

Minutes of a Virtual/Remote Meeting of EXTRAORDINARY **COUNCIL** meeting held on **Tuesday 1 September 2020** from 7.30pm to 9.45pm

Present: Councillors Keith Martin (Chair) Martin Trevett (Vice-Chair) Matthew Bedford, Sara Bedford, Marilyn Butler, Joanna Clemens, Stephen Cox, Steve Drury, Peter Getkahn, Alex Hayward, Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Paula Hiscocks, Margaret Hofman, Tony Humphreys, Joan King, Stephen King, Chris Lloyd, David Major, Joy Mann, Shanti Maru, Alex Michaels, Debbie Morris, Sarah Nelmes, Reena Ranger, David Raw, Michael Revan, David Sansom, Alison Scarth, Andrew Scarth, Roger Seabourne, Stephanie Singer, Dominic Sokalski, Jon Tankard, Alex Turner, Alison Wall and Phil Williams.

CL44/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Donna Duncan, Raj Khiroya and Kate Turner.

CL45/20 TO RECEIVE THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON 24 AUGUST 2020 AND 1 SEPTEMBER 2020

The Chair of the Council had agreed to include the following three recommendations on the Summons to be taken as urgent business under Rule 30(3).

Recommendation from the Extraordinary Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 24 August 2020

Minute PR28/20 NEW SUB-COMMITTEE OF POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Council were asked to:

Agree to allow the Equalities sub-committee to form small task and finish groups as it felt necessary to assist in its review as detailed in Sections 2.4 and 2.5 of the report.

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst explained that the task and finish groups would comprise any Members of the Council to enable representatives from different religions or ethnic groups to discuss issues in relation to hate crime and equalities and therefore be more inclusive.

The Leader of the Council fully endorsed this and added that it would mean issues could be dealt with in a speedier format to ensure the comprehensive Equalities Policy would properly reflect the views and experiences of the community.

Councillor Alex Hayward reiterated what had been said at the Equalities sub-committee meeting, that the Conservative Group previously put a motion forward

that there were not to be Working Party or Task and Finish Groups as they become secret meetings which are sometimes Part 2, with information being leaked. These are unnecessary and could have been more inclusive had Members of the Independent Group been allowed to be on the Policy and Resources Committee. There was nothing to stop the outside community being invited to the sub-committee meetings. These meetings were minuted and open to public scrutiny, unlike the Task and Finish Groups, therefore they would not support this.

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst said that the meetings would not take place in secret with no notes, the intention was for them to be more inclusive. Part of the meetings taking place in Part 2 was due to the confidential nature of the item, particularly in relation to the Local Plan. There was no intention to have these meetings in Part 2, apart from any items dealing with incidents such as hate crimes where the individual's details would need to remain private.

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst moved, seconded by Councillor Sarah Nelmes the recommendation at Minute PR28/20.

On being put to Council the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair of Council the voting being 20 For, 13 Against and 3 Abstentions.

RESOLVED:

Agreed to allow the Equalities sub-committee to form such small task and finish groups as it felt necessary to assist in its review as detailed in Sections 2.4 and 2.5 of the report.

CL46/20 Recommendation from the Extraordinary Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 1 September 2020

ANTI-SEMITISM DEFINITION

Recommendation from the Extraordinary Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held 1 September 2020, immediately before the Council Meeting

Approval of the IHRA definition and makes formal recommendation to Council to adopt the definition as follows:

“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities”.

Councillor Joanna Clemens had concerns about the definition in that it was exclusive not inclusive. By choosing one faith ahead of others it discriminated in itself. It did not define, was open to misinterpretation and misapplication. It was the first religiously collective legislation in this Country since 1829 and there had been religious equality for nearly two centuries and to their knowledge the Jewish Community had enjoyed emancipation before the Catholics. No free society could prevent reprehensible behaviour unless it became a totalitarian country. The Councillor did not know the IHRA definition but agreed remembering the Holocaust victims was a worthy cause but should not be allowed to obscure the fact that this was a lobby and not a law making body and it was not British. The Councillor did not know why the British Government or Three Rivers was outsourcing its

legislation without scrutiny to a non-democratic body based in Berlin. It was completely contrary to the motion in favour of local democracy passed by Three Rivers last month. It was also contrary to any notion of taking back control. It prescribed by law what people were to think and feel. Councillor Clemens understood that members of the Jewish Community would not misuse the power it gave them to harass people or make false accusations but may not be around when it was being interpreted. The Councillor was aware that funding had been linked to the motion and did not believe any Three Rivers Councillor would be swayed by that. Councillor Clemens felt it was horrifying that Government was needing to push a divisive agenda using this kind of incentive.

Councillor Debbie Morris asked for a recorded vote on this item and disagreed with virtually everything Councillor Clemens had said. The recommendation was a simple one, calling for this Council to adopt the IHRA definition of Anti-Semitism. The definition was designed to enable public bodies to understand better what does and does not constitute Anti-Semitism and to enable them to respond consistently and reliably to any issues of anti-Jewish racism. The definition did not give any extra level of protection to the Jewish Community. It did not use any new laws or impose any additional restrictions to free speech, other than those already existing. The definition was not controversial and had been adopted by all political parties represented at the meeting as well as the British Government, Police, the judiciary and over 250 Local Authorities. Anti-Semitism was known as the longest hatred, but despite its long history was still in evidence where we and our residents live, work, study, bury our dead and in our virtual communities. Insignificant levels of hate crime being reported within the District did not mean it did not exist. The majority of hate crime was not reported and whilst there were no synagogues, Jewish Schools or cemeteries within Three Rivers there were plenty close by and many of the Jewish residents would be worshipping, studying and visiting them. There were security guards outside to protect them and there would be swastikas and other highly offensive graffiti. There are times when those guarding the buildings were spat at and verbally abused by passers-by. This took place less than a mile from this Districts borders but would not appear in Three Rivers statistics and did impact on our residents. Anti-Semitic conspiracy theories were abound on social media. Whenever there was a major crisis in the world anti-Semites use it to spread hatred blaming the Jews for 911, the murder of George Floyd and Coronavirus. These messages had upset and enraged the Jewish Community. The Councillor had received messages from people in the District and within the Council stating that the Holocaust was not a unique event and hate crime did not exist and quoted that if this continued to be pushed through 'concentration camps would be on the agenda fairly soon'. Jewish people in the District need to know that Three Rivers acknowledges the race hate they encounter and would do all they could to respond effectively. Councillor Morris asked that Councillors please all support this recommendation.

