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**POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE****MINUTES**

Of a virtual/remote meeting held on 20 July 2020 between 7.30pm and 9.45pm

Councillors present:

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

Chris Lloyd (Leisure)  
Andrew Scarth (Housing)  
Reena Ranger  
Roger Seabourne (Community Safety and  
Partnerships)  
Marilyn Butler (substitute for Cllr Wall)  
Phil Williams (Lead Member for  
Environmental Services & Sustainability)

Others Councillors in attendance: Cllr Sara  
Bedford

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Officers Present: Joanne Wagstaffe, Chief Executive  
Geof Muggerridge, Director of Community and Environmental Services  
Alison Scott, Interim Director of Finance  
Ray Figg, Head of Community Services  
Claire May, Head of Planning Policy and Projects  
Sarah Haythorpe, Principal Committee Manager

**PR11/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Alison Wall with the substitute Member being Councillor Marilyn Butler.

**PR12/20 MINUTES**

Councillor Hayward referred to Page 4 of the minutes where it stated “the Chair had met with the Minister of State for Housing” she thought that had been intended, but not actually happened could this be clarified.

The Chair agreed to seek clarification.

POST MEETING NOTE: Members are referred to the response given to the question raised at Full Council on 14 July 2020 by Cllr Alison Wall regarding the housing targets.

The Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 15 June 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

**PR13/20 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chairman ruled that the following item of business had not been available 5 clear working days before the meeting but was of sufficient urgency for the following reason:

**Item 11a - REPRESENTATION ON THE SUB-COMMITTEES**

To enable changes to the membership of the sub-committees.

**PR14/20 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

None received.

**PR15/20 MEMBER TRAINING**

The purpose of the report was to set a framework for Member training in 2020/21 and to determine whether Members wanted to consider working towards achieving Member Charter or sign up to the Member Charter now.

The Principal Committee Manager reported this report was presented to the Committee every year. This year it encompassed work undertaken following the Peer Review in March 2019. This work had looked at the Member training undertaken, how it could be developed, whether Members would like to work towards achieving the Member Charter or whether we undertake further work which puts the Council in a better position to achieve the Member Charter.

Councillor Alex Hayward proposed that the Council should not spend £3,000 at this time with having to balance the budget and Covid 19 but work towards achieving the Member Charter standard over the next year. She asked why the Property Briefing was part of the Member training schedule. The Principal Committee Manager said that it was part of the training provided to Members on the Council's Property Investment Strategy.

Members queried the Planning training undertaken as it should be included when Members of the Committee and substitute Members complete the training as it was now mandatory every year. The Principal Committee Manager advised that all Members were contacted in May to check and update their records on training but Officers would revisit the training records and recirculate to all Members.

Members were in agreement not to progress for the Member Charter at this time but undertake further work on the gap analysis.

A Member raised concern that some Members were not attending training and this needed to be looked at. Members used to be given a choice of dates, and wondered if more flexibility could be given on dates. In addition Members training needs were different depending on their time as a Councillor so a wider range of training should be considered.

Members agreed they should be kept informed of all training courses so that they know what was being organised. Officers were asked to consider organising training on diversity, the Councillor role, Ward duties, accountancy and Council budgets.

Members asked if the 8x8 virtual meeting training be included in the records.

The Chair said if Members found any anomaly in the training record they should notify the Committee Section. She seconded the motion that the Council should work towards achieving the standards required for Member Charter and review again in a years' time.

The Chair said all Group Leaders should actively encourage their Members to participate in any training organised and if Members had any particular areas they would like training in to advise the Principal Committee Manager. On being put to the Committee the recommendations were declared CARRIED the voting being unanimous by general assent.

RESOLVED:

Agreed to continue with the framework for Member Training for 2020/21 as follows:

That the Head of Paid Service/CEO be delegated to:

1. Authorise attendance at LGA Leadership and other LGA courses in consultation with the relevant Group Leader.
2. Authorise attendance at other external training courses which are not free in consultation with the relevant Group Leader where there are exceptional circumstances.
3. That the Council at this time do not sign up for the Member Charter but instead undertake the work towards achieving the standards required for the Charter and review this in a years' time to decide if the Council wish to sign up for the Member Charter.
4. That the Member training records for 2019/20 and 2020/21 be updated to include planning training completed and virtual meeting training and be recirculated to all Members.

