
POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**MINUTES**

Of a virtual/remote meeting held on 2 November 2020 at 7.30pm to 9.15pm.

Councillors present:

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

Chris Lloyd (Leisure)
Andrew Scarth (Housing)
Reena Ranger
Roger Seabourne (Community Safety and
Partnerships)
Alison Wall
Phil Williams (Lead Member for
Environmental Services & Sustainability)
Paula Hiscocks

Others Councillors in attendance:

Councillors Sara Bedford, Peter Getkahn,
Debbie Morris and Alex Michaels

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
Sarah Haythorpe, Principal Committee Manager

PR58/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

PR59/20 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meetings held on 7 September and the Extraordinary Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 20 September 2020 were confirmed as a correct record by general assent and would be signed by the Chair.

PR60/20 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair of the meeting advised that the following items of business had not been available 5 clear working days before the meeting but were of sufficient urgency for the following reason:

- Agenda Item 5 Local Development Scheme in order that progress with the Local Plan could continue.
- Agenda Item 7 Budget Monitoring Report for month 6, September to ensure that the budget changes can be approved by Council in December 2020.

PR61/20 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Alex Hayward declared an interest in the Local Development Scheme and left the meeting for this item.

PR62/20 LOCAL PLAN DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

Councillor Alex Hayward left the meeting.

The report sought Member's approval of a revised Local Development Scheme (LDS).

The following points and questions were raised by Members:

Q: What was the original completion date for the Local Plan?

A: A written reply would be provided.

POST MEETING NOTE:

The original anticipated adoption date for the Local Plan was mid 2020 as set out in the 2017 Local Development Scheme.

Q: The adoption date was June 2022. Clarification was sought on the consequences of Paragraph 2.7 which stated that failure to have an up to date LDS may result in the Planning Inspector concluding that planning documents are not legally compliant.

A: This meant the Local Plan needed to be prepared in line with the Local Development Scheme and in line with the timetable. It was a legal compliance that the Inspector would look at this during the examination.

Q: Paragraph 2.8 seeks approval to move to adoption of the plan to May 2023, what would the consequences of this?

A: The purpose of the report was to provide an up to date LDS so the Local Plan was prepared in line with the LDS and therefore would be legally compliant. The risks were set out in the table at Paragraph 9.2 which stated 'Delay to the Local Plan may result in speculative planning applications'.

Q: Paragraph 2.9 stated that the LDS takes into consideration the existing Committee timetable. Would it be possible to add more meetings?

A: The report was incorrect, the LDS did take account of an Extraordinary Council meeting to be arranged for 1 November 2021, following the Policy and Resources Committee meeting to enable publication of the Local Plans to start earlier. The Chair explained that preparation time had been built in rather than just meeting dates which was why the Council meeting had been timetabled in otherwise the next meeting would be December 2021.

Q: Did Three Rivers know what stage Dacorum, St Albans, Hertsmere and Watford were at with their Local Plan and the status of their existing Local Plan?

A: Each Local Authority had different timetables because due to when their plan was last adopted. Some were going to Regulation 18 either at the end of 2020 or spring 2021. Three Rivers were not far off this. St Albans had withdrawn their plan from examination.

A Member felt the legal implications needed to be updated at items 4, 5 and 6 to reflect what would happen if Three Rivers did not have an up to date Local Plan and what the consequences of a delay would be.

Q: Did the date of May 2023 include any delays?

A: There were several consultations to get through before that stage so there may be issues that would need to be addressed that could require additional work so there were potential delays. As soon as the Local Plan was submitted for examination it would be down to the Inspectors. The Chair advised that the Plan was entirely within the law as was the LDS and not having an up to date plan or full land supply had been the case since the Government changed the method of calculation on the number of houses.

Q: Paragraph 9.2 stated that the risk rating had been calculated as 6 medium and asked whether the likelihood of it being open season with developers should make it higher, i.e. 'very likely'? Paragraph 4.1 stated the recommendations were within the Council's agreed budget but wouldn't an extra year of Councillor's time incur extra expense?

A: The Director of Community and Environmental Services said although it would be ideal to have an up to date Local Plan matters constantly changed and the Plan was not up to date for long as it was a 15 year document. Three Rivers had not had the identified housing land supply for a few years since the housing targets were increased by the Government and a number of applications had been received during that time and would continue to be. With the current economic situation, the risks were probably a bit lower as house building plans by major developers were in many cases on hold. The Councillor's concern was understandable but it was not felt the risks were unduly increased. In terms of budget, the size of the team would not be increased so the Local Plan would continue within the existing budget.