Councillor Sara Bedford said agreeing this motion would not impose any restrictions on free speech or people making comments about the State of Israel that they could make to other states behaving in a way they did not like. It sought to address people who stirred up hatred in the way Councillor Morris outlined. It had nothing to do with funding and was first proposed last June, before the Secretary of State put the idea forward and then linked it to funding. People needed to be educated that hatred of any sort on the basis of race or religion was wrong, unfounded and would not be tolerated in our society or in Three Rivers. That is why this statement needs to be made, as to what Three Rivers believe and how the Council would behave and how the residents should behave towards each

other and outside of the District. It was hoped everyone would make the statement that this would not be tolerated in Three Rivers at all.

Councillor Stephen Cox said this had been a tortuous journey and had taken well over a year to get this far. It had been a stain on the Council that it had not been passed hitherto and a stain he and the Labour Group wanted to wipe away. The Labour Group fully supported the definition and wanted to get it done now.”

Councillor Alex Hayward seconded the recorded vote request.

Councillor Stephanie Singer reiterated everything Councillor Morris had said and repeated that a lot of people who do not experience anti-Semitic hate crime had no idea of the extent that those of the Jewish community learn about almost every day. The Motion had to be agreed as it was one step towards eliminating it.

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst acknowledged that the adoption of the definition had been delayed but wished to refer Members to Appendix 1 of the Equalities sub-committee report which gave the IHRA guide on its work and gave examples which served as illustrations which not all Members would be aware of those illustrations of Anti-Semitic behavior and attitude and asked Members to read through to notice how indeed it affected people in the community and clearly people in the Jewish Community. He referred to the Home Office statistics on religious hate crimes recorded in England and Wales in 2018/19 showed the second highest percentage of 18% were against the Jewish Community, and these were the ones that were recorded. Having this definition agreed sent a message in terms of dealing with hate crime. The Chair of the local Synagogue had spoken at the Policy and Resources Committee and Equality Sub Committee on why it was essential that the definition was adopted and passed by Council to send the right message to the local community to try and stamp out hate crime.

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst moved, duly seconded by Councillor Sarah Nelmes the recommendation.

On being put to Council the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair of Council the voting being 35 For, 1 Against and 0 Abstentions. On the request of 6 Members of the Council a recorded vote was taken, the details of which were as follows:

For: Councillors Matthew Bedford, Sara Bedford, Marilyn Butler, Stephen Cox, Steve Drury, Peter Getkahn, Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Alex Hayward, Paula Hiscocks, Margaret Hofman, Tony Humphreys, Joan King, Stephen King, Chris Lloyd, David Major, Joy Mann, Keith Martin, Shanti Maru, Alex Michaels, Debbie Morris, Sarah Nelmes, Reena Ranger, David Raw, Michael Revan, David Samson, Alison Scarth, Andrew Scarth, Roger Seabourne, Stephanie Singer, Dominic Sokalski, Jon Tankard, Martin Trevett, Alex Turner, Alison Wall, Phil Williams.

Against: Councillor Joanna Clemens

Abstentions: 0

RESOLVED:

Council approved the recommendation from Policy and Resources Committee to adopt the IHRA definition as follows:

“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities”.

CL47/20 Recommendation from the Extraordinary Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 1 September 2020

ISLAMOPHOBIA DEFINITION

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst said in moving the recommendation to Council the definition being considered had been agreed and widely recognised as an accepted definition of Islamophobia that was backed by the largest group of Muslims in Britain (The Muslim Council of Britain) which had 500+ affiliated organisations, the British Muslims for secular democracy and more than 750 separate British Muslim organisations, it was widely supported generally.. Councillor Giles-Medhurst wished to point out some facts that apply in the UK. 47% of all hate crime was directed at Muslims, 3,530 crimes in the last Home Office statistics for England and Wales for 2018/19. It was regrettable that there was a 14% increase in hate crime relating to race or religion in the same period. There had been some concern in the past in relation to an agreed definition of Islamophobia and there clearly had been some other definitions both in terms of what was in the Dictionary and the Runnymede Trust report from 23 years ago. It was clear that the definition being proposed, in the report, would add to our existing commitment to Equality and Diversity and help contribute to the Councils compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty particularly those that came under the religion and belief protective characteristics within that duty. The adoption of this definition would support the Council and the Community Safety Partnership in proactively tackling Islamophobia in Three Rivers. It was recognised in Hertfordshire Counter Terrorism local profile that the Muslim community “is a community of increased risk of attack and are distributionally over represented as victims of hate incident.” There had been concerns that women wearing head coverings were being verbally and actually assaulted, there had been shocking video footage of such incidences on public transport. Thankfully in some cases prosecutions had been brought and in other cases members of the public had intervened to deal with those attackers. Incidences also happened to Muslims taking their children to school or whilst out shopping. Such instances must be condemned, dealt with and treated as hate crime and we owe it to our Muslim community in Three Rivers to say that we will not tolerate this. This should also be extended to those who are thought to be Muslim and are incorrectly targeted. This is hate crime and should equally be stopped and condemned, hence the need to agree this definition tonight. In order to deliver the hate crime action plan and ensure full community engagement we not only need to understand experiences of the local Muslim community but make it clear that we agree with their own self definition of such and this recommendation does that.

Councillor Sarah Nelmes seconded this recommendation and said the Comprehensive Equalities Policies asks that we identify and eradicate any forms of discrimination. The Council would look to agree similar definitions for other groups who suffer from discrimination. It was a fact that the Muslim community was over represented as victims both locally and nationally. It was for the Council to identify and look at their hate crime survey as a way to protect the Muslim community from any abuse and discrimination that they suffer. Members were urged to look at the proposed definition which would add great value to the work

on the Comprehensive Equalities Policy that was written in 2018 and which the Equalities sub-committee would be reviewing. Members were asked to support this motion.

Councillor Joanna Clemens had concerns about the definition and said the motion and the definition would not achieve the measure of agreement that the other motion had, it mixed up race and religion with cultural practices and closed down discussion. If we are to build a multi-cultural society we need to be able to talk to each other about our issues and problems in the same way that families do, share our lives and share our future and we cannot do that with the definitions which make people afraid to speak. For that reason these definitions would take us backwards and not forwards. Previous concerns mentioned to Members that the phrase Muslimness could be used to pressure many Muslims who do not subscribe to certain cultural practices into religious practices to which they are not inclined. She did not support the motion.

Councillor Alex Hayward said that the recommendation did not endorse the overall content of Islamophobia defined in the report but acknowledged that there were concerns but that the overall content was not being adopted and was confused as to why we were trying to agree a half done recommendation which allowed more confusion. This recommendation was not appropriate and did not properly serve the Muslim residents and it was for that reason that the Group would abstain and await the proper work of the independent adviser appointed to reach an effective and acceptable definition.