## **PR16/20 LOCAL PLAN**

The Local Plan sub-committee (LPSC) had considered a number of draft policies over the last 16 months for inclusion in the new Local Plan. This report brought together the recommendations for approval by the Committee. Each policy had been based on the current National Planning Policy Framework, guidance and regulations and had been informed by the appropriate statutory bodies.

Members asked about the voting on the policy recommendations and requested that it be clarified in future whether the voting was unanimous or not.

Members made no comments on the following policies:

*Provision for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show people*

*Carbon Dioxide Emission and Renewable Energy*

*Waste Management and Recycling*

*Ground Conditions Contamination and Pollution*

*Overarching Policy on Sustainable Development*

*Adapting to Climate Change and Sustainable Construction*

*Deliveries Servicing and Construction*

*Advertisements*

*Broadband and Electronic Communications*

*Open Space Sport and Recreation*

*Biodiversity, Trees, Woodland and Landscaping*

*Landscape Character*

*Sites Safeguarding Policy*

*Green and Blue Infrastructure*

*Green Belt Policy*

## *Development in the Green Belt*

Members made the following comments:

*Policy on Retail and Leisure – on the development of cafes, restaurants and bars and Class A3 and A4 uses the provision of net additional floor space equated to a net gain of 327 square metres by 2036 in Rickmansworth Town centre and 402 square metres by 2036 in the District and local centres. This seemed a large amount of additional net gain floor space for cafes and bars in Rickmansworth. What areas of Class A3 and A4 use do we have in Rickmansworth at present?*

A Member referred to the old policy and the link provided to the meeting of the sub-committee. In the Main Avenue parade of shops in Moor Park the café had been closed which had impacted on the local community, particular at this time, and wondered whether there was any way to safeguard assets when they are the sole one in an area.

*The Head of Planning Policy and Projects responded:*

*The retail and leisure policy was based on the retail and leisure study that was undertaken and set out what was likely to be required over the whole period of the Local Plan based on the evidence and population figures. The policy did protect A1 uses (convenience stores) and the loss of those would be resisted so that they are not replaced by cafes.*

*A written reply would be provided on the proportion of Class A3 and A4 use there is in Rickmansworth High Street at present.*

*It was too early to provide information on the effects of Covid 19 on the High Street. Officers were not able to predict what would happen. The Council were assisting the Herts Local Enterprise Partnership and the Herts Growth Board with their studies to be undertaken over the coming year and would be looking at the short and longer term effects of Covid 19 on the High Street. The studies would take into account when the next review of the Local Plan would be completed which had to be done in the next 5 years. It was possible that the Government might make changes to national policy or permitted development rights to address any issues across the country in the High Street.*

*Officers were unable to prevent the loss of the cafe. The current use would remain and any application would need to adhere to the current use.*

POST MEETING NOTE: the proportion of Class A3 and A4 uses in Rickmansworth High Street:

<b>HIGH STREET</b>		
<b>Use Class</b>	<b>No. of Units</b>	<b>%</b>
A1	50	61
A2	10	12
A3	6	7
A4	2	3
A5	1	1
B1a	2	2

D1	3	4
Sui generis	5	6
Vacant	3	4

*Policy on Social and Community Facilities* – it stated that the Council would seek to protect, retain and enhance existing leisure facilities. But where there loss was proposed the Council would endeavour to ensure that the satisfactory provision was available within an accessible location to ensure that residents do not become disadvantaged but what exactly is the criteria. Could the word easily accessible be included in the policy rather than accessible location?

*The Head of Planning Policy and Projects responded:*

*The background to the social and community facilities policy mentions open spaces as being social and community facility and that was covered under the open spaces, sport and recreation policy that prevents the loss of any such facilities in the first instance. On social and community facilities in general if an application did come in for a change of use or there is a loss in such facilities Officers would only look at it if any replacement was easily accessible by an existing facility. That would mean a judgement would have to be made on every particular instance as it was not possible to set out a criteria to say what should be within so many hundred square metres of another. It would also depend on the accessibility to public transport. The policy was trying to resist the loss of any such social and community facilities. Easily accessible was already included in Part 1b of the policy.*

*Policy on Waterways* - A Member said the aim was to ensure potential owners of houseboats would benefit from the same level of access to services and facilities as living in traditional houses. Were we proposing to put facilities on the land adjacent to the boats?

