

LEISURE, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES

Of a virtual meeting on Wednesday 25 November from 7.30pm to 9.30pm.

Councillors present:

Chris Lloyd (Lead Member for Leisure)	Phil Williams (Lead Member
Roger Seabourne (Lead Member Community	Environmental Services and
Safety and Partnerships)	Sustainability)
Donna Duncan	Alison Scarth
Paula Hiscocks	Jon Tankard
David Major	Alison Wall

Also in attendance:

Ray Figg – Head of Community Services
Rebecca Young – Acting Head of Community Partnerships
Tina Stankley – Interim Head of Finance
Jennie Probert – Environmental Strategy Manager
Malcolm Clarke – Waste and Environment Manager
Josh Sills – Watersmeet Venue Manager
Charlotte Gomes – Landscape and Leisure Development Manager
Kelly Barnard - Leisure Contracts and Landscape Projects Officer
Sherrie Ralton - Committee Manager
Peta Mettam - Citizens' Advice Service Three Rivers

Cllr Chris Lloyd in the Chair

LEC 27/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Stephen King.

LEC 28/20 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee virtual/remote meeting held on 7 October 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair of the meeting when it was possible to do so.

LEC 29/20 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair of the meeting reported that the following item of business had been published 5 working days before the meeting but was of sufficient urgency for the following reasons:

Item 10 – Licensing Fees and Charges – to enable the recommendations on the Fees and Charges for 2021/22 to be included in the budget setting process.

LEC 30/20 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor David Major declared a non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 5 being a member of the citizen advice service in Three Rivers but would stay and take part in the debate on the item.

LEC 31/20 CITIZENS' ADVICE SERVICE IN THREE RIVERS ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

The Director of the Citizen Advice Service provided a presentation to the Committee highlighting the performance and achievements for the last financial year 2019/20.

Over the last year the number of clients had increased to over 7,803 with the number of issues being dealt increasing to over 18,000. The Director wished to congratulate the previous Director, Marion Seneschall on the excellent service Marion had provided over the last 15 years.

63% of the service was seen under the general service, 15% was for debt advice and 14% for specialist advice on sickness and disability benefits with 8% of the advice given in relation to relationships and families. The pandemic did affect the service in the final quarter and they did see quite a significant drop in clients who came to see them for face to face meetings. On the previous year the number of clients coming to see them face to face was 46%, whereas this year it had dropped to 30% and felt that Covid had an effect on this.

The team had moved to remote working due to Covid in March but had still been able to help clients. In the last year they had been able to raise around £1.2 million in additional income for the residents of Three Rivers and help write off £438,000 worth of debt. This did benefit the local community and did represent a total local return of 635% on the core grant from the Council. Their success rate at disability and sickness tribunals continued at 96%. They still had a 100% rate of helping clients with social rent arrears with their housing.

The top 5 issues had changed since last year and they were generally seeing more clients with debt issues. On the benefit issues last year, initial claims for Universal Credit was the second highest benefit issue whereas the previous year they were at the bottom. They had needed to deal with lots of changes to legislation that had arisen due to Covid-19.

The main stay of the service was their volunteers who over the last year had provided over 32,000 donated hours which represented a saving of £544,000 which they would have to pay if they did not have volunteers. They had also been able to maintain the same level of volunteers.

Covid had an impact on costs this year, due to working from home and staff being provided with laptops, etc. but had been able to organise this by the end of March for all staff and volunteers. Staff were able to come back to the office in June and vulnerable clients were seen face to face from October. They had to provide screens, PPE, sanitiser and masks but had been able to take advantage of grants for funding provided due to Covid receiving about £88k. Some staff and volunteers had left the

service due to the pandemic but they had been replaced and recruited more volunteers.

A Member said they were thankful the service was continuing to be provided for the residents of Three Rivers during this difficult time. The Member asked what were the main problems they had found due to Covid?

The Director said that they were finding that employment was featuring high along with furlough. Debt was increasing now because a lot of enforcement and bailiff action along with possessions had been suspended. The main issues had been around Universal Credit claims to our helpline as some people are claiming for the first time ever and there were a lot of new calls as people have needed help with this. That had been a big change to the service, with people being seen for the first time. There had also been a huge rise in relationship problems and domestic violence and had specialist family Law case workers to provide advice and support.

