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

## **MINUTES**

of a virtual meeting on Tuesday 17 November 2020 from 7.30 pm until 8.10pm.

Councillors present:

Andrew Scarth (Lead Member for Housing)  
Steve Drury (Lead Member for Infrastructure and Planning Policy)  
Stephen Giles-Medhurst (Lead Member for Transport and Economic  
Development)  
Alex Hayward  
Tony Humphreys  
Joy Mann  
Joan King

Reena Ranger  
David Sansom  
Stephanie Singer

Officers Present: Tina Stankley, Interim Head of Finance  
Claire May, Head of Planning Policy and Projects  
Kimberley Rowley, Head of Regulatory Services  
Sarah Haythorpe, Principle Committee Manager

**Councillor Andrew Scarth in the Chair**

### **IHED 27/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None received.

### **IHED 28/20 MINUTES**

The minutes of the virtual/remote meeting of the Infrastructure, Housing and Economic Development Committee held on 22 September 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair when it was possible to do so.

### **IHED 29/20 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS**

None received.

### **IHED 30/20 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

To receive any declarations of interest.

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**TRANSPORT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

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**IHED 31/20 TO RECEIVE A PETITION UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 18**

The Lead Petitioner, spoke on behalf residents and shop keepers who had signed the e-petition regarding the pedestrianisation of Rickmansworth High Street from Church Street/Northway to Parsonage Road.

“This petition called for the pedestrianisation of Rickmansworth High Street from Church Street/Northway to Parsonage Road. This would create a traffic free, people friendly, “piazza” style zone where shoppers can move more freely, linger and wonder freely without fear of pollution or being the victim of traffic accidents. The High Street needs to be transformed after the Covid crisis if it is to remain the vibrant heart of the community. Pedestrianisation will promote vitality and variety and bring a new lease of life to the whole area.”

The Lead Member for Economic Development and Transport thanked the Lead Petitioner for presenting the e-petition to the Committee. It was interesting to know that the Lead Petitioner had an additional handwritten paper petition of some 300 signatures. This Council was not the Highways Authority, which it was understood had been explained to the Lead Petitioner. The Council had assisted and worked with the County Council along with the Lead Member and the Local County Councillor, Frances Button, in relation to the section of the High Street that was now the subject to partial pedestrianisation under a temporary Traffic Order that would last up to 18 months. During the course of that time it would be reviewed. The Lead Petitioner was asked to make sure that both the petitions were sent to Herts County Council so that the Lead Member and County Councillor and others can discuss the implications of extending that pedestrianisation and the logistical issues. The Lead Member did know that when it was first looked at in terms of the current pedestrianisation between Northway and Station Road it was feasible because effectively there was another route around the High Street in terms of Northway. Concerns had been raised about whether it could be extended further down to Parsonage Road but that would require a lot more detailed work in terms of bus rerouting etc. The Lead Member was not saying it was not possible although ultimately it would not be for this Council to make that decision it would be for the County Council to work with us and implement the appropriate traffic order and undertake the required consultations. It was always very useful to have residents and businesses feedback on things which would enhance the area and the Lead Member thanked the Lead Petitioner and others for organising and signing the petitions. Officers would write to the Lead Petitioner confirming the details and would in due course engage with them further along with the County Council.

**RESOLVED:**

That the e-petition be accepted by the Infrastructure, Housing and Economic Development Committee.

That a letter be sent to the Lead Petitioner confirming the details provided by the Lead Member.

**RESOURCES**

**IHED 32/20 BUDGET MONITORING – PERIOD 6**

The Interim Head of Finance presented the report which covered the Committee's financial position over 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.

