

17. REPORTS AND QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER AND LEAD MEMBERS

Under the new Rule 14 any written questions not dealt with at the meeting will not be carried over to the next meeting. The written question and answer will be provided in the minutes. At the next meeting the Member whose question(s) were not dealt with may ask one supplementary question on the written answer provided. The time limits in Rule 11(5) will apply. The following written question and answer has been provided in the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2020 but the Member who asked the question is entitled to one supplementary question as the written answer was provided after the meeting.

17a) Question to Councillor Phil Williams, Lead Member for Environmental Services and Sustainability from Councillor Paula Hiscocks

With the green energy initiatives such as solar panels on Council owned buildings, can we be advised how much income/savings this has generated over the last 2 years?

Income received from the Feed in Tariffs for TRDC is as follows:

2018/19 - £4,401

2019/20 - £5,904

2020/21 to date £3,569

The Member can raise a supplementary question on the written response provided after the meeting by the Lead Member.

17b) Report from Councillor Sarah Nelmes, Leader of the Council

As I am sure you can guess, much of my focus since we last met has been around the ongoing Covid pandemic. Since that meeting we have moved from tier to tier and then into full lockdown. Of course, none of us wanted to be in this position, but at the same time the lockdown was necessary to save lives and protect the NHS.

Tragically, many people have sadly lost their lives to this virus. All of our hearts go out to their friends and loved ones.

It has also had a devastating impact on our business community and local economy. I am pleased we are giving them as much support as we can by offering a number of grants that they can apply for.

We are also very fortunate in Hertfordshire to have such a fine public health team and I know from colleagues around the country that we have been kept very much more informed about how things are in our communities because of them.

We now have access to rapid testing for those who are not showing symptoms and much quicker testing for those with symptoms. Via both County and our Environmental Health team, there is excellent work on Track and Trace to ensure that people are self-isolating.

With the vaccination programme continuing at pace, we are now, hopefully, beginning to see some light at the end of the tunnel. Our Primary Care Networks (primarily GPs) and the mass vaccination centres are working tirelessly to vaccinate people across our District. Fingers

crossed, it will then be possible to ease the lockdown and return to some degree of normality soon.

17c) Question to Councillor Sarah Nelmes, Leader of the Council for the Local Plan from Councillor David Raw

The Equalities sub-committee was established in August 2020, to ensure agreed definitions affecting community groups are reflected in the policy and to understand how people have been affected by prejudice and discrimination, the impact this has on an individuals and the resulting community needs and to provide an opportunity for research and discussion with organisations, charities and community groups. Please can you tell us how many individuals, organisations, charities and community groups have been consulted and invited to speak at committee (please provide details) to date and how many recommendations made by the sub committee have been adopted.

Written response:

The Equalities sub-committee has met twice in August 2020 and November 2020. The first meeting considered two definitions which were then recommended to and adopted by Full Council. The next meeting of the Equalities sub-committee met in November 2020 and it received a presentation on the prejudice and discrimination consultation. The objective of the consultation was to investigate the experiences of our communities, to understand how people have been affected by prejudice and discrimination, the impact this has on an individual and the resulting community needs. This consultation took place in September – October 2020 and was marketed to residents, community groups and Councillors. In total, 356 survey entries were completed. The demographic profile of those completing the survey is as follows:

- 55% female, 43% male, 1% non-binary
- 84% heterosexual, 5% gay/lesbian, 5% asexual.
- 72% white UK, 5% white European, 9% Indian, 3% black (African & Caribbean), 1% Middle Eastern and 1% Pakistani.
- 48% Christian, 32% no religion, 7% Hindu, 2% Jewish and 2% Muslim.

The comments in the survey show the continued need to work together (white and BAME people, different age groups and genders), to address inequality and strengthen empathy and thus, communities. This can be helped by working with the Police and other partners to refresh the local network of key links within local communities, including community faith leaders/representatives. The next Equalities sub-committee will be considering a presentation on this at the meeting on 15 March and agreeing a programme of engagement with community representatives at future meetings. The Equality policy is due to be reviewed fully in 2023 but will be considered at a future meeting with regard to the definitions which have been agreed by the Council.

Two definitions were considered by the Equalities sub-committee in August 2020 and recommended to the Policy and Resources Committee in August 2020 and were then adopted by Full Council on 1 September 2020. On 7 September 2020 the Policy and Resources Committee received a Part II report on Hate Crime which was agreed by the Committee. The report and its contents remain confidential.