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst moved, duly seconded by Councillor Sarah Nelmes the recommendation.

On being put to Council the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair of Council the voting being 23 For, 1 Against and 12 Abstentions. On the request of the Chair a recorded vote was taken, the details of which were as follows:

For: Councillors Matthew Bedford, Sara Bedford, Stephen Cox, Steve Drury, Peter Getkahn, Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Margaret Hofman, Tony Humphreys, Joan King, Stephen King, Chris Lloyd, David Major, Keith Martin, Sarah Nelmes, Alison Scarth, Andrew Scarth, Roger Seabourne, Stephanie Singer, Dominic Sokalski, Jon Tankard, Martin Trevett, Alex Turner, Phil Williams.

Against: Councillor Joanna Clemens

Abstentions: Councillor Marilyn Butler, Alex Hayward, Paula Hiscocks, Joy Mann, Shanti Maru, Alex Michaels, Debbie Morris, Reena Ranger, David Raw, Michael Revan, David Samson, Alison Wall.

RESOLVED:

Council approved and agreed to adopt the recommendation from Policy and Resources Committee that The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) supported definition of Islamophobia is:

'Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness'.

The sub Committee however does not endorse the overall content of 'Islamophobia Defined' report that definition stems from.

That the Council will:

Continue to prioritise tackling hate crime and Islamophobia in partnership work with all stakeholder to listen to their concerns and develop policies that will continue to ensure we live in an inclusive District through task and finish groups and consultation.

CL48/20 Motion 1: Councillor Reena Ranger, seconded by Cllr David Sansom moved under Notice duly given as follows:

This Council is currently working towards a completion of the local plan, ensuring future generations have the homes, recreational, employment land they need amongst other infrastructure.

This Council agrees to commit to ensuring that what makes our District an attractive place to live and work in is retained as far as possible and in this instance, our greenery.

Our trees and greenery are a vital part of Three Rivers, not only for its human inhabitants but also biodiversity, insect life and healthy ecosystems.

A climate emergency was declared at Full Council, trees are the lungs the Earth and vital in the fight against climate change.

This Council agrees in conjunction with planning permissions granted, our own efforts along with those of our partners including parish and county councils, we do as much possible to plant one tree for every new dwelling built and where appropriate replace one tree for every one removed in the District due to poor health or planning needs.

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst moved an amendment to the motion to include 'at least one tree for every new house built'. Councillor Phil Williams moved a further amendment to include 'Trees to be of native British stock, and full sized not miniature trees'. The Proposer of the motion accepted both these amendments.

On being put to Council the amended motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair of Council the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

This Council is currently working towards a completion of the local plan, ensuring future generations have the homes, recreational, employment land they need amongst other infrastructure.

This Council agrees to commit to ensuring that what makes our District an attractive place to live and work is retained as far as possible and in this instance, our greenery.

Our trees and greenery are a vital part of Three Rivers, not only for its human inhabitants but also biodiversity, insect life and healthy ecosystems.

A climate emergency was declared at Full Council, trees are the lungs the Earth and vital in the fight against climate change.

This Council agrees in conjunction with planning permissions granted, to direct our own efforts along with those of our partners including parish and county councils, to do as much possible to plant at least one tree for every new dwelling built and where appropriate replace one tree for every one removed in the District due to poor health or planning needs.

Trees to be of native British stock, and full sized not miniature trees.

Motion 2: Councillor Alex Michaels, seconded by Councillor Joy Mann, moved under Notice duly given as follows:

Further Amended Motion received 26 July 2020 to be moved and debated at Extraordinary Council on 1 September 2020

TRDC to amend Constitution to allow all parties/groups or non-affiliated Councillors access to Part I and II papers in advance of committee meetings. Each Group Leader should be provided with a copy of papers at the same time Committee Members are.

On being put to Council the amended motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair of Council, the voting being by general assent.

RESOLVED:

TRDC to amend Constitution to allow all parties/groups or non-affiliated Councillors access to Part I and II papers in advance of committee meetings. Each Group Leader should be provided with a copy of papers at the same time Committee Members are.

Motion 3: Councillor Alex Michaels, seconded by Councillor Joy Mann, moved under Notice duly given as follows:

Further Amended Motion received on 28 July 2020 to be moved and debated at Extraordinary Council on 1 September 2020

This Council notes that:

Recent conflicts in the Middle East have created the largest refugee crisis in generations.

Thousands of people have died while seeking sanctuary from the violence this year alone trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea; many of them were children. The UN estimates there are over 320,000 people though who live in urgent need of resettlement.

The UK has a long and important tradition of offering sanctuary to those who need protection. 100,000 Huguenots, 10,000 Jewish Kinder Transport Children spared the Nazi concentration camps, 160,000 Poles following the Second World War many of whom had served in the Battle of Britain, the Vietnamese Boat People,

the 28,000 Asian Ugandans fleeing Idi Amin and the people who fled the war in Kosovo. This is our proud and decent tradition.

This Council resolves to:

Formally express an interest in both the VPR and Gateway programmes to the Home Office (or if predated by the UK Resettlement Scheme), requesting that 20 refugees be resettled here. We will limit this to five families unless agreed by the Policy and Resources (P&R) Committee to extend this further. The Council take refugees on the basis of this scheme being 100% funded via the Home Office, with the first five years fully funded. The Council further notes that the scheme has been successful across the Country on this basis. While the housing team plans and prepares for a family to arrive, they do this in collaboration with the community's team who are the team that manage the programme post arrival as their contact network is much more valuable to new families.

That the Council buys refugee specialist casework support for at least three years from the Refugee Council who deliver the service for most of the county of Hertfordshire. The council further notes Watford & Three River Refugee Partnership are a local group with relevant expertise as well as Herts Welcomes Refugees who can provide additional support as needed. The specialist refugee casework is funded by the Home office grant which pays additional support costs such as education and furniture thus reducing further any costs on Three Rivers District Council (TRDC).

That although housing needs to be procured through the private sector, housing is preferably secured from a philanthropic landlord who can offer to rent the house at LHA rates. If this is not possible housing must be capped at LHA rates. If housing exceeds LHA rates permission must be secured via Council prior to placing the refugees. Otherwise housing is rented privately and funded by the scheme, not by TRDC or via TRDC stock for the 5 year duration.

That the families are encouraged to make use of the new 'Well-being and work for refugee integration' project which is available until December 2022 and will support adults with low level mental health needs and prevent them from escalating and will also prepare them for the UK workplace. If this model of support is effective, tariff money can be committed to enable it to be developed after 2022.

