
INFRASTRUCTURE, HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES

of a virtual meeting on Tuesday 16 March 2021 from 7.30pm until 8.01pm.

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	David Sansom
Joy Mann	Stephanie Singer
Joan King	Dominic Sokalski

Officers Present: Kimberley Rowley, Head of Regulatory Services
Kimberley Grout – Head of Housing Services
Claire May, Head of Planning Policy and Projects
Nigel Pollard – Section Head – Financial Planning and Analysis
Sarah Haythorpe, Principal Committee Manager

Councillor Andrew Scarth in the Chair

IHED 45/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Reena Ranger had advised that they would be late joining the meeting.

POST MEETING NOTE: Councillor Reena Ranger was not able to join the meeting before it had ended.

IHED 46/20 MINUTES

The minutes of the virtual/remote meeting of the Infrastructure, Housing and Economic Development Committee held on 19 January 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair when it was possible to do so.

IHED 47/20 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

None received.

IHED 48/20 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None received.

IHED 49/20 BUDGET MONITORING (PERIOD 10)

This report covered this Committee's financial position over the medium term (2020 – 2024) as at Period 10 (end of January)

The Period 10 comprehensive Budget Management report has already been presented to the Policy & Resources Committee at its meeting on 8 March 2021 which sought approval to a change in the Council's 2020 - 24 medium-term financial plan

The Section Head – Financial Planning and Analysis advised that on Revenue there was a £21k variance increase primarily due to a reduction in planning fees of £50k. This had partly been offset by an increase in parking income of £19k which was mainly from Permits and Penalty charge notices (PCNs). There was also a saving of £12k on energy efficiency as some projects had been delayed due to Covid. Full details were provided in Appendix 1 to the report. In terms of capital Members would have noticed a reduction of £187k which was due to three schemes being re-phased. One of £83k for parking bays and verge protection in South Oxhey that would not be completed this year. There was £44k being re-phased to next year for highways improvements at Ebury Way and Delta Gain and £38k of the retail parades budget for works at Delta Gain. All three schemes had been delayed due to Covid with resources being redirected but they were scheduled to be completed in the next financial year (2021/22). Appendix 2 of the report provided all the details on the variances of the capital schemes.

Members made the following points:

Q Paragraph 2.9 of the report provided details on debt and the arrears on debt of over a year with regard to temporary housing. How did we have so much debt?

A There was a lot of the debt related to temporary housing but the Debt Recovery Team would now try to recover that debt but a lot of people this year were facing financial hardship so there would be the provision for instalment plans to pay back the debt which would vary in length of time, amounts to be paid and individual circumstances.

Q The project at Delta Gain had been delayed could the reasons be explained.

Q On the issue of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) could some clarity be provided on the money raised and the time period over which they had been issued. We are about to recommence PCNs while people are still working from home and it seemed unfair to be making residents move their car for the sake of one hour.

A The District had been in lockdown since December 2020 and parking enforcement had been suspended. On PCNs and permits the projected income was anticipated to increase by around £30k but it was not possible to show the exact amounts for the two elements. There had been an increase in dispensations and suspensions of £14k but there had been a reduction in pay and display of £23k as the car parks had been closed and parking suspended due to the national lockdown.

The Lead Member advised that with regard to Delta Gain the Council were still waiting for the signing of the legal agreements with the landowner as it was not Three Rivers land. The matter had been reported to Council and there was an update for the extra Council meeting tomorrow night which had not been

considered at the previous meeting due to time constraints. In relation to car parking charges the Council had taken a decision (only one of two Councils in Hertfordshire who did) to suspend pay and display charges from 23 December. The intention was that when the Government message “stay at home” changed on 29 March 2021 the Council would reinstate the charges. Residents would be informed of this. There would be a light touch to enforcement for the first couple of weeks. What the Council had been doing, and was fully advised in our notices, was where vehicles had been parked dangerously, blocked road junctions or hindered access for emergency vehicles they had received a PCN. Therefore some of the increased revenue would have come from this. A breakdown of this could be provided to Members from our parking enforcement body if required.

The Head of Regulatory Services advised that for residents who do live in CPZs there could be capacity issues when parking enforcement restarted from 29 March. Members noted that previously the Council had allowed residents with parking permits to park in our long term car parks for free. This had again been put forward as part of this current proposal when we recommence parking enforcement and should deal with some of the capacity issues.

RESOLVED:

That the report and comments made be noted.

IHED 50/20 SERVICE PLANNING 2021/2024

That the Committee considers the following service plans and recommends to Council:

- Regulatory Services (Please note only the unshaded areas of Performance Indicators)
- Economic and Sustainable Development (Please note only the unshaded areas of the Performance Indicators)
- Housing Services

On being put to the Committee the Chair declared that the Committee had agreed by general assent that the service plans be recommended to Council.

RECOMMEND:

That the service plans be recommended to Council for approval.

HOUSING

IHED 51/20 HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

This report provided the Committee with the proposed Housing Allocations Policy 2020. This details the way the Council allocates affordable rented accommodation through the Housing Register (the waiting list).

The Head of Housing Services advised that the Committee may recall that a draft policy was presented in August 2020 which provided details on the proposed changes the Council wished to make to the policy prior to going out for public consultation. The Council had been through that consultation with the results included in one of the appendices to the report. A comparison document had been provided for Members with details of any Committee comments/changes made

following the consultation (shown in italic). The Committee report also pulled out the topics where changes had been made.

A Member welcomed that Officers had taken on board comments about adult children counting in the household and had increased the age to 21 from 18. Although not perfect it was better.

A Member asked for clarify on why the £60K income threshold proposed had been changed.

The Head of Housing Services referred to the consultation document and advised the change was based on a combination of the strongly agree and agree responses which were then combined to provide one overall percentage. Feedback from partners was also taken into consideration. The comments received were very detailed but could be provided to Members if required. It was felt that a sliding scale should be introduced as a single person should not be assessed in the same way as a family of five.

A Member asked about the proposal to take into account an unborn child as a member of a family at 4 weeks prior to due date but asked if this could be increased to 6 weeks.

The Head of Housing Services advised that the existing policy had been written in line with housing benefit rules. Officers had tried to bring the timescale forward slightly to 4 weeks prior to the baby being born taking on board comments from the Committee. What the Council would not want to do was offer someone a property which at the point of offer was too big for their household size and they then found that they were unable to afford the rent as they would not qualify for any housing benefit. Members of the Committee noted this and agreed the 4 week period suggested by Officers in the policy.

On being put the Committee the Chair declared the policy agreed the voting being agreed by General Assent.

RESOLVED:

Approved and adopted the new Housing Allocations Policy.

IHED 52/20 WORK PROGRAMME

To agree the Committee's work programme.

RESOLVED:

Noted the work programme.

CHAIR