include the newly formed Buckinghamshire Council.

On being put to the Committee the recommendations were declared carried by the Chair the voting being unanimous.

RECOMMEND:

To adopt the amended Statement of Community Involvement at Appendix 1.

The Interim Director of Finance introduced the summary of the financial outturn 2019-20, and said the report included the end of the previous year and the early part of 2020, so the impact of Covid-19 was not yet evident.

Detailed figures were included within Appendix 1, and Members were invited to ask questions.

A Member questioned the calculations around the carried forward total of £329,000 at detailed in Paragraph 2.4 of the report, asked for details included in the capital programme on Page 13 around the £4k on carbon neutral and there being no spend of this budget, the leisure facilities capital variances on Page 10 with the figure in January being £935,260 but in March it was £414,188. The Interim Director of Finance said they were two separate re-phasing's of the same project into 2020/21 on the leisure facility at South Oxhey. In response to why the Carbon Neutrality budget had been deferred, the Chair replied that the team with the remit for this were heavily involved with the food hub and other Covid-19 related matters at present, which took precedence.

In response to a Member question on the Depot, the Director of Community and Environmental Services confirmed that the £73,000 spend so far was down to the procurement costs. The £1.3m had been set aside for the project was to build a new building.

Members raised further questions as follows:

Clarification on the £10k for the Scotsbridge Chess Habitat;

In the capital programme 2019/20 on Page 10 it refers to part of the South Oxhey Leisure Centre budget being re-phased to obtain external legal advice can this be clarified?

Page 3 refers to the temporary accommodation in Rickmansworth and the budget being re-phased to allow completion but they thought the project had been completed and people were living in the accommodation;

Clarification on the controlled parking projects being higher than officers previously anticipated and the 2020/21 budget being reduced to cover the increase in spend in 2019/20;

Clarification on the reduced garden waste disposal charges.

The Interim Director of Finance explained:

The non-recyclable waste had been calculated but the garden waste had not been calculated against the code.

Controlled parking – reduced income at the beginning of the new financial year was due to the impact of Covid-19. Details on this had been provided to Members as part of a decision not to enforce parking.

Temporary accommodation in Rickmansworth - the funding was to be able to undertake repairs and complete any works.

South Oxhey Leisure Centre – this is correct it is funding which is being re-phased.

Scotsbridge Chess Habitat works required consultation with the Environment Agency.

A Member said time could be saved in future by asking Officers questions ahead of the meeting.

A Member outside the Committee referred to the £42k for the Abbots Langley Project, this was a residual budget as the project was wholly funded from

Section 106 contributions. They queried the reduced spend on the garden waste and if the Council were now making a profit on the service.

The Interim Director of Finance said the Abbots Langley project budget was now not required and had been fed back into the general reserves therefore making a saving against the budget. The Garden waste service was not making a profit as the charges for the service covered the costs and overheads for providing this service. The food hub was set up in response to Covid-19 but was taking over from other areas of work in the Council at this time.

On being put to the Committee the recommendations were declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being 8 For, 0 Against 4 abstentions.

Councillor Alison Wall had left the meeting at the time of the vote due to internet problems.

RECOMMEND:

The Policy and Resources Committee recommend to Council:

That the favourable revenue outturn variance of **(£517,045)** to be noted.

That the capital outturn as summarised in paragraph 2.6 and Appendix 3 be noted.

Approves to carry forward: the unspent service budgets from 2019/20 to 2020/21 which total **£329,207** to enable completion of projects as detailed at Appendix 2.

Approves the re-phasing on capital projects from 2019/20 to 2020/21 which total **£1,802,182** as detailed at Appendix 4.

PR09/20 SUB-COMMITTEES OF POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

The Principal Committee Manager asked that nominations be made for the following Sub-Committees:

- Constitution Sub-Committee
- Local Plan Sub-Committee
- Covid-19 Response Sub-Committee

The Chair suggested that rather than call out names now each Group Leader email the relevant information after the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the sub-committees namely Local Plan and Constitution be re-established and that Members be appointed with the following proportional membership:

- 9 Members on the Local Plan sub-committee with the political proportionality being 6, 2 and 1;
- 9 Members on the Constitution sub-committee with the political proportionality being 6, 2, 1; and

That the Covid-19 Response sub-committee has the following proportional membership and that Members be appointed:

- 9 Members on the Covid-19 Response sub-committee with the political proportionality being 6, 2 and 1;

That no decision making powers be delegated to the sub-committees;

That substitute Members be allowed.

That the nominees for the three sub-committees be advised to the Principal Committee Manager Committee after the meeting.

PR10/20 WORK PROGRAMME

To receive the Committee's work programme.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee agreed the items in the work programme.

CHAIR