

Minutes of the Meeting of **FULL COUNCIL** held at Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth on **Tuesday 14 December 2021** from 7.30pm to 8.15pm.

Present: Councillors Keith Martin (Chair) Debbie Morris (Vice-Chair), Joanna Clemens, Stephen Cox, Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Paula Hiscocks, Sarah Nelmes, Ciaran Reed, Dominic Sokalski and Phil Williams

#### **CL55/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Prior to the meeting it had been agreed with the four Group Leaders, the Chief Executive and the Chair of Council that it would be a quorate Council meeting due to the pandemic situation.

There were 11 Councillors in attendance comprising 6 Members of the Liberal Democrats: Cllrs Steve Drury, Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Sarah Nelmes, Dominic Sokalski, Phil Williams and Keith Martin; 3 Members of the Conservative Group: Cllrs Debbie Morris, Paula Hiscocks and Ciaran Reed; 1 x Labour Group: Cllr. Stephen Cox and 1 x Independent Cllrs Group: Cllr. Joanna Clemens.

#### **CL56/21 MINUTES**

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 19 October 2021 were agreed by general assent subject to checking the following statement in the minutes and amending if required:

Councillor Ciaran Reed referred to Page 28 where the Councillor thought that Cllr Raj Khiroya said they would provide a written answer as it would be unfair to answer in person. The recording would be replayed and if the minute was incorrect it would be amended accordingly and a reply provided to Councillor Reed.

The recording was replayed and Councillor Khiroya had agreed at the October meeting to provide a written answer which is provided below. The minutes of the 19 October meeting would be amended accordingly to include the written answer:

I now submit my written report, as per the only meeting held.

#### **Licensing Committee - meeting on 16 June 2021**

As minuted, items discussed were:-

- 1) The casino policy - of having no casinos in the District.
- 2) A premises in Hunton Bridge was subject to a Licensing Review.
- 3) In August 2021 a former pub landlord in South Oxhey was prosecuted after being caught trading without a premises licence or designated premises supervisor.

## **Regulatory Services Committee - meeting on 16 June 2021**

As minuted, items discussed were

- 1) Street Trading Policy
- 2) Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy
- 3) A driver was sentenced in October 2021 for not having a Private Hire Licence and no insurance. A total fine of £680 was given by the Courts.

### **CL57/21 TO RECEIVE A REPORT UNDER RULE 11(6) WITH REGARD TO A MOTION RECEIVED ON LIVESTREAMING MEETINGS/ABILITY TO HOLD HYBRID MEETINGS**

Councillor Sarah Nelmes moved, seconded by Councillor Ciaran Reed the recommendations as set out in the report.

Councillor Ciaran Reed said agreeing this motion was the correct decision for democracy and would allow greater access to our public meetings. A grant application made by the Council had been successful and we had received £60k of funding but the cost of installing the equipment was only around £50k. The Councillor wondered if the remaining £10k could be used for the maintenance of the system. It was advised to the Councillor that the £10k could go towards maintenance.

Councillor Paula Hiscocks asked for an indication of how long the videos would be kept as residents may not be able to view the recording on the same day as the meeting.

Councillor Sarah Nelmes believed the retention of videos was a matter to be considered at the forthcoming Constitution sub-committee.

Councillor Joanna Clemens supported the motion but wondered if after a year details could be provided on how many people had watched the videos/livestreaming in relation to the cost of the installation.

Councillor Sarah Nelmes said that the viewing figures were provided to Members during the lockdown periods and this could be something that could be provided when the installation was completed and the system was being used.

On being put to the Council the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair of Council having been agreed by General Assent.

RESOLVED:

Pursuant to Rule 11(6) the Council passed the motion at Paragraph 2.1.1.

The Council agreed to livestream Council/Committee and sub-committee meetings and have the ability to hold hybrid meetings.

### **CL58/21 INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

Councillor Sarah Nelmes moved, seconded by Councillor Dominic Sokalski, the recommendation of the Panel as set out in the report.

Councillor Ciaran Reed moved an amendment to the motion, considering that the Councillor had been so vocal about the lack of reports from some Lead Members/Chairs of Committees, that the Member Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) be increased by 1.75% but that this excluded the 7 Lead Members and 3 Chairs of Committees. This motion was seconded by Councillor Paula Hiscocks.

Councillor Sarah Nelmes advised that this was the first year that the Council Constitution had included having written reports and believed that the Panel recommendations connected very adequately with the amount of work in running a Portfolio. The inclusion of written reports was something agreed by all Parties at the Constitution sub-committee as a way to provide some more information but there was little or no point in just saying “we had a meeting(s) on ..... “. The SRA is provided for running the Portfolio not for writing reports to Council.

Councillor Stephen Cox said that Members needed to be careful of their language on this. It was not a pay rise it was an increase in the allowance paid to Members for the work they undertook as a Councillor. No Member thought of the allowance as their “pay day”. The allowance was provided for the work of the individual Councillor and an additional allowance was paid to Councillors who have additional responsibilities. Councillors were not here for the financial part of the role

Councillor Steve Drury advised that any planning information was provided each month in the Members’ Information Bulletin.

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst said the role of the Independent Panel was to judge what was suitable for the allowances. It had always been the case that Council’s across the County, and all parties, had accepted the recommendation of the Panel as the recommendation came from an independent group and that Members were not seen as making the decision themselves. In terms of the point made by Councillor Reed regarding written reports they were only a very small part of the amount of work Lead Members/Chairs of Committees undertake in their role and under their portfolio in the same way as attending a meeting was only a small part of the role along with the role Councillors do in representing residents in their local constituencies. The rates provided were not rates of pay but allowances to undertake the duties of the roles.