The AGM would be held on 16 December 2020 and details would be circulated to all Councillors.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

LEC 32/20 MOTIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 11

At the Council meeting on 20 October 2020 it was agreed that the following motion would be referred to this committee. .

Councillor Paula Hiscocks lost connection to the meeting but was able to re-join after a minute.

In accordance with the Council's Committee virtual meeting protocol which sits alongside the Council Procedure Rules a member of the public spoke in support of the motion.

Councillor Paula Hiscocks moved the following motion, seconded by Councillor Alison Wall

This Council believes that, as we are extremely fortunate to have three chalk stream rivers, The Chess, Gade and Colne running through our area, we should work with Thames Water, as far as possible within existing resources, to properly serve our residents and protect the environment. Also that we ensure whenever relevant in the planning process that all the Water Companies are consulted.

Councillor Phil Williams advised that there were plans in place to set up a Water Partnership to discuss these issues. There were two chalk streams and the River Colne.

Both the proposer and seconder were happy to accept the amendment.

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

RESOLVED:

This Council believes that, as we are extremely fortunate to have two chalk streams and the River Colne running through our area, we should work with Thames Water, as far as possible within existing resources, to properly serve our residents and protect the environment. Also that we ensure whenever relevant in the planning process that all the Water Companies are consulted.

LEC 32/20 BUDGET MONITORING

The report covered the Committees' financial position over the medium term (2020 – 2023) as at Period 6 (end of September).

The Period 6 comprehensive Budget Management report had already been presented to the Policy & Resources Committee at its meeting on 2 November 2020 which sought approval to a change in the Council's 2020 - 2023 medium-term financial plan.

The Interim Head of Finance advised that £171,000 over spend was documented on the report.

Income had been impacted severely, Watersmeet Pantomime and other shows had been cancelled but there was now a grant from the Arts council of £175,000 which would be used to introduce a shortened programme at Watersmeet before the end of the financial year.

Due to the way in which the Alternative Financial Model (AFM) works there was projected to be a substantial loss of income to Environmental Protection this year.

Members raised the following points:

There were concerns that the price of nappy sacks was being raised by 25% at a difficult time for many people.

Was the £1,400 for the Ski Club generator at the Aquadrome a one off payment? Why was the Council paying for this as it was a private club who charge for their service? The Head of Community Services advised that there was an expired lease agreement between TRDC and the Ski Club. The generator powered both the public toilets and the adjoining ski club and Property Team were looking at the installation of an electric cable between the public toilets at the Aquadrome and the ski club.

Could part of the Culture Recovery Fund be used against the Watersmeet loss of £51,400 income?

The Watersmeet Venue Manager advised that the grant was restricted in use from 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021 so a portion would be used to offset fixed costs for the current period but could not be used retrospectively for the first part of the year April- September 2020.

Under Community Safety, an explanation was requested as to why the £30k Legal Budget had transferred to Community Safety and not into general funds? The Acting Head of Community Partnerships advised that this had been agreed as an additional budget to the anti-social behaviour caseload due to Court needs and Legal Advice requirements, so they would have control over the amount spent. The Lead Member for Community Safety and Partnerships added that it could be put into the legal budget but seemed more logical to be allocated to them. They were matching the

budget with where the expenditure was being incurred so it was an accounting adjustment.

Was there already external roof access at Watersmeet? The Watersmeet Venue Manager advised that the roof access currently in place was via a vertical ladder so the project was to install two separate staircases, subject to planning permission, one on the side next to Basing House to allow safe access to the roof for maintenance of Solar Roof Panels, satellite dish and the plant room. The second staircase on the side by the church as an emergency escape route from a plant room that is currently only accessed by a separate vertical ladder within the boiler room.

RECOMMENDED:

That Members noted and commented on the contents of the report.

LEC 33/20 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 2021

Leisure and Landscapes

The Landscape and Leisure Development Manager gave a brief overview of the Service Plan.

The following points were raised:

A Principal Tree and Landscapes Officer had been appointed and would be starting in December

Clarification was required on the three separate Watersmeet Manager roles within the report. The Watersmeet Venue Manager advised that the Watersmeet Venue Manager role had oversight over all aspects as well as Programming and Capital Projects. The Technical and Building Manager was responsible for all technical aspects of the building including lighting and sound and organising electrical work and attending events. The Operations and Events Manager focussed on hall hire and had responsibility for the box office and financial administration.