At the Council meeting on 20 October 2020 it was agreed by Full Council that the three motions on Equalities would be referred to the Equalities sub-committee. The three motions were all

considered individually by the sub-committee on 30 November 2020. At this meeting all the proposers and seconders of the motions were invited to present their motion as required under the new Rule 11(11) of the Council Procedure Rules. All the three motions were discussed by the Equalities sub-committee on 30 November 2020 and agreed their intentions as applicable to the Council and any actions arising that might require officer actions, further reports, costings, legal and equalities implications. A further meeting of the Equalities sub-committee is scheduled for 15 March 2021.

At the next meeting YCH Services for Young People have been invited to attend. They have recently started running more diverse groups for their young people. In addition they have run consultations with young people over the pandemic to understand their thoughts, feelings and concerns on a range of issues, so would be able to convey their voice which wasn't captured in the results of the Prejudice and Discrimination Survey. The police hate crimes officer is also being invited to add their thoughts on equalities at the moment.

17d) Question to Councillor Sarah Nelmes, Leader of the Council and Lead Member for the Local Plan from Councillor Alex Hayward

This Council has decided not to reach every resident in respect of the Local Plan public consultation by post or leafleting, yet the Liberal Democrats have their hard copy leaflets delivered door to door – why?

Written response:

There has been no decision made at this time on the methods of communication from the Council to members of the public and to stakeholders in respect of a consultation on sites for any potential developments in Three Rivers. I can assure you though, that we will seek to ensure that all can contribute to any such consultation. A final decision has not been made and will not be made until we are closer to that consultation. By then Covid regulations may be very different than at present but we will be looking to leaflet all households.

With regard to Liberal Democrat literature delivery, keeping our communities informed is vital at all times. If paid delivery by either the Post Office or a commercial delivery firm is ok for my local takeaway then I do not see that there is any difference for our literature, as I am sure Labour colleagues will agree. As presumably would the Police and Crime Commissioner who used paid delivery earlier this year. Lawyers from Operation Talla (which coordinates Covid policing in the UK) at the National Police Chiefs Council have confirmed that, even for volunteer delivery '*it was reasonably necessary for the volunteer to leave home in order to achieve the outcome intended by delivery of the leaflets and that it was not reasonably possible for that outcome to be achieved from home.*'

17e) Question to Councillor Sarah Nelmes, Leader of the Council and Lead Member for the Local Plan from Councillor Reena Ranger

Does this Council regret that the inordinate delay in the adoption of the Local Plan has prevented the minimum housing space standards being implemented?

Written response:

The Local Plan is following a statutory process in order to comply with Government requirements. The principle issue with new dwellings being of substandard size has been the ability to convert former office space to flats without the need for planning permission. This is not affected by the Local Plan and it is pleasing that the Government has eventually recognised the deficiency of this form of permitted development and belatedly introduced

better standards which will come into force in the coming months. Although the emerging Local Plan will include minimum space standards there is no evidence that where planning permission is required new dwellings are currently being developed below these standards other than in a few exceptional circumstances. As such, the timing of the Local Plan has had little effect on whether development meets the minimum space standards.

17ee) Urgent Question to Councillor Sarah Nelmes, Leader of the Council from Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Deputy Leader of the Council agreed under Rule 14(3)

Would the Leader of the Council like to outline the expected additional costs and measures that the authority will be taking in the event of local and PCC elections on 6 May or a later date if social distancing and COVID restrictions of any kind are still in place?

Written response:

Members may be aware of the recent government statement confirming the date of the combined local government elections on Thursday 6 May 2021. As is the case for all District Council elections costs will be met by the local authority elections budget. As our polls will be combined then costs will be shared with our partners Herts County Council and from central government for the Police & Crime Commissioner election, and Chorleywood Neighbourhood Planning Referendum. In addition where any parish vacancies are contested then the Parish Council will be charged a fair proportion of those costs. We have also been advised that the government will be providing grant funding to meet the additional costs of running the polls during the Coronavirus pandemic. We are awaiting details of the financial support package available (31 million across the UK), and are currently working with county and local authority partners to jointly procure the additional equipment required at the most preferential rates.

We are currently working on the basis that existing government restrictions will apply during the polls and will be following all public health related guidance along with the Government Delivery Plan as it affects elections staff, candidates & election agents and voters, including:

- Advising voters of the 3 voting options available – in-person, by post or by proxy, and to apply early to put in place any absent voting arrangement
- Provision of PPE for polling and counting staff including the wearing of masks
- Encouraging voters to bring their own pen or pencil to mark their voting preference on the ballot paper, or else provide single use pencils
- Provide remote training for polling staff
- Regular cleaning and sanitising of polling booths and touch points in polling stations
- Controlling the numbers of voters in polling stations with the use of additional poll staff outside each polling place
- Requirement of voters to wear a face mask while voting (unless exempt)
- Providing remote briefing session for candidates and election agents
- Undertake a Covid risk assessment for all sites
- Communicate messages to voters in regards to voting arrangements on the day, including social distancing requirements at polling stations
- Delay the start of the verification & counting of votes for 24hrs after polls close

INFRASTRUCTURE, HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Reports from the Lead Member for Transport and Economic Development (Cllr Stephen Giles-Medhurst), Lead Member for Infrastructure and Planning Policy (Cllr Steve Drury), Lead Member for Housing (Cllr Andrew Scarth).