It was advised to Council that under the Council Constitution Rule 16 the amended motion had to be voted on first. If the amended motion was not passed then the original motion would be voted on.

On being put to Council the amended motion was declared LOST by the Chair of Council the voting being 4 For, 7 Against and 0 Abstentions.

On being put to Council the original motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair of Council the voting being 7 For, 3 Against and 1 Abstention.

**RESOLVED:**

That there be a 1.75% increase in the Members Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowance for 2022/23 in line with the current proposed employee pay award and as proposed by the Independent Remuneration Panel.

CL59/21

### **COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME FOR 2022/23**

Councillor Dominic Sokalski moved, seconded by Councillor Sarah Nelmes the recommendation as set out in the report. The scheme matches the scheme used for many years and was provided for those people who are in some of the most disadvantaged areas of the County.

Councillor Joanna Clemens asked how people were assessed to be on a low income. Councillor Dominic Sokalski agreed to provide a written response.

*Written response provided:*

*The Three Rivers Council Tax Scheme is not restricted therefore claimants on social security Benefit or on low income will get a means tested award. Claimants income can be requested directly from them or through HMRC portal. There is a set amount known as an Applicable Amount that determines how much award a claimant can get for Council Tax Reduction, this amount represents a basic living expenses compared to claimants income.*

Councillor Paula Hiscocks asked how the Council were protecting themselves from fraud if they were not asking for any proof. Councillor Dominic Sokalski would provide a written response.

*Written response provided:*

*Proof is required for all new claims for Housing Benefits or Council Tax, however we would not ask for proof if the claimant has already been verified by the DWP also where possible would get information required from any other government department, CAB, Colleges or Housing Association Partners.*

On being put to the Council the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair of Council the voting being agreed by General Assent.

RESOLVED:

That the Council adopts the scheme as operated in 2021/22 for 2022/23.

CL60/21

### **COUNCIL TAX BASE FINANCIAL YEAR 2022/23**

The Chair advised that they had agreed to take this report as an urgent item as the report had not been available 5 full days before the meeting. The Council were required to set their Council Tax Base between 1 December and 31 January and needed to take the item as urgent so that this could be completed.

Councillor Dominic Sokalski moved, seconded by Councillor Sarah Nelmes the recommendation as set out in the report.

On being put to Council the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair of Council the voting being by General Assent.

RESOLVED:

That the calculation of the Council's tax base for the year 2022/23 be approved.

That in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by the Three Rivers District Council as its council tax base for the year 2022/23 shall be:-

<b>Parish</b>	<b>Band D Equivalents 2022/23</b>
Abbots Langley	8,669.5
Batchworth	6,349.5
Chorleywood	6,302.0
Croxley Green	5,650.9
Sarratt	1,106.8
Watford Rural	7,446.5
Unparished Area	3,734.5
<b>Total District</b>	<b>39,259.8</b>

**CL61/21 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**Recommendation 1 - Budget Monitoring Report**

Councillor Dominic Sokalski moved, seconded by Councillor Sarah Nelmes, the recommendation from the Policy and Resources Committee 1 November 2021.

Councillor Stephen Cox advised that they had made their displeasure known on some of the information contained in the report principally the £110k roll over on the car parking bays. The Councillor was still of the view that it should have been possible if other schemes were not ready to promote that other schemes were taken first and then come back to the other schemes when they were ready.

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst advised that the £110k was a roll over figure from the two financial years. There was an explanation provided on the staff situation where a member of staff had been away for a period of time had been explained in some detail to Councillor Cox. The schemes the Councillor wanted taken forward in South Oxhey are in the programme for this financial year.

On being put to Council the recommendation was declared CARRIED by the Chair of Council the voting being 6 For, 0 Against, 5 Abstentions.

RESOLVED:

That the revenue and capital budget variations as shown in the table at paragraph 6.1 be approved and incorporated into the three-year medium-term financial plan.

**Recommendation 2 - Business Rates Pooling**

Councillor Dominic Sokalski moved, seconded by Councillor Sarah Nelmes the recommendations from the Policy and Resources Committee 6 December 2021.

On being put to Council the recommendations were declared CARRIED by the Chair of Council the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

1. That Council agrees that, subject to a final review following the Local Government Settlement for 2022/23, Three Rivers District Council enters into the Hertfordshire Business Rates Pool; and
2. To delegate authority to the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee to sign up to the Hertfordshire Business Rates Pool, within 28 days of the Local Government Finance Settlement.

**CL62/21**

**MOTION TO ADJOURN THE COUNCIL MEETING**

The Chair of Council moved, duly seconded, a motion that pursuant to Rule 4(5) and Rule 5(3) of the Council's Rules of Procedure, the remaining items of business on the summons (items 8 to 13) would not be debated at this meeting and that the meeting stand adjourned. An Extraordinary Council meeting be called to take place on Tuesday 25 January 2022 at 7.30pm when those items of business (8-13) would be considered.

The venue for the meeting to be confirmed to Members.

On being put to Council, the motion was declared CARRIED by the Chair of Council the voting being by General Assent.

RESOLVED:

1. That pursuant to Rule 4(5) and Rule 5(3) of the Council's Rules of Procedure, the remaining items of business on the summons (items 8 to 13) would not be debated at this meeting and that the meeting stand adjourned. An Extraordinary Council meeting be called to take place on Tuesday 25 January 2022 at 7.30pm when those items of business (8-13) would be considered.
2. The venue for the meeting to be confirmed to Members.

The Meeting was closed by the Chair at 8.10pm

CHAIR OF COUNCIL