Interim Head of Finance reported the following points within the report:

- Paragraph 2.1 – the approved budget was £1.876 million and the estimated expenditure for the year would be £1.999 million which gave an adverse variance/overspend of £123,000 for the year. The table below gave a breakdown of how this was made up with housing having an overspend of £19,000, Infrastructure and Planning Policy an underspend of £19,000 and Economic Development an overspend of £23,000.
- All details of the latest budget compared to the forecast outturn were contained in Appendix 1 to the report. Some of the details relating to the adverse variance were provided as follows:
  - £25,000 additional cost in Housing relating to a legal case.
  - £33,000 backdated business rates to pay for Talbot Road car park.
  - Due to Covid-19 there was a net £83,000 reduction in parking income.
  - An additional £16,000 for machine maintenance was required.
  - £10,000 reduction in income regarding search fees, as people were doing their own searches. This had been offset in savings in the Regulatory Services Legal budget and across the board in printing stationery and travel cost as staff were working from home and not doing site visits.
- Para 2.4 – 2.6 covered the position on capital with a slight variance in capital of £2,000. Details of individual schemes were provided in Appendix 2.
- Income – Covid-19 was having a significant impact on our parking budgets across all income streams. We had suspended from April to mid-June 2020 our parking enforcement. In the table in Paragraph 2.7 the overall impact over the year was provided.
- Paragraph 2.9 provided details on aged debts with most related to unpaid rent on temporary accommodation for over a year old debt.

A Member asked why the £33,000 on business rates on Talbot Road car park went back 15 years and not 8 years as in the report.

The Interim Head of Finance said that the backdated amount went back some years but in terms of recovery it depended on how active the recovery had been and if there had been actual activity. There was limitations, but the Interim Head of Finance would investigate and get back to Members.

Post meeting note:

The rates for the Car park had been billed to the occupier of the offices nearby since 2005. They believed it was for the car park spaces that they used within the car park. However, on further investigation the Valuation Office confirmed to them last year that their spaces were already included in the rating assessments for their offices. So upon discovering this they requested that the rates they had paid incorrectly were refunded to them. They requested the back date to the start of the liability which was agreed by management.

A Member said that parking enforcement was stopped for the first Covid lockdown and believed that Watford Council had stopped parking enforcement again for this second lockdown. Had Three Rivers stopped parking enforcement?

The Lead Member for Transport and Economic Development said that with regard to valuation tribunal it related to a historic decision in relation to Talbot Road to which notification was only received this year and hence the period of the backdating. Part of the car park was closed prior to that. In relation to the parking enforcement the only Authority to suspend its parking enforcement during the second lockdown is Watford. All other Authorities in Hertfordshire, including Hertsmere BC who run the Three Rivers parking control service, had maintained the current controls over the four week lockdown period. It was decided that it would be too confusing to send out details to residents to say it had been suspended and then to reinstate it again on 3 December. Watford Council have a considerably larger number of controlled parking zones which they have suspended. We have a very limited number of parking control zones compared to Watford.

The Head of Regulatory Services said that British Parking Association has issued some guidance and TRDC appeared to be following good practice in maintaining parking controls at the current time. The Council had gone along with the majority of the authorities considering the short timescale of the lockdown with essentially many people remaining at home.

On being put to the Committee the recommendation to note and comment on the report was agreed by general assent.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

**IHED 33/20 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT (PLANNING), LOCAL LAND CHARGES SEARCHES, STREET NAMING AND NUMBERING AND PARKING SERVICES FEES AND CHARGES**

This report provided an overview of all discretionary charges for Development Management, Local Land Charges Searches, Street Naming and Numbering and Parking.

On being put to the Committee the recommendations were declared CARRIED by the Chair of the meeting having been agreed by general assent.

RECOMMEND:

- i) There is no change to the fees and charges associated with the Development Management pre-application service. The existing fees and charges are accepted into the Committee's budgets, which are recommended to the Policy and Resources Committee.
- ii) There is no change to the fees and charges associated with the Parking Service. The existing fees and charges are accepted into the Committee's budgets, which are recommended to the Policy and Resources Committee.
- iii) Fees and charges for Local Land Charges and street naming and numbering are increased in line with inflation at 3%.

## **IHED 34/20 STRATEGIC, SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING 2021-2024**

This report enabled the Committee to comment on its draft service plans and the growth bid.