Costs for this scheme will be £20k over 5 years per family (£4,000 per annum) in additional staffing costs for the TRDC housing team. This includes an initial three month period finding housing and ongoing 2 days per month management. These costs have been provided by the housing team and the CFO. We will cap the number of families at 5 which limits the total annual cost to £20,000. Subject to available resources any additional costs are budgeted for by P&R as required. Subject to the resources being available we commit to taking refugees on the terms of this motion.

The Council notes that the initial funding is for 5 years, in which time the refugees will be able to seek work to support themselves beyond this time. Council notes that this government strategy has been successful in other parts of the country and expect with the right support from TRDC, Refugee Council and other voluntary organisations there will be no further costs to fund. TRDC will be wholly

responsible after 5 years to seek further funding and grants via the home office and other organisations if needed.

To commit to ensuring that refugees are welcomed in this area and help facilitate this process by coordinating local service provision and coordinating the immense public will to help.

On being put to Council the amended motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair of Council, the voting being by general assent.

RESOLVED:

This Council noted that:

Recent conflicts in the Middle East have created the largest refugee crisis in generations.

Thousands of people have died while seeking sanctuary from the violence this year alone trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea; many of them were children. The UN estimates there are over 320,000 people though who live in urgent need of resettlement.

The UK has a long and important tradition of offering sanctuary to those who need protection. 100,000 Huguenots, 10,000 Jewish Kinder Transport Children spared the Nazi concentration camps, 160,000 Poles following the Second World War many of whom had served in the Battle of Britain, the Vietnamese Boat People, the 28,000 Asian Ugandans fleeing Idi Amin and the people who fled the war in Kosovo. This is our proud and decent tradition.

This Council resolved to:

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That the Council buys refugee specialist casework support for at least three years from the Refugee Council who deliver the service for most of the county of Hertfordshire. The council further notes Watford & Three River Refugee Partnership are a local group with relevant expertise as well as Herts Welcomes Refugees who can provide additional support as needed. The specialist refugee casework is funded by the Home office grant which pays additional support costs such as education and furniture thus reducing further any costs on Three Rivers District Council (TRDC).

That although housing needs to be procured through the private sector, housing is preferably secured from a philanthropic landlord who can offer to rent the house

at LHA rates. If this is not possible housing must be capped at LHA rates. If housing exceeds LHA rates permission must be secured via Council prior to placing the refugees. Otherwise housing is rented privately and funded by the scheme, not by TRDC or via TRDC stock for the 5 year duration.

That the families are encouraged to make use of the new 'Well-being and work for refugee integration' project which is available until December 2022 and will support adults with low level mental health needs and prevent them from escalating and will also prepare them for the UK workplace. If this model of support is effective, tariff money can be committed to enable it to be developed after 2022.

Costs for this scheme will be £20k over 5 years per family (£4,000 per annum) in additional staffing costs for the TRDC housing team. This includes an initial three month period finding housing and ongoing 2 days per month management. These costs have been provided by the housing team and the CFO. We will cap the number of families at 5 which limits the total annual cost to £20,000. Subject to available resources any additional costs are budgeted for by P&R as required. Subject to the resources being available we commit to taking refugees on the terms of this motion.

The Council notes that the initial funding is for 5 years, in which time the refugees will be able to seek work to support themselves beyond this time. Council notes that this government strategy has been successful in other parts of the country and expect with the right support from TRDC, Refugee Council and other voluntary organisations there will be no further costs to fund. TRDC will be wholly responsible after 5 years to seek further funding and grants via the home office and other organisations if needed.

CL49/20 REPORTS AND QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER AND LEAD MEMBERS

The Chair of the Council agreed with the Council that, due to time constraints, written reports would be provided to the Council. Written answers to the questions had been provided so only supplementary questions would be discussed.

INFRASTRUCTURE, HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Question to Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Lead Member for Transport and Economic Development, from Councillor Reena Ranger

In light of Covid-19 and the unknown and potential waiting time outside shops due to social distancing, should TRDC not extend all TRDC owned parking to two hours free to support our local shops, business and residents?

Lead Member for Transport and Economic Development response:

The new parking service introduced in the short-stay car parks was to encourage the movement of cars 'churn' in the Council's car parks. As our businesses and high streets recover this will be important to support this economic recovery.

Supplementary Question: People were still waiting outside banks and shops. People may not be able to use on-line banking and the added pressure of going back to top up the payment machines for one hour was problematic. There was no retrospective or top up payment ability, so unless we change the machines to facilitate these types of payments there was a need to re-visit this.

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst had seen no requests for this change. There was an hour free with the second hour the cheapest in the County. To change to 2 hours free would involve a report to Committee followed by a new Traffic Regulation Order which would have to go through a legal process involving additional costs and this would not be feasible. It had been reported back to him that the car parks were busy and people were using local shops and the car park facilities available.

Question to Councillor Andrew Scarth, Lead Member for Housing, from Councillor Joan King

How many homeless (rough sleepers) across Three Rivers District Council's area are there or were housed in temporary accommodation e.g. hotels, due to Covid-19 and what is planned for those individuals in the future by this authority?

Lead Member for Housing response:

The Government issued advice for Council's to make sure that rough sleepers, or those at risk of rough sleeping, are supported into accommodation. Since the "Everyone In" advice at the end of March, the Council has accommodated a total of 23 households that would not ordinarily have been placed into temporary accommodation. As at 20 July, of those 23, there are 12 still in temporary accommodation [In the District and elsewhere]. The 11 households that have moved on from temporary accommodation have been helped as follows:

- 3 housed through the Housing Register [in the District]*
- 3 housed into the private rented sector [in Bricket Wood]*
- 2 reconciled with family/partner*
- 1 moved into supported housing [YMCA Watford]*
- 1 referred to another Local Authority for assistance*
- 1 voluntarily left*

For the remaining 12 households, one household is due to move into private rented at the end of July, [Bricket Wood], three households have since become priority cases for the Council and so they will be owed the full duty (which means they will be offered further housing in social or private rented housing). The intention is to help the remaining eight households into private rented accommodation [hopefully in the District]

A supplementary question was asked to Councillor Andrew Scarth, Lead Member for Housing, by Councillor Joan King as follows:

Did any rough sleepers gain a roof over their heads? Of the 3 families to which a duty of care is owed, is the Lead Member saying there is not sufficient social housing within the District in which to house those families?