17f) Report from Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Lead Member for Transport and Economic Development

Parking Controls

The current controls covering permit parking have been suspended whilst in the current lockdown. Most councils have not suspend controls. Civil Enforcement Officers will still be enforcing restrictions relating to road danger or contacting the Police as appropriate.

Rickmansworth High Street

The part time closure of the High Street as part of the Government's intention to support social distancing and improve the shopping environment continues. This is supported by the County Council who have brought in the Temporary Traffic Order which the County Council has now extended until January 2022. Planters have now been installed and TRDC has initially planted these up as requested. Discussions continue regarding ongoing maintenance of the planters.

There is the outstanding issue of a new bus shelter in Northway which is within the remit of Herts County Council (HCC) but I have been kept abreast of the ongoing delay. I'm afraid that BREXIT and COVID has made this rather more complex. A new shelter was agreed here by the County Council well before Xmas. Unfortunately the last UK-based manufacturer of shelters withdrew from the market around 18 months ago and left a big gap which has not been filled all that satisfactorily. So they have to be sourced from abroad including Belgium and China (for some components!). So something of a 'double-whammy' here inevitably delayed by COVID and Brexit problems at the ports. The shelter is still in-transit and has not reached contractor's yard yet. Once received it should be installed in days.

Croxley Green Permit Scheme

This was progressed to the Traffic Regulation Stage. 750 letters were sent out. 14 objections were received and considered but raised no issues that had not already been considered. The order has been sealed and it's intended to have the scheme operation from 31 March subject to any national restriction changes. Residents in the permit zone are all be written to explaining again how the scheme will run.

Other Croxley items

Minor changes including other junction protection measures outside of the permit area will be progressed later this year.

Rickmansworth West Controlled Parking Zone

Following a meeting with Ward Councillors final designs are being agreed. We will then review and will decide when the formal consultation will take place.

Cycling

We will shortly be carrying out informal consultation with Councillors about Local Cycling and Walking priority routes (LCWIP) as part of the review of our Walking and Cycling Strategy that is being progressed jointly by Three Rivers, Watford and the County Council together.

Delta Gain upgrade

Unfortunately this Retail Parade Revitalisation project has been set back as Ward Members are aware, not least over securing a detailed legal agreement over land that is not in public ownership. Officers continue to try to get agreement from the landowners for the planned scheme.

Electric Vehicle Charging Points

The tender for these in two of our car parks is now out. I welcome the recent government announcement that is encouraging local highways authorities to make on road provision along with additional funding. This will fall to HCC as on road provision.

Other items

New wayfinding directional signed street nameplates are due to be erected in Croxley Green (part funded from Sustainable Transport funding contributed from planning agreements). Local members and key partners were consulted over these. Further Welcome Signs for Three Rivers are due to be erected at key locations to enhance local identity in the District. The grass verge hardening programme continues – principally in South Oxhey. TRDC has provided a small amount of capital money to the County Council to allow a road safety improvement scheme to be extended by the A405 in Bucknalls Lane.

I am also pleased to announce that the first two new solar powered (for lighting) buses shelters are due to be installed (if not already done by the time of the Council meeting) in South Way and by St Michaels School. Delivered by the Council through our Better Buses Programme. This is yet another first for Three Rivers.

Hertfordshire Growth Board (HGB) – S101 Joint Committee

As Deputy Leader and the representative on this body for Three Rivers Council I have attended meetings on the 17 December and as the first Joint Committee on 26 January. This has included a workshop on its work programme and how to engage stakeholders. A Communications Strategy and Work programme has been agreed to drive forward inward investment and ensure that the HGB (and its authorities) are match fit to secure potential government support for infrastructure investment

Priorities to December 2021 include:

- Economic Recovery, performance and resilience;
- Working together to deliver the homes that Hertfordshire needs;

By December 2021 we hope have:

- Secured a Growth Deal with HM Government;
- Protected Hertfordshire from the impact of the virus upon our economy;
- Established the Hertfordshire Housing pipeline and Delivery Pathway;

- Developed an investment prospectus and approach;
- Assembled a spade ready projects investment portfolio;
- Delivered some initial projects whilst progressing second tier projects.

17g) Question to Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Lead Member for Transport and Economic Development from Councillor Joan King

Is the Lead Member aware of the lack of disabled parking near the chemist's new premises close to the market square in South Oxhey which is causing consternation and precluding people who need to use the chemist from doing so? Further as this chemist plans to administer the Covid vaccine, what is this Council proposing to do to alleviate the problem?

