

LEISURE, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth on Wednesday 7 July 2021 between 6.30pm and 7.15pm.

Councillors present:

Chris Lloyd (Lead Member for Leisure)
Ruth Clark
Stephen Cox
Alex Hayward
Lisa Hudson
David Major

Phil Williams (Lead Member
Environmental Services and
Sustainability)
Debbie Morris
Alison Scarth
Jon Tankard

Also in attendance:

James Baldwin – Solicitor to the Council
Jayne La Grua - Principal Lawyer
Ray Figg – Head of Community Services
Alex Laurie – Principal Trees and Landscape Officer
Malcolm Clarke – Waste and Environment Manager
Sherrie Ralton - Committee Manager

Councillor Phil Williams in the Chair

LEC 01/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Roger Seabourne, Stephen King, Paula Hiscocks and Alex Michaels with substitute members being Councillors Ruth Clark, Stephen Cox and Alex Hayward.

LEC 02/21 MINUTES

The minutes of the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee meeting held on Wednesday 10 March 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair of the meeting and would include an amendment after LEC 56/20 adding the following:

'At the end of LEC Cllr Seabourne thanked everyone, he said not all council meetings were enjoyable but this one had been pleasant to chair and really enjoyable with so many achievements to talk about and to set targets for future meetings and thanked Members for their input.

Councillor Duncan thanked Cllr Seabourne for doing a great job chairing the meeting and how they all appreciated how good the meeting was and Members were all nice to each other.

Councillor Seabourne went on to say there was nothing wrong with disagreement as long as it was polite and it was a bonus when they all agree and thanked everyone again and wished them a pleasant evening.'

LEC 03/21 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business

LEC 04/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

LEC 05/21 TREE STRATEGY

The purpose of the report was to summarise the content and implications of the draft Tree Strategy for the District, and recommend that the draft Strategy was released for a period of public consultation.

The Trees and Landscapes Officer advised that the document set out the Council's approach to the management of trees in the District and the actions for the Council to achieve over the next 5 years and gave a brief overview of the details of the report.

A Member had sent in the following question: Can I ask on the matter of the tree strategy that we amend this to 2 trees for every one taken out? The 1:1 policy is insufficient as not all trees take, so we will see a net reduction.

Response: There were a number of factors officers needed to consider when specifying replacement planting. In some situations trees would be felled in the knowledge that they would regrow from the cut stump, and many species have the ability to do this, so replanting may not be necessary.

Where trees were causing damage to property it may not be possible to replant, or there may not be space for more than one replacement tree in the location a tree is removed. Replacement standard trees (approximately 2 metres height at time of planting) cost approximately £400 each, so additional planting of these would have financial implications.

However, alongside planting replacement trees close to where a tree had been removed, the council also plants many other new trees across the District as part of the management of its open spaces. These were often small whips (approximately 30cms at time of planting) which were very cost-effective and the council may plant several hundred during the planting season (November to March).

Many new trees were also recruited through natural regeneration in open spaces and this would be allowed and encouraged where possible.

One of the aims of The Biodiversity Opportunities Audit, which is currently being carried out, was to identify locations for new tree planting and natural regeneration on TRDC land.

It may not be possible to plant 2 trees in the location where 1 was removed, but there was an action in the strategy to produce a 5 year plan for substantial new planting on TRDC land.

Members raised the following points:

Was the strategy aimed just at Three Rivers' woodland or did Three Rivers want to enter into dialogue and encourage The Woodland Trust to pick up on some of the points. Assuming this was linked we would be encouraging other owners of woodlands to comment on the strategy. Whippendell Woods were managed by Watford Borough Council and had their own management plans but may want to comment on the strategy. The Member asked for details of who had been consulted.

Response: The consultees are listed in the post meeting note below and asked Members to let the Officer have details of any other contacts they would like included. The strategy was primarily directed at woodlands and trees owned by Three Rivers. Three Rivers had the role of Local Planning Authority in terms of protected trees and woodlands. The Forestry Commission consulted with the Council if they were doing forestry work on privately owned woodlands. One item in the strategy was to recruit a new member of staff to be a link into the community.