*The Head of Planning Policy and Projects responded:*

*Any new moorings should be in a location close to villages or town centres.*

*Policy on Local Distinctiveness and Place Shaping and Design Criteria* - Where the policy stated 'Innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design ..... Could this be made more robust in the policy box to ensure protection against inappropriate designs?

Can a full cover of hardstanding be discouraged on driveways to provide some element of greenery?

On retrospective planning applications, if someone does not comply with planning permission was there something that can be done to protect ourselves?

The sentence 'will be encouraged when appropriate' could be a green light to developers to put up buildings that do not fit in within the area.

Planning permission is not always required for driveways and sometimes inappropriate materials are used so there is no soakaway or drainage. Driveways with pebble stones go across the footpath. There seemed to be a lack of joining up between the District and County Council in terms of crossovers being granted by County that Three Rivers had no say on.

*The Head of Planning Policy and Projects responded:*

*With innovative design and promotions, it is a requirement of the NPPF that such proposals are considered favourably. There are other policies in the Local Plan that set out local distinctiveness and how developments should fit in. When talking about innovative designs in developments it was hard to determine what they would be. It was down to the individual application and the other policies within the Local Plan to decide if the design fitted in within each particular area.*

*If the materials required as part of the planning permission were not used on driveways/hardstanding this could require enforcement action to be taken.*

*'Will be encouraged' is currently in Planning Framework and was in the last Local Plan.*

*Three Rivers do not have a lot of control when they are not asked for Planning Permission in the first instance.*

*Policy on Housing Density: The policy is 50 per hectare, was this a blanket rate across the District? The original report in 2019 paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6 state that Rickmansworth had a density of 52 but Chorleywood had a density of 18 so if we were to set 50 we would be changing the nature of some of Wards beyond all recognition.*

*If 50 dwelling per hectare, how much garden does each dwelling have?*

*How many dwellings per 50 hectares would be achievable? An area that has a density of 18 we would be tripling the density level. If building near a station that would change the nature of the area. Was there a sliding scale?*

*Would the increase in density be applied on a pro rata basis as very few would come up with a hectare that needs developing.*

*The Head of Planning Policy and Projects responded as follows:*

*The Council had to increase the density on developments so gardens would be smaller. The amenity space in the current Local Plan was considered to be very generous. Privacy issues are already addressed in the Design Criteria. A garden could be less or more depending upon the design and position.*

*The priority was to make efficient use of land and increase the densities for development. Reference was made to point 3 of the Policy where flexibility was allowed. The starting point was 50 dwellings, and areas served by public transport a much higher density. The policy allowed some flexibility. Applications would be looked at to ensure they made efficient use of the land.*

*A mixture of dwellings within developments was being encouraged. There was guidance on garden size in the Design Policy, setting out the requirements depending on the number of bedrooms. It would depend on the development proposals in the first instance.*

*In Rickmansworth one would struggle to find a site near to the station to increase the density. A requirement of the NPPF is to show an increase in density.*

*A pro rata basis would be applied. If under a hectare a proportion would be taken. The policy does allow for lower levels of density.*

*Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Developments: Can there be a line in the Policy to cover not creating noise to existing dwellings or new dwellings?*

*The Head of Planning Policy and Projects responded:*

*This was already covered in the Contamination Pollution Policy. The noise levels would have to meet the requirements of the noise policy.*

Residential Design Layout Accessible Adaptable Buildings: Space standards be made more robust and to say it was the minimum requirement.

*The Head of Planning Policy and Projects responded:*

*If we are saying 'Residential Development must meet or exceed National Space Standards', there was no ambiguity.*

Heritage and the Historic Environment: Demolition in Conservation Areas, was there anything subsequently added or not able to be added. In the original meeting in August 2019 Members had talked about heritage assets such as walls.