Written response:

This issue was brought to mine, officers and Countryside management attention some weeks ago by Cllr Andrew Scarth and I thank him for that and his helpful input.

Firstly let me outline the details regarding the parking provision here which is readily available in public documents on the Council website.

The details are:

Parking provision for residential and non-residential uses and management of the parking in the SO redevelopment was carefully assessed as part of the planning permission. The management of the parking is controlled by Condition 30 of the planning permission (ref. 16/0005/FUL) which requires the submission of a Car Parking Management Strategy for each phase and by the Phase 3 planning permission (ref. 19/2133/FUL)

With regards to parking for holders of blue badges 20 accessible spaces were agreed including 8 in Fairfield Avenue and Bridlington Road and 5 in the Henbury Way car park.

This parking provision and layout, including the accessible spaces, was considered sufficient to serve the development at the planning stage and no objections were raised on this aspect which was approved by the highways authority, the County Council.

It is acknowledged parking spaces (including accessible spaces) do not exist immediately outside shops but such spaces are in close proximity to the retail premises and central area. An enforcement agent has recently been retained by the applicant and enforcement of the parking spaces across the development and on non adopted roads is now underway.

Notwithstanding this, Officers are currently investigating the use of the loading bays outside this chemist premises. However, these loading bays are the main group of loading bays serving the non-residential aspect of the development so any reduction in the number of loading bays will most likely impact on all traders here and would have to be carefully considered and consulted upon. It would also require a planning application to amend the existing permission.

It should also be noted that at present this is not adopted highways by the County Council so TRDC actions in respect of any enforcement cannot legally take place

Also thanks to Cllr Andrew Scarth. On the 1 February Countryside Management, having been made aware of the issue by Cllr Scarth, added additional signs to the four bays in front of the

Pharmacy, to try and reduce/prevent people just leaving their cars there long term. This has had some effect, and while the area is not adopted can continue. As Andrew suggested they organised for some disabled persons parking only signs, to be deployed, to see if that had a greater effect.

For Countryside to change the use of these bays permanently from loading only, they would have to propose the revision to HCC in addition to the planning application. Countryside have raised that with their Technical Team, who are already aware of the parking issues and are investigating.

As the highways authority is the County Council they would need to consent to removal of the loading bays in case such a removal effects traffic flow here. As the County Councillor for the area you may wish, if you have not already, to discuss with highways officers and the Development Management Team at the County Council.

17h) Report from Councillor Steve Drury, Lead Member for Infrastructure and Planning Policy

As a Council we wrote to the Secretary of State to voice our objections to the proposed Permitted Development Rights, as requested at IHED Committee on 19 January 2021. To which we have had a reply stating that "from April all new homes delivered through this scheme will meet nationally described space standards."

There could be an enormous amount of extra work for our planning officers, for which there was no mention in the reply about fees and charges for this and as a Council, we may lose out financially.

The Planning Advisory Service have been asked by MHCLG to undertake research on Planning good practice/experience which is to take place next month, which Councillor Lloyd will I expect comment further on.

The Local Plan is progressing and there have been a number of meetings recently to progress this further.

Lastly, Central Government, at the moment is still planning Elections for May so, the Chorleywood Neighbourhood Referendum should go ahead as planned along with some Parish, Local District and the County Council elections, but we will have to wait and see how things progress over the next few weeks.

17i) Question to Councillor Steve Drury, Lead Member for Infrastructure and Planning Policy from Councillor Alison Wall

Residents have contacted local Councillors reporting increased flooding. Flood management needs a larger focus in planning applications and the impact schemes have on water tables. Will this administration write to Herts County Council (HCC) the flood authority and our MPs to highlight this issue?

Written response:

I would agree it is an issue and it is the County Council that is the Lead Local Authority on this.

The Local Planning Authority has a statutory requirement to consult the Lead Local Flood Authority only when considering major development (an application for 10 or more houses or with 1,000 square metres of floor area proposed) with surface water drainage. The statutory requirement to consult the Environment Agency on flooding matters is only applicable to development other than minor development to be carried out in Flood Zones 2 or 3. Often the Environment Agency encourage the Local Planning Authority to use their online standing advice when considering planning applications, rather than providing bespoke written comments. This standing advice gives general guidance on the management of surface water, access and evacuation, and floor levels for proposed developments.

I am pleased that following a motion proposed by the Liberal Democrat Group to a Full County Council meeting last year the Administration at County Hall has now agreed a root and branch review of how it deals with flooding issues and I hope and expect this will include what advice it gives on planning applications.

It is however often the case that in large developments flood mitigation measures can assist in dealing with witnessed issues with the inclusion of attenuation ponds and other works.