Q: A Member was concerned that the Local Plan was taking an extra year, and asked whether it could be brought forward to June 2022.

A: The LDS could possibly be reviewed following consultation exercises to see if it could be sped up. The Chair pointed out that some of the administration time after consultation would be dependent upon what came back from the consultation.

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst moved the recommendation and pointed out that as soon as the LDS was published it had some weight on any planning applications and appeals and additional weight was added at each stage of the process. There was 7 months built in for the Government Inspector stage which was outside our control. It was important to get it right for the post Covid-19 situation.

Q: A Member asked for the publication dates that had been set and moved over the last 5 years to be sent to Councillors (a post meeting note is provided below). Also could every Member of the Committee be advised on the same day of any legal advice the Council seeks around delays. It was thought any delay could be avoided and the shorter the delay the lower the risk. Although a lot of things were out of the Council's control, the one thing within our control seemed to be delayed. Was this delay legal? If the Inspector feels the Council were negligent what would be the consequence and what action could they take?

A: The Chair said the LDS would mean the Council was not non-compliant. The Director of Community and Environmental Services advised that the LDS timetable put forward by Officers was legal. The Inspector examined whether the correct steps had been covered, not the length of time taken. Reasons for the delays had been explained.

POST MEETING NOTE

The Local Development Schemes approved for the production of the new Local Plan are set out below with details of the Publication dates as requested.

LDS (February 2017)

Regulation 19: Publication version of Local Plan December 2018 – February 2019

LDS (October 2018)

Regulation 19: Publication version of Local Plan September – November 2019

LDS (October 2019)

Regulation 19: Publication version of Local Plan May - July 2020

LDS (February 2020)

Regulation 19: Publication version of Local Plan December 2020 – February 2021

LDS (November 2020)

Regulation 19: Publication version of Local Plan November - December 2021

The Local Plan could not be published during purdah as it was a consultation. Adoption of the Local Plan would be when the Inspector came back to us but there were no Council meetings during purdah.

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

RESOLVED:

That the Policy & Resources Committee recommend to Council the Local Development Scheme as set out in Appendix 1.

Councillor Alex Hayward returned to the meeting

PR63/20 MEMBERSHIP OF THE SUB-COMMITTEES OF POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the membership of the four sub-committees of this Committee.

The Chair of the meeting moved, duly seconded, the recommendation in the report.

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

RESOLVED:

That changes to the membership of the four sub-committees and the appointment of any member(s) outside the Committee onto any of the four sub-committees be allowed.

PR64/20 BUDGET MONITORING – MONTH 6 (SEPTEMBER)

This report sought approval to a change in the Committee's 2020-23 medium-term revenue financial plan. The report showed the Council's overall consolidated medium term financial plan for both revenue and capital.

Members made the following observations:

Q: The increased costs at the Depot had not been agreed but had now been reduced by £676k, when was that agreed?

A: The Depot cost was a decision by the Property Investment Board which looked at the project. With more flexible working now taking place with Covid-19 it was felt the scheme could be re-designed with less office space and provide better value for money. Rather than a reduction this kept within the original budget.

Q: Under Pay and Display, the additional charge of £16k should have been known about from the contract. Also the figures add up to £27k so clarification was required.

A: This was additional to the maintenance budget as there was a requirement for more maintenance than expected due to vandalism that had occurred early on. The Director of Community and Environmental Services would provide a written answer.

POST MEETING NOTE:

Whilst £27k is required there is already monies in the budget, leaving an additional £16k required. The additional costs cover the running and maintenance costs of the P&D machines currently operating and will be required for future years.

Q: On parking there was a projected £82k reduction in income, should we have no charging at this time as a loss was being incurred?

A: Car parking was not a loss, an income was being made. If a decision was made to stop charging for parking the loss of parking income would not be covered by the Governments Income Guarantee scheme as it would be a loss of revenue. Staffing costs would also need to be met due to Service Level Agreement with Hertsmere.

Q: Clarification was required on the car parking charges additional cost on business rates and the backdated liability from 2005 on the Talbot Road car park.

A: This was a national NDR case where the Valuation Office set the business rates.

Q: Carry over of the Waste Vehicle budget, why was there a delay in purchasing the vehicles?

A: The Council was getting better use out of the vehicles than anticipated so there made good sense to postpone the purchase.

Q: Why was Three Rivers House spending £195k at this time on a programme of works?

A: A lot of the work was to adapt space on the ground floor to be let out to provide income for the Council. There were also basic maintenance tasks that were best carried out when the building was empty.

Q: Watersmeet showed a loss of £51,460 and an Arts Council Grant of £175k had been achieved. What was the total loss since first lockdown in March?