*The Head of Planning Policy and Projects responded:*

*Unless walls are attached to a listed building there was not much that can be done. They must be listed or locally listed. Under the review of the local list residents can be contacted to see if they wish to add anything. There were changes made following the original discussions to strengthen the policy. This was reported to sub-committee in June with additional wording from Historic England. Any building in a heritage area was provided with protection under this policy.*

Flood Risk and Water Resources Policy: Can it be confirmed that the new map of flooded areas by the Environment Agency would be included in the new Local Plan?

*The Head of Planning Policy and Projects responded:*

*The Strategic Flood Risk Assessments informs this Policy and were an enhancement on the Environment Agency Flood Risk maps and were looked at as part of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.*

Health and Wellbeing Policy: Was Mental Health being added to the Policy?

*The Head of Planning Policy and Projects responded:*

*Health covers Mental Health, there would be a definition in the glossary for the draft Local Plan.*

Sustainable Transport and Travel: Electric vehicle charging points and electric charging points on the highway - should the Council be encouraging developers to provide these or provide accessibility.

*The Head of Planning Policy and Projects responded:*

*The provision of charging points was covered in the Parking Policy and the Design Policy.*

*Councillor Steve Drury lost connection to the meeting.*

*Alternative transport was in the control of Herts County Council although we look at sustainable transport need to ensure people are not disadvantaged.*

The Chair gave a summary of the recommendations.

A Member sought clarity on what changes could be signed off by the Director and Head of Service. The Head of Planning Policy and Projects advised this would be any changes in the National Policy Regulations/legislation. The Local Plan would be presented to a future Policy and Resources Committee. The Committee would be advised of any substantive changes.

On being put to the Committee the recommendations were declared CARRIED, the voting being 10 For, 0 Against and 2 Abstentions.

RESOLVED:

- 1) Approved the policies recommended to them by the Local Plan Sub Committee for inclusion in the new Local Plan as set out in Appendices 1 – 28 of this report, and
- 2) That delegated authority be granted to the Head of Planning Policy & Projects and the Director of Communities and Environmental Services in consultation with the Lead Member to make changes to all draft policies.

#### **PR17/20 COVID-19 DECISIONS**

Details of all the Urgent and Operational Decisions which had been made during the Covid-19 Pandemic from 23 March to 17 June 2020 were presented to the Committee. Details on the Decisions had also been published in the Members' Information Bulletin every month.

Members made the following comments:

Under D46 Reopening of High Streets Safety Fund, had the grant been claimed?

The Deputy Leader of the Council advised that the Council had not yet claimed this money but had spent a limited amount of money on signage in the High Streets it was responsible for. The County Council had put up signs in other areas including Rickmansworth High Street. The process to claim back the money had been discussed with Officers and due to the very complicated application process Officers were mindful of the length of time it may take to claim back just £3,000. There was no guarantee the money would be received. This was work in progress and it would be reviewed in due course. It can only be spent on signage and publicity.

RESOLVED:

That the details of all the Urgent and Operational Decisions which had been made during the Covid-19 Pandemic from 23 March to 17 June 2020 be noted.

#### **PR18/20 COVID-19 RESPONSE SUB-COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

This report asked the Committee to agree the Terms of Reference for the Covid-19 Response sub-committee. The Principal Committee Manager reported a correction to the last bullet point and that it should be changed to "Recommend the Exit Strategy Criteria.

A Member said the Terms of Reference should include Councillors being updated on all grants available to the Council and clarification on eligibility so

Councillors can be in a knowledgeable position to advise residents? It was advised that this detail would be provided through the information presented at the Covid-19 Response sub-committee.

On being put to the Committee the recommendation was declared CARRIED, the voting being unanimous by general assent.

RESOLVED:

Agreed the Terms of Reference for the Covid-19 Response sub-committee.

## **PR19/20 BUDGET MONITORING – IMPACT OF COVID 19**

This report provided a summary of the impact to date on the Council's budget of Covid-19. The report included the latest position on expenditure, projected income losses and Government funding.

The report had been updated to include the Grant received from Government. The Government had been said the grant would not cover commercial income.

Members made the following observations:

Paragraph 2.5, what percentage does the 4 tenants from the March quarter rentals represent? The Interim Director of Finance said payment had been received from one of the tenants. The exact percentage would be given in a written reply. The tenants concerned in value terms were quite small.