Indeed recent examples of such successful measures include the developments at Farriers Way off Bucknalls Lane and the development off Woodside Road.

I have no issues of again bringing to the attention of the County Council and MPs the ongoing issues of developments and the failure of the Government to ensure all developments i.e. those less than 10 units do not have to comply with requirements.

17j) Question to Councillor Steve Drury, Lead Member for Infrastructure and Planning Policy from Councillor Shanti Maru

Many developments ruin grass verges. The County Council then needs to make them good through tax payers' income. Will this administration write to our MPs and Herts County Council (HCC) to look at the introduction of a verge bond?

Written response:

I agree it is unacceptable for developers to not reinstate damaged verges whether these be single house developments, extensions or large building sites. Some developers do this and indeed it is the case that in larger schemes such re-installment is the norm.

However like other Councillors I have often brought the County Council's attention to problems with damage to the verges.

My fellow County Councillors, especially Cllr Giles-Medhurst, who leads on Highways issues has raised this issue repeatedly in the last 20 years but the County Council has been slow to act on occasions and is restricted by the law. On the legal basis it does require evidence to support that the damage to verges (and footways) has been caused by a developer and that was not already the case before works started.

If damage is proven/obvious HCC as the Highways Authority will write to the owners and the developers to try to get restoration undertaken and in a lot of cases this can be successful but takes time. It does however require the County Council to be informed of such damage first so if you are aware of sites please do let your County Councillor or the County Officers know.

As I understand the County Council cannot legally require a bond for something outside the development and this has already been looked at by the County Council. Indeed the Government has relaxed greatly the controls on developers and suggests such requirements restrict developers.

If the highways aspects are not part of the planning application it does not have the same highways powers that exist in the Greater London area. Often a large development scheme may offer to undertake works on the highway but neither TRDC or HCC can require works that are outside of the planning application.

17k) Report from Councillor Andrew Scarth, Lead Member for Housing

There have been two excellent evening training sessions for members who wished to know about the role of the Housing department, its structure and how it functions. Kimberley Grout gave fellow members the opportunity to ask questions as she went through her hour long presentation. I would like to thank her for the time and effort she spent on this informative task.

Due to the current national lockdown, Housing department officers are again duty bound to accommodate any rough sleepers in the district. As of the end of 28 January Council had 49 households in Council owned temporary accommodation (all within the District). There were a further five households in other temporary accommodation, three of which are outside of the District (Watford, Borehamwood and Potters Bar).

Up to 21 February there is again an eviction ban in place. Whilst this is positive there is a concern that when the ban is lifted there will be a rise in evictions from the private sector.

During quarter three (Oct-Dec) the Housing team were able to prevent 33 households from becoming homeless and they relieved homelessness (meaning they found alternative accommodation) for 32 households. Therefore 65 households were prevented/relieved from homelessness which is the highest figure the team have ever achieved. I would like to congratulate Kimberley and her team.

Regarding the refugee post. Kimberley will give me the latest on this before the Council meeting.

Questions to Councillor Andrew Scarth, Lead Member for Housing from Councillor Debbie Morris

17l) This Council requires occupants of temporary accommodation to have all electrical appliances more than 12 months old PAT-tested but do not ask for copies of the PAT certificates unless a particular issue has been identified on inspection. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Watford Community Housing Trust (managers of the South Oxhey temporary accommodation) are not inspecting any property. How are tenants protected from the risks generated by potentially faulty electrical appliances?

Written response:

The inclusion of such a clause by the Council highlights the importance that is placed on protecting our residents. However, it should be noted that the Council is being cautious by its inclusion. Due to the very nature of temporary accommodation and people often needing to be provided with this accommodation at short notice and in crisis, it would not be reasonable for the Council to request that PAT certificates are produced when offering temporary

accommodation, nor is there a legal requirement for customers to provide such information to the Council. PAT certificates must be paid for and a customer may not have sufficient funds in order to pay for this. Should the Council request such information, any failure to produce a PAT certificate would not result in the withdrawal of an offer of temporary accommodation. Therefore, a pragmatic approach is taken and the managing agent inspects all temporary accommodation sites on a regular basis. However, due to the pandemic and current lockdown, inspection visits have been temporarily halted by Watford Community Housing. Initial lettings are completed in person and if we or Watford Community Housing have any concern a visit will be completed; it is only inspection visits that have halted. As with lots of other issues, the pandemic has meant certain things have not been able to be completed. Officers believe this is reasonable in the current time. Inspection visits will resume when the lockdown ends.

17m) Where else in the District are tenants bringing into Council-owned accommodation electrical appliances more than 12 months old without having to produce a PAT certificate?