A Member asked about the action to investigate arboricultural training and development for a member of the grounds maintenance team to specialise in tree establishment and early years' maintenance and said that there should be a definite method of maintenance.

Response: The Officer's advice, when planting large standard trees that were expensive would be that the necessary maintenance be carried out to ensure the tree would establish successfully.

A Member's ward had a number of trees planted with hydration bags which were looked after by the grounds maintenance team, would that policy apply to other trees planted in the District?

Response: Any standard trees planted would have hydration bags or a watering tube. The strategy also included the mulching of newly planted trees. These all contributed to a good level of establishment.

Post Meeting Note 1: *The following questions from Members had been received and responded to prior to the meeting. The Committee agreed for these to be included within the minutes of the meeting.*

1. *The final version of the recommendations is stated to go to P&R on 24 November and LEC on 6 December. As LEC meet on 24 November and P&R on 6 December, I assume that there's a mistake in the report: para 4.2.*

Response: *Apologies, this was a typo. It would go to LEC on 24 November and P&R on 6 December. **This was further amended that it would go to P & R on 1 November and LEC on 24 November.***

2. *The purpose of the recommendation to have a public consultation is to enable a wide range of stakeholders to consider the draft strategy. Please can you set out the stakeholders it is proposed to consult? Members may have ideas about others not on the list.*

Response: *A current list of consultees is supplied below (Appendix 1). If members would like to add to the list, please send the contact details to the principal tree & landscape officer*

3. *Are there records of the formal tree inspections undertaken by the council approximately every three years (paragraph 21, Appendix A)? If so, please advise where they can be viewed.*

Response: Our tree management database 'Ezytrees' holds all of the Council's inspection records. It is not publically accessible, but records can be provided on request.

4. Are details of the current zoning system available and if so, where? Why will it take almost two years to review this? (Paragraph 28, Appendix A and final schedule)

Response: The current zoning is also on Ezytrees, but again is not publically accessible. There are over 4,000 individual trees and 1,500 tree groups currently plotted on the database, reviewing our current inspection regime and developing a new regime is a significant undertaking, which will take substantial time to complete.

The aim is to complete this by the time of the next safety inspection, which may include inspection intervals in some areas of 18 months

5. Is there a list of which spaces and woodlands are considered to be major and minor within the district and if so, where can it be viewed? (Paragraphs 38 – 43, Appendix A)

Response: There is currently no definitive list, however our website has plans of many of our more minor woodland sites at: <https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/egcl-page/woodlands-management-plan>

Some of our major woodland sites are also included on this.

6. Why is the preparation of the management plans for the minor open spaces and woodlands considered to be such a low priority that they won't be ready until March 2025? (Final schedule)

Response: The Council are planning to develop generic management plans for our smaller woodlands sites, and the Biodiversity Opportunities Audit, (currently being undertaken by Countryside Management Service) aims to identify potential improvements on smaller open spaces.

These are both substantial pieces of work which will take several years to complete and implement.

7. The final schedule asks for consideration to be given to the recruitment of a community/education officer to work with local communities on biodiversity and tree-planting schemes on TRDC owned land. Please identify bodies within local communities that you believe should be approached and why there can't be engagement with them under existing protocols. Surely if extra resources are required, they should be designated to some of the other items identified as requiring attention which have long time scales before completion is anticipated – see above.

Response: Officers have identified that additional staff resource may be required to enable actions within plans and the audit to be implemented, and for local communities to be engaged in potential improvements.