POST MEETING NOTE: It is approximately 5%.

The Council had an Economic Impact Reserve that was set up at the same time that the Council started to diversify its sources of income and look for funding that would fill in some of the gap caused by the reduction in Government support in order to protect services.

On honorarium payments of £71,000 for Environmental Service Management Staff, why was this paid to management staff and how many. The Director of Community and Environmental Services clarified that this was paid to the Waste and Refuse Crews who were working under exceptional circumstances throughout the Coronavirus Pandemic. This was dealt with through the procedure rules in terms of authorising the expenditure. The budget also included honorarium payments to the Grounds Maintenance staff as they had been dealing with very high amounts of rubbish left in parks, open spaces and out in the streets. They had also been dealing with social distancing as part of their work. It was confirmed that the honorarium paid was in addition to their salary. The authorisation was covered in the urgent/operational Covid 19 decisions discussed earlier.

When was the homeworking allowance started and agreed? The Interim Director of Finance confirmed that the homeworking allowance was £26 per month. It was provided to staff when they started working from home. It had now stopped and staff were now able to claim the allowance through HMRC.

Could there be clarification on exactly what the £2.3million saving was? The Interim Director of Finance advised that the Council had been offered the opportunity to buy a parade of shops in South Oxhey as a property investment. It was put into the Capital Programme. The Council were not now taking this forward so there was a saving. There was no corresponding saving in terms of Capital Financing Charges as it was an investment paying for itself. This

scheme did not come to Members as it failed due diligence. The Interim Finance Director agreed to provide details on the location of the shops.

A point was raised on the rental where the summary table was showing a loss of half a million. The Interim Director of Finance confirmed that the table was showing a prudent view on what may be lost this year including rental on garages. The sum for commercial rents was lower than the half a million.

It was confirmed that the £65,000 saving on District Elections was due to not having any elections this year.

A Member said the Waste and Refuse Collectors had kept the service running in exceptional circumstances. Regarding money for Local Elections, would a grant have been received from the Home Office? The Interim Director of Finance would provide a written answer.

POST MEETING NOTE: In response to the question on Local Elections, the answer is No. A grant would only be received if combined with a national poll.

A Member said they supported the manual workers 100% and was very grateful that the full service had been resumed very quickly.

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

RESOLVED:

Noted the financial impact of Covid-19 and the work being done to balance the budget.

RECOMMEND:

That the Director of Finance be authorised to make the necessary adjustments to individual budgets to reflect the expenditure and loss of income arising from Covid-19 contained in the report, including the expenditure savings set out in Appendix 2 and the capital programme changes set out in Appendix 3.

## **PR20/20 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received the work programme.

In response to a Member question on why the Community Interest Company report was not being presented to this meeting the Chief Executive advised that some further work was being completed on the Governance arrangements and the report would be presented to the September meeting.

The Committee were advised that Councillor Steve Drury was having connection issues.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee agreed the items in the work programme.

## **PR21/20 REPRESENTATION ON THE SUB-COMMITTEES**

The Committee noted that Councillor Sarah Nelmes would replace Councillor Sara Bedford on the three sub-committees of Policy and Resources Committee.

On being put to the Committee the recommendation was declared CARRIED, the voting unanimous by general assent.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Sarah Nemes be added as a member of all the 3 sub-committees replacing Councillor Sara Bedford.

**PR22/20 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Chairman moved the following motion and it was agreed:

“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.”

**PR23/20 LOCAL PLAN**

On being put to the Committee the recommendation was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting unanimous being by general assent.

RESOLVED:

That public access to the report be denied until the publication version of the Local Plan is agreed by Full Council; and

That public access to the decision be denied until the Council minute's publication.

**PR24/20 LEISURE FACILITIES MANAGEMENT CONTRACT – COVID 19 SUPPORT**

The purpose of this report is to provide details of the associated revenue and capital implications of the Leisure Management Contract (DBOM) due to COVID 19.

On being put to the Committee the recommendation was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being unanimous by general assent.

RESOLVED:

That public access to the report and decision be denied until the matter is resolved.

**CHAIRMAN**