If not, should we be ensuring this Council meets its own targets for social housing and deplore the fact it has not done so as part of the South Oxhey initiative? Further, does he agree with Councillor Joan King that the skewing of the Local Plan to one bedroom properties for social rent does nothing whatsoever to help families?

The Lead Member for Housing confirmed that all rough sleepers located were taken off the streets and a report would be required for the Government to show where they were. The Lead Member agreed to provide a full written reply to Councillor Joan King.

The Lead Member for Housing provided the following written reply:

The majority of customers that were assisted through the “everyone in” initiative were single people. The three customers to which a full homelessness duty became owed was due to their vulnerability and they will be considered for further accommodation along with all customers that are in temporary accommodation. As with all customers that are owed the full homelessness duty in temporary accommodation, they will be offered further accommodation which could be into social housing or private rented housing.

The Three Rivers Housing Register indicates that there is a need for one bedroom social rented properties as well as two and three bedroom social rented properties for customers in the priority bands A-C. The Local Plan policy aims to address a range of needs.

Question to Councillor Andrew Scarth, Lead Member for Housing, from Councillor Alex Michaels

Can you explain why the Council has decided not to buy in specialist long term support via the Refugee Council for the refugees we have settled?

Lead Member for Housing response:

I wish to state that I and the Head of Housing Services are sympathetic to the plight of refugees arriving one way or another in the UK. When I was Chair of the Council, one of my charities was the Watford and Three Rivers Refugee Partnership. This was promoted by Ann Shaw.

For those who do not know, we have two Syrian refugee families in the District,

The Refugee Council is a national charity, and was heavily involved in year 1 basically 'holding the hand' on a weekly basis to assist the two families settle into the District. TRDC paid £37,000 to this charity in Year 1 and £15,000 in Year 2.

However, during year two, it was evident that the support was not sufficient for the families as considerable officer time was needed to sustain the tenancies. When the offer for year three support was made by the Refugee Council it was decided that this was not good value for money and so not purchased. At the time there were also financial concerns in relation to tenancy sustainment for the families and so Housing Services wanted to ensure the Home Office money remained available to provide assistance for the families for as long as possible without the risk of eviction or using Council budgets.

The Council is paying for English lessons managed by East of England LGA, and both families are receiving support from Herts Welcome Refugees [a charity] as it's more locally aware of needs than the national charity.

LEISURE, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY

Question to Councillor Chris Lloyd, Lead Member for Leisure, from Councillor Paula Hiscocks

What pressure is this Council using to stop Thames Water discharging sewage into our rare chalk stream River Chess thereby protecting our residents and our beautiful Chalk stream habitat?

Lead Member for Leisure response:

A number of public and Member concerns have been raised with regard to the recent sewage discharges into the River Chess. The Environment Agency (EA) issues licences and permits for waste discharges into surface and ground water which includes the River Chess. They monitor compliance and take enforcement action where appropriate. The responsibility for the monitoring and publicising of any sewage discharges into the River Chess lies with the Environment Agency. They are aware of the current concerns regarding the recent discharges and are investigating. Officers have been in contact with the Environment Agency initially seeking information and more recently requesting the Agency lead on ensuring the public are aware of any sewage discharge events and impacts. TRDC have posted social media posts detailing the responsibilities and providing the EAs incident hotline.

The Lead Member for Leisure agreed to provide a written reply to Councillor Paula Hiscocks on the following supplementary question:

Can large signs be put up warning of the Thames Water Sewage breaches? Could we put pressure on Thames Water to enlarge the Sewage Works to stop raw sewage being discharged into the rivers?

It was agreed that Councillor Hiscocks would email notes to Councillor Lloyd/Head of Regulatory Services to take up with the Environmental Agency and Thames Water.

The Lead Member for Leisure provided the following written response:

Officers were currently investigating this matter and would be contacting the Environment Agency again regarding further information and public communication on any sewage discharges.

On 25 September a public meeting was held at Sarratt Village Hall to discuss the ongoing sewage discharges at the River Chess within the last year. It was reported at this meeting that Thames Water have vowed to increase sewage treatment capacity as part of their efforts to combat sewage discharges in the River Chess. There are ongoing investigations and developments.

Question to Councillor Chris Lloyd, Lead Member for Leisure, from Councillor Shanti Maru

What diligence has been followed for the contractor to build the new swimming pool at South Oxhey Leisure Centre as many residents have complained about damage to their verges and cars?

Lead Member for Leisure response:

The works to South Oxhey Leisure Centre are being undertaken by Vincent Stokes, on behalf of the Council's Leisure Management Contractor, Sports and Leisure Management Ltd (SLM). The works site is overseen by the Site Manager whose contact details have been made available on the site noticeboard and via newsletters to local residents, should residents have any concerns regarding the works or site.

All deliveries and vehicles accessing site are confirmed 48 hours in advance of arrival. A banks-man then sees the vehicles both onto and away from site. All vehicles details are recorded at the time of arrival.

In September 2019 Officers were made aware that a resident had raised that a bollard, outside their property, had been damaged. The resident advised that the damage was done by a vehicle that was going to the Leisure Centre works site. On investigating with the Site Manager and the wider project team, it was confirmed that there had been no reporting's of any incidents involving vehicles coming or going from the site.

In September 2019 Officers received communication via the planning department that following some bad weather that vehicles exiting the works site had left mud on the road. Once raised with the Site Manager a road sweeper was arranged and the road was cleaned later that same day.

In November 2019 Officers noted that there were a tyre mark, from a vehicle, on a grass verge near to the Chapel. Contractors and users of the South Oxhey Leisure Centre were reminded that parking, to access the venue, was in All Saints Church car park and the public car park on Henbury Way.

These are the only incidents that Officers have been aware of. There have not been any reported complaints of damage to cars.

There was no supplementary question but Councillor Shanti Maru asked for the road to be swept regularly. Councillor Chris Lloyd agreed to pass on the comment.

Question to Councillor Chris Lloyd, Lead Member for Leisure, from Councillor Stephen Cox

Are the flower beds at the junction of Hayling Road and Prestwick Road the responsibility of this authority?

Lead Member for Leisure response:

The rose beds are the responsibility of Three Rivers District Council (TRDC).

Supplementary Question: Did the Lead Member believe it was a happy coincidence that the flower beds were weeded within 48 hours of the question and the question was answered physically as well as in writing within two months? Could he provide the maintenance schedule for the flower beds at the junction of Hayling Road and Prestwick Road?

The Lead Member replied that Councillor Cox should have emailed him directly and he would have checked the flower beds. A written reply would be provided on the maintenance schedule.

