

LEISURE, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Of a virtual meeting on Wednesday 10 March from 7.30pm to 9.05pm

Councillors present:

Chris Lloyd (Lead Member for Leisure)	Phil Williams (Lead Member
Roger Seabourne (Lead Member Community	Environmental Services and
Safety and Partnerships)	Sustainability)
Paula Hiscocks	Alison Scarth
Donna Duncan	Jon Tankard
Alex Michaels	Alison Wall
Stephen King	

Councillor also in attendance:
Matthew Bedford

Also in attendance:

Ray Figg – Head of Community Services
Malcolm Clarke – Waste and Environment Manager
Rebecca Young – Acting Head of Community Partnerships
Joanna Hewitson – Climate Change Officer
Charlotte Gomes – Landscape and Leisure Development Manager
Temitope Opeyemi – Finance Manager
Elen Roberts – Waste and Recycling Officer
Jennie Probert – Environmental Strategy Manager
Sherrie Ralton - Committee Manager

Councillor Roger Seabourne in the Chair

LEC 48/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies were received.

LEC 49/20 MINUTES

The minutes of the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee meeting held on Wednesday 13 January 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair of the meeting when it was possible to do.

LEC 50/20 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business

LEC 51/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

LEC 52/20 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 had 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 Finance Manager advised that there was a variance of £87k for revenue due to the removal of the income expected from AFM. They had predicted receiving £104k from Herts County Council but had received confirmation that no payments were likely to be made for this financial year. Due to the Pandemic there had been an increase in tonnage and therefore to the cost of recycling and an adverse variance report served on Licensing as there had been no renewals or applications during the year. There had been an increased income in Clinical Waste, further underspends on furniture, equipment and material in Waste Management and hire vehicles.

On Capital there was £640k to rephrase into next year due to the ongoing Depot projects.

Members raised the following points:

Q: The table at paragraph 2.6 the Community Safety spend to date showed zero, why when there was £45k in the budget?

A: The Finance Manager advised that the £45k related to the budget for next year so the latest on capital for Community Safety was actually £9,700, a lot of which had been rephrased and some had been offered as a saving.

Q: On Appendix 2 when would the CCTV budget of £6k be spent?

A: CCTV Capital budget was for maintenance, replacing existing cameras and upkeep, not for new additional cameras.

Post Meeting Reply: *There was no spend planned for the remainder of this financial year as it was a demand led service and the budget would be rephrased for 21/22.*

Q: Garden Waste was bringing in more than anticipated, was this due to the increase of £5 residents had to pay on direct debit for brown bins or more uptake of the service?

A: This was due to increased uptake of the service at present. The change in price was not due to take effect until April 2021.

Q: Appendix 1 Community Partnerships paid annual leave of £22,930 to a departing member of staff. Clarification was requested on this.

Post Meeting Reply: *The figures are all legitimate contractual payments and are made up as follows:*

Outstanding TOIL accrued at time of leaving - £6,865. Payment for accrued but untaken annual leave - £4,280. Pay in lieu of notice - £11,782.

Total = £22,927

On Watersmeet Members were pleased to see they had donated the food and beverage stock which was close to the sell by date and hoped they would get the second Government Grant. It was useful to note that catering, lettings and box office commission usually brought in £51,000.

Q: Appendix 2 £60,000 spend on Paladin bins – how many bins and where would they be situated?

Post Meeting Reply: *The paladin bin capital bin budget was set at £25,000 in 2020/21. £4,000 was re-phased from the previous year. And in P6 an additional budget allocation was agreed, therefore the total budget was £39,121 and the budget had been fully spent. The budget set for 2021/22 was £40,000 and proposed for 2022/23 at £60,000. This budget was used to purchase and refurbish bins, which was an on-going requirement due to damage, life expectancy of a bin, conversion of businesses to flats and new flats.*

RESOLVED:

Noted and commented on the contents of the report.

The Chair repeated items 1 to 4 of the Agenda due to a live stream error.

LEC 53/20 SERVICE PLANNING 2021/24

The Committee considered the following service plans for recommendation to Council:

Leisure and Landscape Service Plan:

The Landscape and Leisure Development Manager advised that this was the final Leisure and Landscape Service Plan, the draft having been discussed in November.