A: The £51k was additional as a change to the overall loss that went to the Committee at the last meeting. The Interim Director of Finance would provide a

written response. The grant had to be used for very specific programmes at Watersmeet.

Post Meeting Note:

The total additional cost to the Council (above Watersmeet's original budget) over both Watersmeet cost centres (1455 and 1456) as a result of Covid is £168,141 for period 1-6 (1 April – 30 September 2020). The £175,000 Culture Recovery Fund grant can only be used for period 7-12 (1 October 2020 – 31 March 2021) and will be used to cover fixed building costs, Covid Secure set-up costs and to support a live theatre programme. The expected final outturn position for Watersmeet for this financial year (2020/21) is £168,141 additional cost to the Council due to Covid. The grant will mean that Watersmeet's financial position is not expected to worsen beyond the position reported at Period 6 Budget Monitoring.

Q: 32 vacant posts seemed high, 27.65 FTE, could these be made job share opportunities to speed up recruitment? The Tree Strategy appeared to be held up due to the lack of an Officer.

A: Vacant posts were slightly higher partly due to a decision not to fill posts due to Covid 19 making the recruitment process more difficult and also to balance budgets. It was not always easy to recruit to specific posts but they were working to fill those considered essential. There had been a minor re-structure within the Landscape section so the Tree Strategy would be progressed soon.

Q: Shops - what was the increased income, due to a full review of all rental income?

A: These were rent reviews that were overdue, part of the usual commercial review. Some were awaiting the outcome of rent review tribunals.

Q: How were the Council getting the Council Tax hardship fund and Small Business, Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants information to the public?

A: The Business Grants had already been paid out, the scheme finished on 28 August. The Government had announced another round in relation to the 2nd lockdown and the Council were awaiting guidance, but it would go to those business that met the Government criteria. The Council Tax hardship fund had been paid up to £150 to everyone of working age who received Council Tax subsidy. There was some left but there were new cases all the time. Plans to use any remainder would be made once the post furlough situation was known. As soon as guidance was received all information would be published on-line.

Q: Was there an excess on how far back additional costs on business rates could be calculated as it stated 2005?

A: There were limits but this would depend on when the appeals were lodged and this was likely to be an old one that had taken time to go through the system.

The Chair moved, duly seconded, the recommendation in the report.

On being put to the Committee the recommendations were declared CARRIED the voting being 8 For, 0 Against, 5 Abstentions.

RECOMMEND:

To Council:

That the following revenue and capital budget variations be approved and incorporated into the three-year medium-term financial plan:-

Variance	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
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	£	£	£
Revenue - (Favourable)/ Unfavourable	191,000	4,352	(35,648)
Capital - Increase / (Decrease)	(1,145,500)	1,164,000	0

PR65/20 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received the work programme.

A date was requested for a report to go to Leisure, Environment and Community Committee.

When looking at the Property Investment and Asset Management Strategy, could an update on how the Council are doing be included. The Lead Member advised that this information was provided regularly as part of the Budget Monitoring report.

The Chair moved the recommendation as set out in the report.

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

RESOLVED:

Agreed the items included in the work programme.

PR66/20 MOTIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 11

At the Council meeting on 20 October 2020 it was agreed that the following motions would be referred to the Policy and Resources Committee. The following motions were taken individually in the order provided. All the proposers and seconders of the motions had been invited to the meeting to present their motion under new Rule 11(11).

It was advised to the Committee that Councillor Sokalski had been unable to attend the meeting to second the motion.

Motion 3 - Councillor Peter Getkahn moved, seconded by Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst under Notice duly given as follows:

Metropolitan Line Extension

Council notes that the UK Government has pledged a 'New Deal for Britain' to deliver vital infrastructure. In his speech on June 30th the Prime Minister set out plans to 'build back better' in the wake of coronavirus and has pledged £5bn to accelerate infrastructure projects.

Council also notes the community frustration that the plan to extend the Metropolitan Railway was effectively shelved in 2019 after initial works had been completed. The MLX project has already utilised funds from Hertfordshire County Council and Council believes the current situation effectively wastes this public money.

The project has previously been supported by this Council, and some of the benefits would be:

- a) Improving access to public transport for local residents (*more than 2,500 households would be within 10 minutes' walk of the two new stations*);
- b) Creating better connections between Watford and Croxley Green, with new routes to Watford General Hospital, Croxley Green Business Park and other

employment areas, which would increase access to employment opportunities for local people;

- c) Providing access for Metropolitan line passengers to central Watford and to West Coast mainline National Rail links from Watford Junction station;
- d) Contributes to this Council's on-going commitment to battle climate change by providing a viable alternative to car-travel.