A Member commented on point in 2.1.1 on the corporate objectives where it stated that we would work on a Local Plan to deliver sufficient housing and adopt that plan by 2021. Was that date correct and were there any changes.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said the only consideration for this Committee was in regard to the Conservation Areas in the service plan. The Local Plan timeline is agreed through the Local Development scheme that was agreed by Policy and Resources Committee on 2 November and the timeline was available there.

A Member asked if the report needed to be updated with the new timeline to whenever the Local Plan would be adopted as per the Policy and Resources Committee decision.

The Head of Planning Policy and Projects said that it was correct in the table on page 13, but that it was a draft service plan and would be amended for when it came back to the Committee in March for approval.

A Member thought we had to deliver a Climate Change Strategy after a motion was approved at Full Council and asked if we needed to add anything in terms of:

- Recycling.
- Our duty to upgrade bins in our High Streets and Council spaces so that they are recycling friendly.
- High Street regeneration post the pandemic

The Head of Regulatory Services said the service plans cover the areas for this Committee, and recycling would be picked up by the Environmental Protection service plan. The Climate Strategy would be picked up under the Community Partnerships service plan. The Climate Strategy was currently out for consultation. The regeneration of the High Street was fed down from the Corporate Framework and Plan. Unless they are specific targets or projects things would be picked up generally by the Climate Change Officers in terms of their strategy and new projects. Officers would not go into that level of detail in the service plans.

The Head of Regulatory Services said that a PID for GIS was presented to IHED last year. GIS is a spatial mapping system that was used across the Council and is used by many different teams. Historically there had been teams which had Officers with the expertise to use the system but over the years and as priorities had changed we had lost a lot of that expertise and ended up with a very fragmented mapping system. The Covid-19 pandemic had changed many priorities over the last 8 months, and unfortunately the Council had not been able to find the resource to progress this project internally. The Council were currently receiving some support from Watford BC and were trying to get the system updated. From an officer perspective it was felt that there was demand for the creation of a new post to support a much improved GIS system for the Council.

A Member asked what the difference was between this PID and the one that was brought forward last year. We should have our own GIS system and not rely upon other Councils to help us and it would be good to have our own system and make a

bit of profit by selling information to other Councils. They were in full support of this project.

The Head of Regulatory Services said the only change in the PID was that the figures had been updated. Local plans use the system a lot along with Environmental Protection. We need a corporate central resource to manage the systems and data and then they can disseminate to teams who would then update their own data. It was evident there had been many LAs who had used GIS for mapping data during the current pandemic, and the widespread use of this data meant TRDC were increasingly lagging behind.

A Member supported the PID and acknowledged that the Council over the years had lost the expertise to manage a GIS system. The Member referred the Committee to the implications of not completing the project as provided in Point 1.6 of the PID. The Council had an over reliance on individual officers and spend a lot on the software and were not getting the return we needed in having an officer dedicated to the mapping system and making sure it is up to date. We are currently not able to provide the appropriate information to the land registry in the form that they require which had additional cost implications on the Council. We are losing out by not having a dedicated resource.

On being put to the Committee the recommendations were declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being unanimous by general assent.

RECOMMEND:

The Committee commented on the draft service plans attached to the report at Appendix 1 and would receive the final service plans in March 2021 for recommendation to Council.

The Committee commented and supported the Service Committee growth bid contained within Appendix 2 of report for consideration by Council (January/February 2021) as part of the budget setting process.

## **IHED 35/20 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received its work programme.

The Chair informed Members that the Head of Housing Services had offered Housing training to Members and wanted to know if there would be any interest. The sessions would be organised for early January 2021 and that questions would need to be e-mailed to Officers.

A Member said it would be a good idea that all Members of the Council attend if they wished, as long as it was before the reports came forward to the Committee.

On being put to the Committee the recommendation to provide a Housing Training in early January 2021 was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being unanimous by general assent.

RESOLVED

The Committee noted the work programme and agreed the recommendation that Housing Training be provided to all the Committee Members in early January but that all Members be invited to attend if they wished.

**CHAIR**