A consultation was taking place at present on the initial briefing document of the Tree Strategy. This highlighted key milestones and consultation dates to make stakeholders aware that the Tree Strategy was to be reviewed and to invite any thoughts on any particular issues they would like the draft strategy to address. The briefing document could be viewed through the Council's website homepage and details had been sent to some of the key stakeholders.

A Member noted that there was an assumption of a lot of internal recruitment for some of the posts in all the Service Plans and asked whether sufficient new members of staff were being recruited to keep the service fresh?

The Head of Community Services advised that the Customer Service Centre was treated as an academy where staff were given a breadth of knowledge over all the services. When vacancies occurred the Council recruitment procedure was followed. When the Principal Trees and Landscape Officer position was advertised it was found that no one internally had the skills and knowledge required so an external candidate was appointed. The Council always looked at the skills and knowledge within each team when a vacancy arose but if it was not possible to recruit from within the team would advertise internally then externally as necessary.

The Head of Community Services advised that the Tree Strategy consultation was on the work programme of both the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee and Policy and Resources Committee.

Community Partnerships Service Plan:

The Acting Head of Community Partnerships advised the following additions:

- The Green Homes grant project which has secured funding from the Government.
- Further information on the Climate Change officer posts in the structure chart.
- The Partnership with Watford and Three Rivers Trust and the support to the voluntary sector for which the funding had now been agreed.

Environmental Protection Service Plan:

The Head of Community Services advised they would be adding a project to the Service Plan around rewilding.

Through our membership of the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership they would be undertaking two bio-diversity audits. The first was to understand what biodiversity existed across the whole District and the County, to see what the opportunities were to bring some land up to a higher level of bio-diversity.

The second audit was specifically on Council land which did not have a management plan in place, for example the Swillet, to establish what opportunity there was for increasing biodiversity, and connecting corridors to the baseline audit.

Both were due to commence in early summer and should be completed by the autumn.

In spring they were looking to do a pilot of five areas across the District, where mowing would be reduced to once per year, at the end of summer. The proposed sites were:

- Parts of Woodhall Lane, South Oxhey
- Parts of Hayling Road, South Oxhey
- Parts of Fortune Common, Rickmansworth
- Parts of Tudor Gardens, Mill End
- Part of Oulton Way Playing Fields, Carpenders Park

Members raised the following points:

Q: There were other areas that could easily not be mowed. Was this just a start? Would other areas be considered?

A: Officers would be looking to expand in the future, but the caveat would be that it would depend upon the results of the two bio-diversity audits.

Q: Who would carry out the audits?

A: Herts County Council would be commissioning the audits and the results would be provided at a future LEC meeting.

Q: Could a different mowing regime be adopted this summer, where some first cuts could be missed? Could a mowing criteria be adopted for 2021 for non-designated amenity spaces owned or managed by the Council to have a reduced cut to once only for this year in August or September? Any issues raised by members of the public could then be looked into by Officers. Could a 1 to 2 metres radius be left around small trees and 2 to 3 metres around large trees? For playing and recreational fields 2 to 10 metres could be left around the edges and also could we look at large corner verges and banks.

Q: Could more be done on other sites, for example Leavesden Country Park, some fields within the Aquadrome, Rickmansworth Park, Coombe Hill Road, grass verges in Abbots Langley car park and the alleyway between Kindersley Way and Gallows Hill Lane?

A Member pointed out that the alley way between Kindersley Way and Gallow Hills Lane was very steep and Ward Members had worked hard to ensure it was kept clear of vegetation as it got very slippery.

The Chair asked Members to send suggestions of other sites to the Head of Community Services, the Waste and Environment Manager and the Environmental Strategy Manager. The service plan would be updated accordingly.

Q: A member asked if Leavesden Country Park, the Aquadrome and Rickmansworth Park could be added to the Pilot Sites to be decided by Officers in coordination with the Lead Member? There were concerns that if this did not start this season there would be another season of decline.

A: The Chair advised that Officer time could not be committed to items not in the work programme. If it was possible for them to be considered then they would do so. The Head of Community Services advised that the grass cutting taking place now was being undertaken by Herts County Council not Three Rivers. Officers could look at the three sites mentioned with the Lead Member(s) to see what they could do in the current year.