Could all training be as broad as possible with no duplication and include a partnership with Rangers. Also could training be provided between the Parish and Council? The Officers would take that into consideration when arranging training.

Were all the positions already in post or were they new roles? It was confirmed that these were all existing posts apart from the Leavesden Country Park Ranger post which was related to the National Lottery Heritage Fund Project, which was a fixed term contract.

The Leisure Projects Officer for Abbots Langley was part of the National Lottery Heritage Fund project and was funded by Section 106 and would come to an end on completion of the project. The Head of Community Services added that the only new post was the Principal Tree and Landscapes Officer. This was due to a restructure at the end of the summer. The only vacancy was for the Senior Park Ranger but this would not be recruited to until they established what role was required.

Community Partnerships

The Acting Head of Community Partnerships said the structure chart was not up to date due to recent changes. Also the Climate Change Officer role was missing from the chart.

The ASB Casework Management Database would be removed as this had been agreed for this year.

A Member asked whether there would be any updates on the projects. The Acting Head of Community Partnerships said updates were included in the Members Information Bulletin and presentations could be made to Committee on any specific project of interest.

Environmental Protection

The Environmental Strategy Manager pointed out that this was a draft and 'actuals' for the Service Planning would be populated in the final document.

The following points were raised:

Could the Water Partnership be included? The Head of Community Services said they would get back to the Committee on this once they had worked out which was the best service plan for this. **Post Meeting Note:** *The Water Partnership would be included in the Climate Change section of the Community Partnerships Service Plan.*

A query was raised on EP15 satisfaction with keeping public land clear of litter and refuse, the target this year was 76% but next year it was 71%. **Post Meeting Note:** *At this stage the Service Plan is draft. Once actuals are completed for 2019/20 the targets will be looked at in greater detail for trends and past performance for the final Service Plan.*

Could a tree strategy be developed? This was covered within the Leisure and Landscapes Service Plan but there would be cross service working.

Regulatory Services (items relating to Licensing)

The Head of Community Services advised that the performance indicators had not been amended as this was just at draft stage.

Growth Bids:

Leisure and Landscapes

The Landscape and Leisure Development Manager advised that the existing gyms had been installed between 2009 and 2011 and many were coming to the end of their life and difficult to maintain as a number of parts came from China. Within the next 12 months there would be a need to remove some equipment so the funding was needed to replace them. These areas supported people to become more active without the financial burden of having to take out gym membership. They would potentially look to implement a hiring option for personal trainers or exercise instructors at limited times and days. Also the Leisure team would look at organising sessions at the zones. There were 2 options, Option 1 to replace the four sites at the Aquadrome, Leavesden Country Park, South Oxhey Playing Fields and Barton Way and option 2 to replace the four sites but include King George V Playing Fields as a potential additional site. It was proposed to use the £20,000 Capital Health and Wellbeing Fund over 2 to 3 years with additional funds from the TRDC Capital pot.

Members raised the following points:

The hiring of equipment to personal trainers was a good idea but how would this be managed to prevent instructors using it without permission? The Landscape and Leisure Development Manager said this would be a challenge to police as it would require 24/7 monitoring, which would not be practical, however information would be available on the website to encourage people to go through the appropriate channels to hire the equipment. The Council would raise awareness that the instructor's

insurance would be invalid if they did not have the land owner's permission to run sessions.

A Member would like additional play equipment for children in the Aquadrome as it was very busy. They were in agreement with personal trainers being charged to run sessions on the outdoor equipment but would like the equipment to be available to individuals as well. The Chair clarified that it would be used in the main by individuals but they would explore charging for personal training sessions at specific times and days.

Could funding be provided by HS2 for the King George V play area? This would be investigated by the Officers.

Why would equipment be moved to Barton Way? This was due to space required for the new equipment but would be looked at in more detail during the project.

As part of the hire agreement Officers would look at ensuring equipment was available for individuals to use.

The Committee agreed that they preferred Option 1 but would want Officers to investigate the possibility of getting funding from HS2 for the equipment at King George V Playing Fields.

Community Partnerships

W3RT

The Acting Head of Community Partnerships said the growth bid was to develop a three year Service Level Agreement with Watford and Three Rivers Trust.

The Chair moved the recommendation set out in the report.