Written response:

The Council owns properties that are used for temporary accommodation at 15 Bury Lane, 38 Lincoln Drive, Spellen Place and Jack Prescott Place plus four other pepper-potted properties in the District.

17n) The occupancy agreement for temporary accommodation requires tenants' vehicles to have valid tax, insurance, MOT certificates and to be in a roadworthy condition yet again, this Council and its managers do not seek evidence of this. If the Council considers it sufficiently important for tenants' vehicles to be insured, taxed and roadworthy, why are they not validating this or asking the relevant authorities to do so?

Written response:

Officers believe that there is no need for the Council to validate such information, nor would this be a good use of officer time. The Police are the responsible authority that would deal with this matter and it is felt it would not be a good use of Police time to provide such information to the Council for every customer. The requirement for residents is that they must comply with the law, this is listed in the occupancy agreement to reinforce the legal requirement. As previously stated, requiring customers to provide this at a time when they are generally going through crisis would not be reasonable and there is no legal requirement for this to be provided to the Council. Should the Council request such information, any failure to provide this could not result in the withdrawal of an offer of temporary accommodation. If the Council or its managing agents have any concern about any vehicles at temporary accommodation sites they will liaise with the relevant authorities.

LEISURE, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY

Reports from the Lead Member for Leisure (Cllr Chris Lloyd), Lead Member for Environmental Services & Sustainability (Cllr Phil Williams), Lead Member for Community Safety and Partnerships (Cllr Roger Seabourne) and questions.

17o) Report from Councillor Chris Lloyd, Lead Member for Leisure

Leisure – Watersmeet is closed. Skate Parks and Out Gyms are closed. Play areas are open. The Aquadrome had to close because of the worst flooding in 7 years. We have yet been able to fully assess the damage to paths and river banks. Trees have been planted since last council meeting at the Aquadrome.

Health – The Council Leader has been forwarding regular updates. HCC have been organising regularly updates alternating between afternoon and evening. I would like to thank all of our officers.

We are currently recruiting for a Covid Engagement Officer, funded by Public Health, to support with the organisation of Covid Marshals and engage with the community, encouraging uptake of the vaccine and compliance with regulations. We have also been able to expand the Community Support Service delivered by Herts Mind Network to support people with mental health problems through extra public health funding. The Healthy Hub also remains open offering services virtually.

Watersmeet continues to remain closed to the public at present due to Covid restrictions with the intension of reopening as soon as restrictions allow. In the meantime phase 2 of the stage lighting replacement (switching over to LEDs) is due to take place from 8 March with the works lasting 3 weeks following a successful tender process. The new lighting system will allow greater flexibility and bring Watersmeet lighting infrastructure up to date whilst improving the energy efficiency of the building. In addition a number of other building improvements continue to be carried out including repair works to the roof. Watersmeet management have submitted an application to the second round of the Culture Recovery Fund for a grant of £87,500 to help support the venue through April-June 2021 and we expect to hear if the application has been successful by the end of March. Tickets for shows and events from April and beyond continue to be on sale with the online box office open 24/7 and a telephone box office open 11am-2pm Monday to Friday. Watersmeet staff continue to support the Council's wider Covid response activity including redeployments to Revenues and Benefits.

I would like to thank all the officers for the support during the Council year.

17p) Question to Councillor Chris Lloyd, Lead Member for Leisure from Councillor Debbie Morris

Public consultations on a cycle path at Swilletts Recreation Ground (SRG) and an outdoor adult gym at Eastbury Recreation Ground (ERG) took place in spring 2020. The SRG project came before our Planning Committee in December 2020 but the ERG one is not expected to come to Planning Committee for several more months. Why has the SRG project progressed so much faster than the ERG one?

Written response:

Eastbury Recreation Ground

- Following the consultation process for the project, it was highlighted that there were differing views on the location and this needed to be resolved prior to moving forwards. A site meeting was therefore needed, however due to the pandemic a number of restrictions were put in place, which meant officers were unable to arrange a site visit to agree the location. In addition to this, the officer leading on this project was re-deployed to Environmental Protection and subsequently has been seconded to Community Partnerships as part of the Council's response to the pandemic.
- As part of the Council's response to the pandemic, all services across Three Rivers were prioritised based on a number of factors: supporting the vulnerable, significant financial implications etc. and were agreed through the COVID-19 Policy and Resources Sub Committee. The majority of leisure projects were identified as priority 4 and 5 and have been on hold throughout the pandemic. They were due to recommence in November 2020, however, following the latest national lockdown this has now been postponed.

- The location was highlighted as an issue to Ward Councillors and Batchworth Community Council and they have since agreed the location for the Outdoor gym through a site meeting amongst themselves.
- Officers have corresponded with Ward Councillors to highlight that the project would be picked up again in early 2021, subject to resources. This remains the case and Officers will be starting work on the procurement for the project, now that the location has been agreed and will be sharing this with Ward Councillors and Batchworth Community Council in due course.