Appendix 1. Tree Strategy Consultee list

Type	Group
Parish Council	Chorleywood
	Sarratt
	Watford Rural
	Abbots Langley

	<i>Croxley Green</i>
	<i>Batchworth Community</i>
	<i>Moor Park</i>
	<i>Loudwater</i>
<i>Councillors</i>	<i>All TRDC</i>
	<i>HCC (TRDC divisions)</i>
<i>Officers</i>	<i>All TRDC</i>
	<i>CMS</i>
<i>Housing Associations</i>	<i>Thrive Homes</i>
	<i>Watford</i>
	<i>Moor Park (1958) Limited</i>
<i>Residents Associations</i>	<i>Loudwater</i>
	<i>Chorleywood</i>
	<i>Moor Park</i>
	<i>Carpenders Park</i>
	<i>Bridle Lane and Wagon Way</i>
	<i>Croxley Green</i>
	<i>Eastbury</i>
	<i>Heronsgate</i>
	<i>Hillside</i>
	<i>New Road</i>
	<i>Northwood</i>
	<i>Oxhey Hall</i>
	<i>Rickmansworth & District</i>
	<i>Little Green</i>
<i>NGO</i>	<i>Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust</i>
	<i>Environment Forum</i>
	<i>Woodland Trust</i>
	<i>Chiltern Society</i>
<i>Friends of</i>	<i>Croxley Common Moor</i>
	<i>Withy Beds</i>
	<i>Chorleywood House Estate</i>
	<i>Chorleywood Community Orchard</i>
	<i>Carpenters Wood</i>
	<i>Oxhey Woods</i>
	<i>St Mary's Church</i>

Neighbouring LA's	Watford Borough Council
	Hertfordshire County Council
	Buckinghamshire County Council
	St Albans City & District Council
	Dacorum Borough Council

Post Meeting Note 2:

The final version of the recommendations is stated to go to P&R on 24 November and LEC on 6 December. As LEC meet on 24 November and P&R on 6 December, I assume that there's a mistake in the report: para 4.2.

Response: *Apologies, this was a typo. It would go to LEC on 24 November and P&R on 6 December. This date was amended following the Policy & Resources Committee Meeting on 14 June and the Tree Strategy will be presented at Policy & Resources Committee on 1 November 2021.*

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

On being put to the Committee, the Chair declared the recommendation CARRIED the voting being unanimous.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Policy & Resources Committee approve the draft Tree Strategy for a period of public consultation subject to any comments from the Leisure Environment & Community Committee

A final version will then be presented to the Policy and Resources Committee on 1 November 2021, and Leisure, Environment and Community Committee on 24 November 2021.

Post Meeting Note: *Following the meeting officers have been advised that the Tree Strategy should be presented first at Policy & Resources Committee on 6th December 2021, and then at Leisure and Environment Committee 12th January 2022.*

LEC 06/21 REPORT ON BW FOUNDATION (WOODCOCK HILL CEMETERY)

The purpose of this report was to provide information on the BW Foundation's policy of unrelated two tier burials during the early part of the coronavirus pandemic; and Grants of Deeds of Exclusive Rights of Burial in respect of the Muslim Section of Woodcock Hill Cemetery.

The Principal Lawyer introduced the report and advised that, in relation to the transfer of Exclusive Rights of Burials to families, it was not possible to say precisely when that would happen as it was legal work that was ongoing.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 35(b) one member of the public spoke against the report and one member of the public spoke for the report.

The Principal Lawyer advised that the Council had undertaken to consider applications from all of those who wished to hold deeds and were eligible to do so. They could not force these on people who did not necessarily want them. In relation to the management of the Cemetery, the Council were the burial authority and had a statutory power to do all such things as they consider necessary or desirable for the proper management, control and regulation of the cemetery.

Members of the LEC Committee thanked the members of the public for speaking and thanked the Officers for the detailed report and all the time that had gone into providing it.

RESOLVED:

That public access to the report be immediate.

LEC 07/21 WORK PROGRAMME

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

The following points were raised by Members:

If no urgent items were requested prior to the August LEC Committee Meeting the meeting would be cancelled.

The Committee Manager confirmed that the Citizen's Advice Service in Three Rivers Annual Report 2020/21 would be brought forward to the LEC Committee Meeting on 13 October.

The Biannual Update of the Climate Emergency Sustainability Strategy would take place in October and March and would be brought forward to the Committee Meeting on 13 October.

Councillor Chris Lloyd moved, seconded by Councillor Alison Scarth the work programme to include the amendments.

On being put to the Committee the amendments to the work programme were declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being unanimous

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be agreed with the amendments.

CHAIR