The Lead Member for Leisure provided the following written reply:

The beds are attended twice a year – summer and winter. There are issues with weeds due to no longer using glyphosate so we are looking at sowing with wildflowers/grass next year. Bird nesting season is March-September so only certain work can be carried out then.

Work will be continuing with the rose beds at the bottom of Hayling Road, and they will be looking to re-stock the beds by spring.

With respect to when work is carried out on shrub beds in other areas, this is largely reliant on when Grounds Maintenance are able to finish the grass cutting/leaves clearing in the winter and dependent on the weather but they are all maintained between November and January. With respect to the summer, work to the shrub beds are normally carried out in May which would be a light trim due to bird nesting.

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

Following my question to Council on 16 July 2019 asking about stopping or deterring cars idling outside schools and my email on 02/03/2020 asking if there was any update. Also noting that Three Rivers District Council (TRDC) have a legal duty to ensure that incidents of environmental pollution are kept to a minimum and that TRDC declared a climate emergency on 21 May 2019. Could the Lead Member please let me know, now one year on, if he has looked into this and has an answer. In July 2019 the Lead Member informed Council “Whilst the cost of seeking designation would be minimal and that this would be something to look into (implementing).”

Lead Member for Environmental Services and Sustainability response:

As previously advised at Full Council the Council may apply for designation under The Road Traffic (Vehicle Emissions) (Fixed Penalty) (England) Regulations 2002. However, specific criteria needs to be met. The Council has an Air Quality Management Area so meets the first criteria for designation. However, part of the application for designation would include the submission of evidence to demonstrate that there is a problem locally. There is no current available evidence detailing there is specific problem outside schools in Three Rivers District Council as such the designation has not been pursued.

If designated the Council would be empowered to issue fixed penalty notices to users of vehicles in their area who fail to switch off their vehicle engine, when requested so to do, by a suitably trained and authorised officer of the Council. (The offence is only failing to turn off your idling engine when specifically requested to do so, rather than just idling).

Civil Enforcement Officers are able to issue Notices under the legislation but this would either require an increase in Officer resource or reduction in parking enforcement capacity. Hertsmere Borough Council have been asked for an initial view on costs.

What Officers have been asked to consider as part of the Climate Emergency work is to investigate the work of other Local Authorities who do not have a formal designation (with associated costs) but have ‘no idling’ promotional/publicity campaigns, often in partnership with schools. This maybe an alternative approach. This will be taken forward by the Climate Strategy Officer once in position.

Councillor Reena Ranger asked the following supplementary question:

When will the Climate Strategy Officer be in place? Could the Air Quality be assessed outside of schools? Would a formal designation be considered if the air quality outside of schools was not of a high standard and ensure Enforcement Officers rotating their duties on school parking would also enforce no idling zones?

The Lead Member replied that the Climate Change Officer was in situ now on a six month secondment. Air quality control had been discussed with the Youth Council and other County Councillors as to whether they could fund the diffuser tubes at schools within the District. It would not be via Three Rivers District Council although Three Rivers would store the data. This would be enforced by the Council if possible.

Question to Councillor Phil Williams, Lead Member for Environmental Services and Sustainability, from Councillor Alex Hayward

When will the works on the Depot in Rickmansworth begin?

Lead Member for Environmental Services and Sustainability response:

Works on Batchworth Depot were due to commence in September.

POST MEETING NOTE:

At the last meeting it was stated that works were starting imminently on the new Depot. This was true in as much as work on paper had started but not strictly the case in terms of physical works on site and the Lead Member wished to clarify as follows:

The scheme that had got planning permission and which officers were progressing was going to go over the allocated budget if it was to be built to the highest sustainability standards, something we all take very seriously. Officers took the opportunity of the coronavirus lockdown to re-evaluate the scheme and to take on board the need to reduce costs, keep standards high and in light of the move to more agile working to provide less desk space for Depot based officers. Unfortunately this has required a new planning application which is due to be decided at this month's planning meeting and to which it is hoped all Councillors will give their support given the building will now be less bulky but all other benefits will remain. Once granted planning permission it is intended that works commence as soon as possible (probably January) as work had already been advanced on discharging the planning conditions which will be very similar to the original permission.

The hopeful timeline is as set out below. It's worth noting that the site will remain operational throughout the build.

October 15 2020 – Planning Committee

November - December 2020 – Final design stage, discharge of planning conditions, off site manufacture of the building

January 11 2021 commence on site -groundworks and utilities

February/March 2021 – New Office Building Installed

April/May – Ground works phase 1

June – Demolish old building

July – Project complete

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

Last year this Council declared a Climate Emergency and declared it would use all practical means to reduce the impact of Council services on the environment why therefore a year later do we still not have recycling waste bins in our principal town of Rickmansworth or the Aquadrome?

Lead Member for Environmental Services and Sustainability Response:

This is the responsibility of Environmental Protection but can now also be picked up by the Climate Officer and the funding available from Keep Britain Tidy.

Supplementary Question: What date would the new recycling bins be available. Could the plastic bins at the Aquadrome used as recycling bins?

The Lead Member for Environmental Services and Sustainability replied that there was a member of staff at the Depot who sorted through and handpicked the recycling from the Aquadrome and the High Street which was the most efficient way of doing. The recycling figures had gone up to 64%.

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

Why is this Council failing our Muslim residents and treating them differently to our other residents, causing them emotional stress by allowing BWF to open the graves of their loved ones without their authority and bury a total stranger on top?

Lead Member for Environmental Services and Sustainability Response:

Sections G, H, J and N of Woodcock Hill Cemetery are collectively designated as the Muslim Section. By a series of leases granted on various dates between 1988 and 2017, Three Rivers District Council leased the Muslim Section to the Trustees of B W Foundation ('BWF') for a period of 120 years. BWF are a Muslim charitable organisation.

On 16 March 2020, BWF introduced a 'Two Tier Burials' policy which stated, amongst other things:

"... The shortage of cemetery space in the London area is a known issue. BW Foundation has a responsibility to ensure that the space available is used in the most efficient way according to Islamic jurisprudence. The emergence of the COVID-19 virus is expected to escalate demand for grave spaces significantly.

As of 16 March 2020, and until further notice all Burials in section J Will be two tiers so that we can meet the demand. This means that each grave space will be used to bury two bodies ... Two bodies will be interred in each grave space, at different depths. ... Interments will be sequential with no spaces being left between graves and pre-selection of the grave space will not be possible.

All families purchasing grave space in the Muslim Section during the operational period of BWF's two tier burials policy were required to sign a declaration confirming their understanding and acceptance of the policy.