On being put to the Committee, the recommendations were declared CARRIED, by the Chairman, the voting being unanimous

RECOMMENDED:

That the Committee commented on the draft service plans attached at Appendix 1 and receive the final service plans in March 2020 for recommendation to Council and

That the Committee commented on the Service Committee growth bids contained within Appendix 2 for consideration by Council as part of the budget setting process.

LEISURE

LEC 34/20 WATERSMEET

The Watersmeet Venue Manager gave the following verbal update:

Following on from the last update at October's committee there have been a number of developments. Three Rivers was successful with their application to the Culture Recovery Fund for a grant of £175,000 which will enable Watersmeet to reopen supporting the fixed running costs of the venue, allowing Covid Secure measures to be implemented, and to subsidise a live theatre programme. The conditions of the grant stipulate that the money must be used to cover costs during the period 1 October 2020 – 31 March 2021.

The original intention was to reopen Watersmeet on 12 November, however due to the announcement of the current national restrictions these plans have been postponed.

The new tier system announced on Monday has the following implications for Watersmeet:

- Tier 1 – has no additional impact on our planned reopening
- Tier 2 – means that Watersmeet will not be able to sell alcohol but will still be able to reopen (Post Meeting Note: The Government have issued further clarification that theatres and cinemas in Tier 2 can serve alcohol to people with tickets when seated in the auditorium)
- Tier 3 – means Watersmeet will not be allowed to reopen and planned events for December will need to be postponed or cancelled

It is anticipated that Rickmansworth will fall into either Tier 1 or 2 which will allow Watersmeet to reopen from 3 December, and so if this is the case we intend to reopen with our first hire booked for Monday 7 December and the first film is scheduled for Wednesday 9 December. Initially the programme in December will consist primarily of films and live theatre screenings as we needed to commit to a programme that offered flexibility and minimal financial risk should the current national restrictions have been extended, or if Rickmansworth were to go into Tier 3.

To reassure our audiences when attending Watersmeet we will be implementing a suite of 'Covid Secure' measures including, a reduced auditorium capacity, one way systems, hand sanitiser stations, enhanced cleaning between events as well as requiring staff and customers to wear face coverings. Details of what to expect are available on the Watersmeet website and will be included in email correspondence. Audiences will be encouraged to use contactless payment by booking online and downloading the HOPT bar app for ordering and paying for drinks. For those people who do not have smart phones or the ability to book online we will continue to offer a limited 'in person' service for both ticket purchase and the purchase of refreshments.

The key points for customers to note are:

1. To book online via the Watersmeet website if possible
2. Download the HOPT bar app in advance of your visit (providing you have a smart phone)
3. And remember to bring a face covering with you

To give you a flavour we have an exciting programme planned for December and beyond including a live theatre comedy night on Thursday 10 December, a number of popular event cinema screenings including the hit musicals *Kinky Boots* and *42nd Street*, the delightful *Michael Ball & Alfie Boe: Back Together* concert as well as a selection of Christmas movie classics such as *It's a Wonderful Life* and the hit 90's family film *Home Alone*.

As we head into 2021 we have a full programme of live theatre scheduled for later in the year and so there is plenty on offer for our local residents to get excited about in the year ahead.

- **Your Visit During Covid**
 - Details of Covid secure measures
 - What to expect when you arrive
 - Details about box office opening hours and how to book tickets
 - How to download the HOPT bar app
 - Ticket information

- Accessibility information
- **What's On**
 - Event cinema
 - Films
 - Live theatre

With regards to capital building projects, it was agreed by Policy & Resources Committee to rephase the second part of the LED lighting replacement budget into this financial year to make use of the available capacity due to reduced number of events. The tender documents are currently being prepared with the works expected to be completed by end of March 2021.

A planning application for Watersmeet external roof access will be submitted imminently. If planning permission is granted the fabrication of the structures will be started with installation expected to take place in February or March 2021.

HYOC2020 has continued throughout the year with a number of events shifting online. It has been decided that HYOC2020 will not be formally extended into 2021. Arts, culture and heritage activity will continue to be promoted on the Creative Hertfordshire website under the banner of 'We are Creative Hertfordshire'. This will be open to local arts organisations providing a window to activity on offer across the county.

Over the past month, as well as supporting the Council's Covid response via redeployments, the Watersmeet staff team have been working extremely hard to prepare the venue for reopening and we are hopeful that we will be able to welcome audiences back to Watersmeet very soon.

The Chair thanked the Watersmeet Venue Manager for the update.