The Swillet Cycle Track

- This is a different project process due to the need to secure external funding to proceed with this project. The potential funding partner highlighted that before they could assess a funding application for this project, planning approval would be needed. The timescales for the funding partner indicated that the most feasible funding window that the Council could apply to, allowing for the processes for planning and procurement, would be February 2021. The funding application window closes in June 2021 and the outcome will then be known as to whether or not the project can proceed.

Both projects are being delivered within similar timescales but in a different order due to the need of prioritising resources and external influencing factors. It is likely that both projects will have a similar installation timetable, with Eastbury Outdoor Gym being potentially sooner. It is anticipated that this will take place during the summer months.

17q) Report from Councillor Phil Williams, Lead Member for Environmental Services and Sustainability

The teams at the Depot continue to work at their fantastically high standards. Some of you will have noticed that “Let’s Recycle” have yet to publish the 2019/2020 recycling figures. The previous year we were best in Herts, best in the Eastern Region, best in the whole of the South England and 3rd in England overall. Last year’s figures are imminent.

Along with Officers I have attended a number of meetings with colleagues across Hertfordshire at the Hertfordshire Climate change Strategy Partnership and the Herts Waste Partnership to help create a joined up County wide way of tackling issues.

Jo Hewitson, Elen Roberts and Ellie Nathan have been beavering away to get the Climate Change Strategy ready. It is due to be presented to the LEC Committee on the 10 March. I’m sure we all thank them for their efforts.

17r) Question to Councillor Phil Williams, Lead Member for Environmental Services and Sustainability from Councillor David Sansom

How many solar panels does TRDC now have and how much power has been generated and what funds/credits received by TRDC?

Written response:

The number of solar panels are as follows:

Three Rivers House – 65

Watersmeet – 56

Bowls Club – 4

Income received from the Feed in Tariffs for TRDC is as follows:

2018/19 - £4401

2019/20 - £5904

2020/21 to date £3569

17s) Question to Councillor Phil Williams, Lead Member for Environmental Services and Sustainability from Councillor Reena Ranger

All trees have value. In response to our climate change emergency, how are we ensuring that low amenity trees (not under TPO) being felled are replaced so that we aren't presiding over a decline in tree numbers?

Written response:

- Development of the draft Climate Change Strategy identified the need to find new locations for tree planting on District Council-owned land. Officers will be meeting with Countryside Management Service in the near future, with the aim of commissioning a study aimed at identifying new planting locations. It is hoped this study will form the basis of a long term tree planting plan for the district. More detail on plans for tree planting will be included in the forthcoming Tree Strategy for the District, currently in production.
- Policy DM6 of TRDC's current local plan requires many developments to produce landscaping schemes, which include new tree planting. Tree & Landscape Officers also review and comment on many planning applications in the district, and frequently advise that new tree planting is required as a condition of development.
- The draft Climate Change Strategy includes a biodiversity objective to 'Encourage local residents and householders in the District to improve their gardens and open spaces for biodiversity.' Actions to achieve this objective, such as tree planting, will be set out in due course.

17t) Question to Councillor Phil Williams, Lead Member for Environmental Services and Sustainability from Councillor Paula Hiscocks

When are we starting regular meetings asked for by Councillors and residents with the water authorities to discuss the sewerage signage and flooding concerns?

Written response:

The Community Partnerships team will be setting up a water partnership consisting of key organisations and stakeholders in our District to work to reduce water consumption, bringing organisations together to enable discussion and communication on reducing pollution and preventing flooding in our district. The first meeting will be planned for May. There are also discussions taking place with the water organisations and the flood authority to support the delivery of the Hertfordshire Water Action plan and with regard to specific issues of flooding and sewerage discharge which we are involved in.

17u) Question to Councillor Phil Williams, Lead Member for Environmental Services and Sustainability from Councillor Paula Hiscocks

Why did the Muslim families of those buried in Woodcock Cemetery not receive their deeds of burial as is their legal right?

Written response:

When grave space is purchased, it may be purchased with or without an exclusive right of burial. It is not compulsory to grant a deed of exclusive right of burial. Nor is it a purchaser's legal right to be granted one. It is, however, the Council's practice to send to all prospective purchasers of full plot graves a form entitled 'Notice of Intended Burial' which includes a request that they be granted the exclusive right of burial in that particular grave.