Four families were directly affected by BWF's two tier burials policy; their deceased relative being buried in either the lower or upper tier of a two tier grave with the remains of an unrelated individual buried in the second tier of that grave space. The deceased relative of a fifth family was buried in the lower tier of a third two-tier grave but the upper tier of that grave remains empty.

One of the families affected subsequently challenged BWF's two tier policy in the High Court. The policy was found to be entirely lawful. Nevertheless, it was a policy that caused considerable upset amongst a section of our Muslim community; and one which has not been replicated by TRDC in respect of those parts of the cemetery under the Council's direct management, i.e. the non-Muslim sections of the cemetery.

Given that the significant escalation in demand for grave space anticipated at the time that BWF's two tier burials policy was introduced has not, thankfully, materialised, TRDC requested that BWF abandon their two tier burials policy and adopt a policy which is in line with the Council's own, i.e. with families being given the right to choose who, if anyone, is buried in the grave space above their deceased relative. BWF agreed to do that and there have been no unrelated two tier burials since June 2020.

BWF reserve their right, as the long-term leaseholder of the Muslim Section, to review their policy in the event of any future public health emergency, but have agreed to work collaboratively with the Council so as to ensure parity between the Muslim and non-Muslim sections of the cemetery.

Of the 4 families whose deceased relatives have been buried in unrelated two tier graves, two (whose deceased relatives are buried in the lower tiers of two separate graves) continue to object to the policy and they seek the exhumation of the remains of the deceased buried in the respective upper tiers; and two (the relatives of the deceased buried in the two upper tiers) continue to consent to BWF's two tier burials policy and, accordingly, oppose the exhumation of their deceased family members' remains.

Any application for exhumation would be a matter for the Ministry of Justice to determine.

It is the position of TRDC that the decision whether or not to seek an exhumation is one that should be made freely by the families concerned, and not one which the Council should seek to influence one way or the other.

In relation to the fifth family, whose deceased relative is buried in the lower tier of a two tier grave with the upper tier remaining empty, BWF have agreed to assign the entire grave space to the family concerned.

Other than the five families mentioned above, all other interments in the Muslim Section of Woodcock Hill Cemetery (that is, all burials outside of the period

between 16 March 2020 and 26 June 2020) are unaffected by BWF's two tier burials policy.

RESOURCES AND SHARED SERVICES

Questions to Councillor Matthew Bedford, Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services, from Councillor David Sansom

With the advent of Virtual meetings making Councillors Laptops crucial, what are the reliability/failure figures on the Surface Pro PC?

Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services response

We have replaced 6 units for four members

- o 3 through physical damage - screen breakages due to physical damage,*
- o 3 through battery issues*

Additionally 2 members have migrated to laptops to manage specific eyesight-related issues

Am I the only Councillor who is locked out by McAfee, log on with the help of IT only to have it lock again within 1 hour?

Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services response:

McAfee is a security feature, encrypting the device. McAfee is installed on all laptops (Officers and Councillors) across both Councils, in the region of 550 devices. As with the surface pros themselves, McAfee is used successfully by multiple commercial and public sector bodies for many thousands of employees.

Multiple McAfee lockouts can be caused by a range of causes including low battery level or overdue Windows updates. If you are having difficulties I would urge you to contact the Helpdesk so they can advise and ensure there is a fix.

Supplementary Question: With the McAfee problems, what was the criteria for getting the surface pros replaced? The Lead Member advised that the Surface Pros had not been replaced due to McAfee problems. They were replaced for the problems listed previously.

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

Following the pandemic which Government grants are available to Three Rivers District Council?

Which grants have we applied for to date?

Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services response:

See attached spreadsheet

Councillor Paula Hiscocks asked the following supplementary question

Could business grant details be received in good time in order to alert residents?

The Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services advised that the information was circulated as soon as it became available.

Question to Councillor Matthew Bedford, Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services, from Councillor Alex Michaels

Your flagship property investment scheme involved £20 million cash being taken from TRDC reserves and being spent on commercial property despite warnings from several Members at the time, including myself. One of these properties, in Norwich, has not paid rent since March 25, and leaves an ongoing £60,000 per annum hole in our accounts. How will this be accounted for?

Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services response:

Unfortunately the question itself contains a number of misconceptions. The property investment scheme has not reduced the Council's reserves in any way. It has prudently invested in property in order to make better use of surplus cash. Not to do this would be a dereliction of our duty to act as prudent stewards of residents' funds. Nor is the investment solely in commercial property as the question states. As was stated publically at the time, the aim was for a balanced portfolio across different classes of residential and commercial property. This was achieved. Specifically there is an extremely limited exposure to retail and zero exposure to leisure.

We do have one retail property, actually in Nottingham not in Norwich as stated. In common with the vast majority of retail tenants in the country, encouraged by the Government, the rent has not been paid since end of March. The rent has not been waived and we are continuing to pursue through normal debt recovery processes. Clearly there is a risk that some rent will ultimately not be recovered. The impact of this is included in the figures reported to the Policy and Resources Committee.

Councillor Alex Michaels asked the following supplementary question:

How would the £60,000 gap be funded? With the commercial market as it is, and having a non performing asset that was costing the Council money, looking forward if opportunities came up in the future would things be done differently?

The Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services replied that the same process of due diligence and taking external advice would be followed. The detailed information about where the funds were coming from had been provided in various written reports and further information in the report going to Policy and Resources Committee the following week. There was extremely limited exposure to the retail property market, significantly less than many other Local Authorities, partly because they evaluated the risks.

Question to Councillor Matthew Bedford, Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services, from Councillor Alex Hayward

What evidence can the Council provide to the residents of the Three Rivers District that they have been best served by the Administration's policy to purchase property outside the District?

Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services response

Clearly if we have surplus cash, it is prudent to invest it in a way that maximises the return for residents, but without putting the underlying investment at risk. As you know, the Council went through a rigorous risk-assessment process in setting

up the fund and a rigorous due diligence process in relation to each investment. Overall the Council is generating around £1m per year more income to fill the gap left by reductions in Government support. That has helped us to protect services. We recognise this is not risk-free – that is why we established at the same time a specific reserve (the Economic Impact Reserve) in order to protect the Council against unexpected shocks. We are confident that we have got the right balance and that this is the best approach.

Councillor Alex Hayward asked the following supplementary question:

Part of the original question had not been answered referring to ‘outside the District, so should we not have served the residents better had we purchased inside the district where there would have been a return on the money and supported the local economy.

The Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services replied, no, they had looked at some options presented inside the District and some options outside the District and those inside were very much less attractive and in some cases had significant elements of retail exposure which were not pursued.