LEC 35/20 FEES AND CHARGES FOR LEISURE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES IN 2021/22

The Committee were asked to consider the fees and charges set out and shown in Appendices 1 and 2 for Leisure and Community services for 2021/22 and to recommend accordingly to the Policy and Resources Committee.

Members raised the following points:

There were concerns about the 3% increase in Watersmeet Hire Rates due to the venue being closed for so long and the need to attract people and asked for this item to be voted on separately.

Another Member said there could be high demand due to weddings and events being postponed during the Pandemic so it seemed the time to increase the hire cost.

The Chair moved recommendations 11.1 and 11.3 and 11.4 as set out in the report.

On being put to the Committee, the recommendations were declared CARRIED, by the Chair, the voting being unanimous

The Chair moved recommendations 11.2 as set out in the report.

On being put to the Committee, the recommendation was declared CARRIED by the Chair, the voting being 6 For, 3 Against and 0 Abstentions.

RECOMMENDED:

11.1 That the fees and charges detailed within this report are accepted into the Committee budget, which is recommended to the Policy and Resources Committee.

11.2 To agree the increase of 3% for Watersmeet hire rates, equipment and staff, as set out in Appendix 1.

11.3 To agree the increase of 3% for fees relating to the hire of a park, recreation ground or open space, as set out in Appendix 2.

11.4 To agree the increase of 3% for fees relating to the filming in a park, recreation ground or open space, as set out in Appendix 2.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES AND SUSTAINABILITY

LEC 36/20 FEES AND CHARGES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

To recommend to Members the Environmental Protection fees and charges for 2021/22

The Environmental Strategy Officer advised that there was a 3% increase unless otherwise stated. The football pitches would be club set up only due to Covid and the fees had been adjusted accordingly. Garden waste was set at £45 (£37 for those on certain benefits as outlined in the report) and the £5 discount for payment by direct debit would be removed.

The following points were raised:

Special collections were increasing from £48 to £49, Watford Borough Council Charge £31, was this increase necessary? Had been an increase in fly tipping? The Officer had looked at other Local Authority Special Collection rates and many were on par on what Three Rivers were proposing.

The brown bin service was £7,382 over budget and residents had missed collections due to COVID and the annual break from collections 16 December to 10 January, so did the Council need to increase this by £5? This was a non-statutory service and the Council were not at cost recovery stage yet. The Head of Community Services added that people on benefits pay a lower rate and cost recovery had not yet been reached so there was no surplus. A Member clarified that although £7,382 over budget the service was still running at a loss. The plan was not to make a profit but to break even.

A Member asked if a tally could be kept on how many white goods were being dumped.

The Chair thanked Officers for the work put in, particularly the different options for the sports pitches in light of COVID-19 and moved the recommendation set out in the report

On being put to the Committee, the recommendation in the report was declared CARRIED by the Chair, the voting being 6 in favour and 3 against.

RECOMMENDED:

That this Committee recommends the fees and charges detailed within the report are approved by the Policy and Resources Committee.

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PARTNERSHIPS

LEC 37/20 REVIEW OF LICENSING FEES AND CHARGES

Considered a review of discretionary fees and charges, with any adjustments to take effect from 1 April 2021.

The Chair moved the recommendation set out in the report.

On being put to the Committee, the recommendation in the report was declared CARRIED by the Chair, the voting being unanimous.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Committee agree the following recommendation:

- i) There is no change to the fees and charges associated with the Licensing service. The existing fees and charges are accepted into the Committee's budgets, which are recommended to the Policy and Resources Committee.
- ii) Fees and charges for Environmental Health Commercial services (skin piercing and tattooist services) are increased by 3% in line with inflationary increases.

LEC 38/20 WORK PROGRAMME

To review and make necessary changes to the Committee's work programme.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Committee agreed the items included in the work programme.

LEC 40/20 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chair moved, duly seconded, 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 items 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."

LEC 41/20 ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES FEES AND CHARGES

The Livestreaming of the meeting was stopped and the Committee moved into Part II business.

To consider Appendix A of the Part I report (item 10 on the agenda)

On being put to the Committee, the recommendation in the report was declared CARRIED by the Chair, the voting being unanimous

RECOMMENDED:

That this Committee recommends the fees and charges detailed within the report are approved by the Policy and Resources Committee.

CHAIRMAN