Rule 6 of the Council's Rules and Regulations in respect of the Woodcock Hill & Chorleywood Road Cemeteries provides that, "*A person can purchase the exclusive right of burial in any grave or vault for a period of 100 years only. A deed of grant of exclusive right of burial (The Deed of Grant) will be issued by the Council to this effect.*"

When the Muslim Section at Woodcock Hill Cemetery was leased by the Council to B W Foundation, deeds of exclusive rights of burial were granted in their favour. B W Foundation have not previously transferred those rights onwards to purchasers of individual graves, and the Council has not required them to do so.

During the second part of 2020, the Council received a number of requests from families who had purchased grave space from B W Foundation to be issued with deeds of exclusive rights of burial. As a result, the Council requested and B W Foundation have agreed to surrender their deeds of exclusive rights of burial back to the Council in order that the Council may in future issue deeds to individual families on request.

17v) Report from Councillor Roger Seabourne, Lead Member for Community Safety and Partnerships

During the last year the department has undertaken the following activities / implementation new processes and services:

March 2020:

- The department conducted a multi-agency operation (*Op Guardian*) with police and trading standards to check vehicles in the area that were carrying scrap metal
- The department quickly implemented online applications due to working from home
- Conducted multi agency visits to licenced premises giving advice on Covid-19 regulations.

April 2020:

- The increase in licensing fees which were reviewed in 2019/2020 came into effect.
- Councillors attended the first successful Licensing training for Councillors via video link

August 2020:

- Officers implemented the temporary pavement licence process

October 2020:

- Joint working with the police and inspecting the scrap metal sites within the district
- St Albans Crown Court upheld the Magistrate's decision to dismiss an appeal from a driver based on hearsay evidence concerning inappropriate behaviour.
- Officers commenced distributing licence plates & badges from Watersmeet including vehicle checks.
- Officers have changed the design of the licence plates and these have started to be distributed.

November 2020:

- New staff member (seconded from CSC team) appointed to help with day to day licensing functions and to assist with the implementation of online applications.
- Department held first successful virtual licensing sub-committee (Shish restaurant, Moneyhill Parade)

January 2021:

- The Travel with confidence scheme launched and has received significant interest. This is a training course that drivers and operators may undertake which teaches them about how viruses can be easily spread and how they can help to reduce the spread of infection.
- Overview in numbers of suspensions/revocations/refusals between January 2020 and end of January 2021:
 - o PH and HC Drivers: 163 suspensions issued, 3 driver licences revoked, 4 driver licence applications refused,
 - o PH and HC Vehicles: 28 suspensions issued, 2 applications refused
 - o PH Operators: 4 suspensions issued, 1 application refused
 - o Licensed premises: 18 suspensions issued
- Officers are continuing to pursue opportunities to accept new driver applications

17w) Question to Councillor Roger Seabourne, Lead Member for Community Safety and Partnerships from Councillor David Sansom

I was pleased to see the 'Travel with confidence' scheme to encourage the use of Taxis and Minicabs when appropriate. Last summer when we were not in lockdown, TRDC would not test any new taxi/mini drivers so could not issue any new drivers licenses. If officers can't test new drivers, how are the existing drivers being trained to this new standard?

Written response:

The Travel with Confidence scheme is effectively an accreditation for the sanitisation of a licensed vehicle to combat the spread the Coronavirus and other infections. It is not a pre requisite to become a licensed driver and it is not mandatory. Existing licensed drivers can apply to be accredited by the scheme. Existing licensed drivers are able to achieve the scheme accreditation by undertaking an electronic training course. Their vehicles also have to be inspected by Council staff. We have already seen a positive interest from existing drivers in pursuing this accreditation (and first accreditation now been issued).

RESOURCES AND SHARED SERVICES

17x) Report from Councillor Matthew Bedford, Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services

There is no report from the Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services

17y) Question to Councillor Matthew Bedford, Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services from Councillor Paula Hiscocks

The sale of Council houses to Thrive Homes generated £32 million for this Council. Could I have a breakdown of how that money has been spent?

Written response:

The income received was a capital receipt and under the LG regulations it can only be used to support capital expenditure.

£20m was used to fund the Property Investment Board's acquisition of Properties in Norwich and Nottingham and the Ex public House 'The Grapevine in South Oxhey. These generate revenue income in the form of rents of £1million.

The balance of the capital receipt has been used to support the funding of the Councils approved capital programme over the years, including provision of temporary housing for homeless families within the District.

17z) Question to Councillor Matthew Bedford, Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services from Councillor David Raw

At the last Full Council, I asked this administration what 5 savings they had made. They could only provide two examples. Is that because there were only two?

Written response:

5 savings were provided as requested. "Savings" by definition includes additional income. Residents benefit equally from increased income and from reduced expenditure. As at period 6 budget monitoring the top 5 savings are:

£73k saving in temporary staffing in Leisure

£23k saving on hiring of rooms for Active Community Development Fund

£34k due to additional transport subsidy from HCC

£15k additional building control income

£71k additional property income