Question to Councillor Matthew Bedford, Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services, from Councillor Michael Revan

I know it’s on a four year cycle, but does the Council believe that the Microsoft Surface Pro is not fit for purpose and should be upgraded immediately.

Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services response

I am aware there are issues with the surface pro but I am also aware that these devices are widely and successfully used in commerce and the local authority sector. My own experience is that the Helpdesk are able to resolve all issues very quickly when contacted and I would urge all Members with any problems to utilise that.

Councillor Michael Revan asked the following supplementary question:

When would you look at computers again and would an iPad be considered?

The Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services replied that issues using a personal I-Pad were significantly different to issues needed to connect to the Council’s network. There would be Member involvement when the investment was made to replace these devices.

Question to Councillor Matthew Bedford, Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services, from Councillor Joan King

What is the Lead Member’s view on the permitted hours of working at the construction site referred to as South Oxhey Central?

Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services response:

The current permitted hours at the development site known as South Oxhey Central (Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm, Saturdays 8am-1pm, no working Sundays and Bank Holidays) were agreed as part of a Construction Management Plan secured by planning condition. The hours reflect the standard hours agreed historically by this Council under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 which, amongst

other matters, considers noise nuisance from construction sites. The permitted hours have been considered appropriate for this development site.

Councillor Joan King asked the following supplementary question:

The reply regarding the hours were the old hours. New hours had been agreed until 30 September and do you think proposals received to commence work at 7am and continue to 9pm and seek Sunday working were an absolute disgrace? Do you commend the actions of the local Labour Councillors who notified the public of the proposals and the significant role they played in the reduction of hours finally agreed? What will this Council commit to in respect to enforcing parking restrictions in respect to the South Oxhey Central Building Site?

The Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services was aware that the hours had changed but the written answer was correct at the time it was given. All local Members would be advised to keep their residents updated with any significant planning applications in their area. It is a matter for the Planning Committee to address those as and when they come up.

Question to Councillor Matthew Bedford, Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services, from Councillor Stephen King

How much funding has been paid by way of grants to businesses in Three Rivers during the pandemic and how much business rate income is presently outstanding?

Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services response:

See the list below:

£825,000.00 of Business Rates arrears remain outstanding for April, May and June 2020. Reminder notices have been issued to these accounts which are now being followed up with phone calls.

<i>Fund</i>	<i>Number of Businesses</i>	<i>Amount of Grant</i>	<i>Total grant paid</i>
<i>Small Business Grant Fund (SBGF)</i>	<i>491</i>	<i>£10,000</i>	<i>£4,910,000.00</i>
<i>Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grant Fund (RLHGF) A Fund – (RV up and including £15,000)</i>	<i>113</i>	<i>£10,000</i>	<i>£1,130,000.00</i>
<i>RLHGF B Fund – (RV £15,000 - £51,000)</i>	<i>216</i>	<i>£25,000</i>	<i>£5,400,000.00</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>820</i>		<i>£11,440,000.00</i>

Councillor Stephen King asked the following supplementary question:

It was noted that £25,000 of business rates arrived at the end of June. Can an up-to-date figure be provided up to the end of August and what percentage would Three Rivers be competent of recuperating?

The Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services advised that updated information was available in the Budget Monitoring Report going to Policy and Resources the following week and was available on the Council website.

Question to Councillor Matthew Bedford, Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services, from Councillor Joan King

What is the difference between the costs to the Council of all measures taken due to Covid-19 and the monies received or pledged by the Government?

Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services response

	£
Additional costs of Covid-19 response	530,385
Forecast reduction in income levels	1,602,927
Expenditure not incurred due to Covid-19	(287,915)
Government funding to mitigate Covid-19 impact	(1,081,683)
Increased Budget pressure	763,714

Councillor Joan King asked the following supplementary question:

Does this report also let Members know if we are making representation to the Government regarding the deficit?

The Lead Member for Resources and Shared Services said we had to report the figures to the Government but was not aware if the Council were making specific representation but was sure it could be brought up at the Policy and Resources Committee next week.

CL50/20 REPORTS AND QUESTIONS TO THE CHAIRS OF THE AUDIT, LANNING, LICENSING AND REGULATORY SERVICES COMMITTEES (RULE 14) to include any report from February that the Chair thinks appropriate

AUDIT COMMITTEE

The Chair of the Audit Committee, Councillor Margaret Hofman had no report.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Chair of the Planning Committee, Councillor Chris Lloyd made the following report.

Question to Councillor Chris Lloyd, Chair of Planning, from Councillor Reena Ranger

Does this Council think it's acceptable for a development to completely overlook neighbours and the developer not provide any trees or mitigation measures? Do we as a local authority believe that where we are the applicant/developer, schemes should be of the highest standards not only to protect all our residents but also lead by example?

The Chair of Planning Committee response:

From Planning Policy and Projects - Trees: The Local Plan Sub Committee unanimously voted to recommend to the Policy & resources Committee the

policy on Biodiversity, Trees and Landscape for inclusion in the Local Plan on the 16 June 2020. The policy includes a requirement for developers to submit landscape proposals which seek to retain trees and other important landscape and nature conservation features. The policy also seeks new trees and other planting to the landscape of the site where it is appropriate.

From Planning Team - No. Each application is assessed on its own individual merits having regard to national and local policies and other material considerations. In assessing a planning application Officers would have regard to any real or perceived overlooking of neighbouring properties and the impact on these properties. There may be mitigation such as distances between properties, juxtaposition, type and orientation of windows for example to be considered. Whilst landscaping may assist, it should generally not be relied upon to provide screening. In order to refuse an application on overlooking grounds demonstrable harm must be identified.

Any Council scheme should be of a high standard that takes into account relevant national and local policies, however, the benefits of any scheme have to be carefully judged and weighted and it may mean certain standards or harm is outweighed by other benefits on the basis of what is referred to as the planning/tilted balance.

Supplementary question asked to Councillor Chris Lloyd, Chair of Planning, from Councillor Reena Ranger

Would you say to the residents of Bowring Green that the Council Scheme was built to a high standard? The Leader of the Council is aware of the overlooking, mental distress, general inconvenience and personal financial expenditure the residents have had to outlay and people have left the area. Do you think we have served those who will use the units we have built well with frosted windows for them to look out of all day?

Councillor Chris Lloyd agreed to contact residents the following day and ask for the photographs to be sent to him. An update to be provided to the Chair of Planning from Regulatory Services to advise Councillor Ranger.

LICENSING COMMITTEE

The Chair of the Licensing Committee, Councillor Martin Trevett had no report.

REGULATORY SERVICES COMMITTEE

The Chair of the Regulatory Services Committee, Councillor Martin Trevett had no report.

CHAIR OF COUNCIL