A Member said they were ready for rewilding on Woodhall Lane, Hayling Road and Carpenders Park. The Parish Council were looking at planting wild flowers either this year or early next year.

Q: Could an email go out to all Councillors to ask for any areas they considered could be left to rewilding? Network rail use the back of the Fortune Common area to access the rail track so Three Rivers or HCC would have to contact them. Were Three Rivers asking Parish Councils what areas could not be cut this year?

A: The Chair agreed Parish Councils should be approached for their suggestions.

Q: A Member advised of 3 sites within their ward which had been untended for decades, the former tip sites at Furtherfield and Bedmond Green and a small piece of land at the bottom of Church Hill in Bedmond. They asked if Officers could speak to the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, the Countryside Management Service or whoever necessary to get Management Plans in place for those sites. If Members were in agreement could these sites be added to the work plan?

A: The Head of Community Services said following the two audits they would look to see what they could do in the main parks but they may not have sufficient resources.

Q: Three Rivers only own a third of land so if 10% was rewilded it was not a lot of space. Less cutting would mean just one cut and lift in late summer.

Councillor Alex Michaels proposed that the three sites, Leavesden Country Park, the Aquadrome and Rickmansworth Park be added to the five pilot sites. The Councillor suggested not being too specific on numbers so the Lead Members could be consulted to make a decision.

A: The Head of Community Services was happy for this to be considered but said that they may not get what they wanted in the current year. The intention was to cut and leave the grass as there was a potential cost on a cut and lift regime so there could be budget implications. The grass would not be lifted at this stage unless shown as a requirement in the results of the audit. There may be a requirement to allocate budget funding to this.

A Lead Member advised that it may not be suitable to cut some of the areas of the Aquadrome. Also a reminder that this crossed over two Lead Members' remits and they would need to work on this together.

Councillor Alex Michaels moved, seconded by Councillor Paula Hiscocks, a proposal to add Leavesden Country Park, The Aquadrome and Rickmansworth Park to the five pilot sites.

The Chair suggested that they should look to add those sites to the existing five pilot sites and leave it to the Officer's judgement as to whether they had the resources. It was not acceptable to expect this to be carried out when it was not on the work programme.

Councillor Alex Michaels moved an amendment to their motion that the Committee agree to add the three sites, Leavesden Country Park, the Aquadrome and Rickmansworth Park, to the Pilot project to be decided between the Lead Members and the Officers with the presumption that they would leave as big a section as feasible uncut on these sites in the current year. This was supported by Councillor Hiscocks.

The Chair advised that the service plan would be adjusted accordingly.

The Chair asked the proposer and seconder of the motion that the suggestion remain informal at this time. They both agreed to this.

Members thanked Officers for their work on this.

The Environmental Strategy Manager advised that some of the new Depot money had been rephrased but work was due to commence in May and finish by the end November. A project had been added on the Waste Compositional Analysis carried out across the whole of Hertfordshire. The main theme was to be food waste.

Regulatory Services Service Plan:

This service plan was being presented to the Committee in relation to the Environmental Health element and there were no changes from the draft.

There were no comments.

RESOLVED:

That the service plans be recommended to Council.

LEISURE

LEC 54/20 LEAVESDEN COUNTRY PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2021/31

The Landscapes and Leisure Development Manager introduced the report which was to present the new 10 year management plan for Leavesden Country Park and to recommend its adoption by the Council. The report also detailed the results of the public consultation for the fencing options for grazing on The Horses' Field.

The report recommended option 2 which allowed the public to access the site all year round without encountering cattle.

Members raised the following points:

Thanked the team, members of the public and the volunteers for all their work.

Q: Only 15 people had responded to the survey out of 93,000 residents, and wondered if this would be a representative view of 4 in favour of option 1, 4 in favour of option 2 and 5 with no preference?

A: The Chair advised that the options were a decision for the Committee to make.

Q: With the ending of the National Lottery Heritage Fund would Leavesden residents have to pay a precept for the Country Park the same as Rickmansworth residents had to pay for the Aquadrome?

A: The Chair advised that this was a not a Management Plan issue. The Member should approach the Finance Officers for advice.

Q: Would Heritage cattle be used?

The Management Plan stated a presumption against peat and a presumption against chemicals. What did this mean?