Council therefore resolves to write to local MP Gagan Mohindra (Private Parliamentary Secretary to the Department of Transport), Grant Shapps the Secretary of State for Transport, and Dean Russell, MP for Watford, and ask them to petition the Government to allocate sufficient funds to restart and complete the Metropolitan Line Extension project and realise the planned benefits to the area.

Councillor Alex Hayward proposed an amendment to the motion that a letter be also sent to the Mayor of London. The proposer of the motion declined the amendment.

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

RESOLVED:

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Motion 4 - Councillor Sara Bedford moved, seconded by Councillor Matthew Bedford under Notice duly given as follows:

Paying the real living wage

1. Council notes its decision in 2013 to pay the Real Living Wage (RLW) to all employees.
2. Council further notes that this decision was not extended to staff employed on a casual basis and believes that this was incorrect.
3. Council understands that only the Real Living Wage is independently calculated each year and is based on the minimum that employees and their families need to live.
4. Council believes that as a responsible employer this wage should be extended to all employees, regardless of their contract type, and to contracted staff, such as cleaners and security officers.
5. Council therefore requests that all employees of contractors and Council staff employed on a casual basis should be paid the RLW as soon as practically possible, and that discussions take place with SLM regarding the pay of employees at our leisure facilities.
6. Council also commits to becoming an accredited Living Wage Employer.

Note: the cost of this has been estimated by TRDC to be around £10,500pa.

Councillor Hayward lost the connection to meeting and did not take part in the vote.

On being put to the Committee the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being 12 For, 0 Against and 0 Abstentions.

RECOMMEND:

Paying the real living wage

1. Council notes its decision in 2013 to pay the Real Living Wage (RLW) to all employees.
2. Council further notes that this decision was not extended to staff employed on a casual basis and believes that this was incorrect.
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Note: the cost of this has been estimated by TRDC to be around £10,500pa.

Councillor Alex Hayward re-joined the meeting.

Motion 6 - Councillor Sara Bedford and seconded by Councillor Matthew Bedford to move under Notice duly given as follows:

Ending food poverty and holiday hunger amongst our children

1. Council notes

- a) The increasing level of hunger amongst children in lower income families and the effect of malnutrition on children's physical, social, educational and emotional development.
 - b) The continuing increase in the use of foodbanks by families, especially during school holidays.
 - c) The 'temporary' use of vouchers to feed children during school holidays, who would otherwise receive free school meals.
 - d) A group of supermarkets, businesses and charities have formed a taskforce and backed proposals from the National Food Strategy with an independent review of UK food policy to reduce food poverty and holiday hunger.
2. Council believes that a wealthy and civilised country should ensure its most vulnerable citizens are properly housed and fed.
 3. Council supports the campaign to improve the nutrition and lower the hunger of children in lower income families by:
 - a) Expanding free school meals to every child from a household on Universal Credit or equivalent, reaching an additional 1.5m children aged seven to 16.
 - b) Expanding an existing school holiday food and activities programme to support all children on free school meals in all areas of England.
 - c) Increasing the value of the Healthy Start vouchers - which help parents with children under the age of four and pregnant women buy some basic foods - from £3.10 to £4.25 per week, and expanding it to all those on Universal Credit or equivalent, reaching an additional 290,000 people.
 4. Council resolves to write to all three MPs representing the Three Rivers area, and the appropriate Ministers at both the Department for Education and the Department for Work and Pensions, asking them to comment on and take up the points raised above.

Councillors Hayward and Seabourne lost their connection to the meeting and did not take part in the vote.

On being put to the Committee the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being 11 For, 0 Against and 0 Abstentions.

Councillor Hayward re-joined the meeting.

Motion 8 - Councillor Sarah Nelmes moved, seconded by Councillor Alex Hayward under Notice duly given as follows:

This Council wishes to praise and thank all the dedicated staff of Three Rivers District Council, the staff of the NHS, the key workers who carried on working throughout the lockdown and all the local volunteers who stepped forward to help those in need in our District.

In a time of crisis, the hard work and resilience shown by so many is something we are all truly grateful for and we want to thank you most sincerely.

Councillors Hayward and Ranger moved an amendment to the motion to do more and offer free parking, free brown bin, free tickets to Watersmeet when it opens again, a card or chocolates or consider for a future motion. The proposer of the motion but did not wish to complicate what was a "thank you". The Council

could look at other things and indeed consideration was already being given to this as a tangible way of saying thank you.

On being put to the Committee the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being 12 For, 0 Against and 0 Abstentions.

CHAIR