Post Meeting Reply: *“A presumption against the use of peat”* – this will be amended to say *“peat will not be used on any of our sites”*

“A presumption against the use of pesticides” – unfortunately there are some circumstances where herbicide may be needed to kill tree stumps, but in most cases we can use ecoplugs. These are small plugs of herbicide which can be inserted into stumps to kill them without the risk of other trees or plants being affected. However, there are some circumstances where these cannot be used, for example on Croxley Common Moor where the herbicide may be painted on instead. In addition, at the moment insecticide is used to control Oak Processionary Moths, but officers are investigating other means of dealing with this. I can re-word this statement to say *“pesticides will not be used unless there are no alternative means of control”* – the Management Plan is reviewed annually, so if this changes and we have other methods in place, we can amend this statement further.

The Chair moved, duly seconded, the recommendation at Option 2 in the report.

On being put to the Committee, the Chair declared the motion CARRIED having been agreed by General Assent.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee agree to the adoption of the Leavesden Country Park 10 Year Management Plan (2021-2031) and

2 That the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee agree to the installation of cattle grazing fencing as outlined in option 2

LEC 55/20 CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

This report presented the revised Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy, (attached at Appendix A) which included new ambitions in relation to climate change and sustainability, our achievements so far, and how we can lead, enable and engage individuals and businesses to adopt pro-environmental behaviours to reduce their

environmental impacts. The associated action plan would be developed and used by officers to deliver the strategy once agreed.

The item has been agreed at Policy and Resources Committee on 8 March, subject to any comments from LEC Committee to be recommended to Council.

The Officer advised that they sought approval of the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy. This Council passed a motion in May 2019 committing itself to carbon neutrality by 2030 a position taken by almost three quarters of all local Councils. A draft Strategy was presented to the Committee in October 2020 which was recommended for public consultation. This took place through a residents' survey and group discussion with the Local Strategic Partnership, Local Area Forums, Environmental Forum, local schools and resident groups and was completed by 30 November 2020. Since then officers across the Council including those from planning, property, procurement, transport, waste, landscapes and biodiversity, reviewed and responded to the survey comments relevant to their area of expertise, and this version of the Climate Emergency Strategy evolved. The Officer highlighted the main points from the Consultation report.

Members raised the following:

Q: Would it be possible to add a timeframe to the strategy? Could there be a biannual update of the strategy added to the work programme? Had they considered using Gantt charts?

A: The action plan would be designed to pick up milestones and target dates for completion. Officers would be reporting on this and would add these reports to the work programme.

Q: A Member's ward had flooding issues, much of which was due to water going into sewers rather than sumps. Could this be included in the Local Plan and within Permitted Development?

A: The Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership had identified water and flooding as the biggest priority for the County and the first Action Plan to be produced was on water and flooding. The action plan would be taken to planners across the County for consultation.

Q: Would Members be consulted on the action plan and was there a timescale.

A: The Action Plan would be brought to LEC Committee around September.

Members thanked all the Officers for their hard work. Thanks were also given to Councillors and Residents.

On being put to the Committee, the Chair declared the motion CARRIED having been agreed by General Assent.

RECOMMEND:

That the proposed Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy to Council for adoption subject to any comments made by the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee.

LEC 56/20 WORK PROGRAMME

To review and make necessary changes to the Committee's work programme.

The following points were raised by Members:

A Member asked about the Tree Strategy. The Chair advised that the strategy would be going to consultation between August and mid-September. The Member asked for Hedgerows to be included and that the Woodland Trust and the people at St. Mary's Church be included in the list of stakeholders, which Officers agreed was a good idea and would include them.

A Member asked for a date for the Cemetery Report. The Chair advised this would be brought to the July Committee meeting.

The following addition would be made to the Environmental Protection Service plan and grounds maintenance work programme

- Consideration of additional three sites, Leavesden Country Park, the Aquadrome and Rickmansworth Park to be included in the pilot for no grass cutting within parts of them. This to be decided by the Head of Community Services in consultation with the Lead Members.

The following addition would be made to the Committee's work programme

- Biannual update of the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy.

On being put to the Committee the to the work programme were declared CARRIED by the Chair having been agreed by general assent.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be agreed with the amendments.

CHAIR