

# LEISURE, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

## MINUTES

Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth on Wednesday 12 October 2022 between 7.30pm and 9.40pm.

Councillors present:

Roger Seabourne (Lead Member for Community Safety and Partnerships)	Phil Williams (Lead Member for Environmental Services, Climate Change and Sustainability)
Chris Lloyd (Lead Member for Leisure)	Ciarán Reed
Rue Grewal	Jon Tankard
Stephen King	Anne Winter
David Major	
Chris Mitchell	
Debbie Morris	

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Officers present:

Ray Figg, Head of Community Services  
Emma Sheridan, Interim Head of Community Partnerships  
Josh Sills, Head of Customer Experience (left after the Budget Monitoring report)  
Sally Riley, Finance Business Partner  
Charlotte Gomes, Landscapes and Leisure Development Manager  
Kelly Barnard, Leisure Contracts Officer  
Ben Terry, Watersmeet General Manager (left after the Watersmeet presentation)

External People present:

Peta Mettam, CEO CASTRA  
Mark Leahy, Regional Contract Manager, SLM  
John Sewell, Area Contract Manager, SLM

### **Councillor Chris Lloyd in the Chair**

The Chair and Members of the Committee wished to thank the Head of Customer Experience and the Building and Technical Manager for their pre-committee presentation on Watersmeet.

#### **LEC 01/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

## **LEC 02/22 MINUTES**

The minutes of the Leisure, Environment and Community Committee meeting held on 16 March 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair of the meeting.

## **LEC 03/22 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chair of the meeting, Cllr Chris Lloyd, advised that agenda item 9a – Rickmansworth Aquadrome Management Plan – had not been available 5 clear working days before the meeting, but they had agreed to take the item as urgent so that the Committee can agree the 5 year Plan and be able to apply for funding.

## **LEC 04/22 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Rue Grewal declared an interest in item agenda item 7 – Leisure Facilities Management Contract – Sports and Leisure Management (SLM) workplan as a member of one of their facilities but would stay and take part in the debate on the item.

Councillor David Major declared a non prejudicial interest in agenda item 6 – Citizens Advice Service in Three Rivers CASTR – Annual Monitoring Report for Three Rivers District Council for Financial Year 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 as a Member of the Three Rivers CASTR but would stay and take part in the debate on the item.

## **LEC 05/22 BUDGET MONITORING – PERIOD 4**

This report covered this Committees financial position over the medium term (2022 – 2025) as at Period 4 (end of July)

The Period 4 comprehensive Budget Management report had already been presented to the Policy & Resources Committee at its meeting on 12 September 2022 which sought approval to a change in the Council's 2022 - 2025 medium-term financial plan

The Finance Business Partner highlighted the main variances for this Committee on revenue as detailed in Annex B of the appendix. There were a number of areas where the 2021/22 pay award had been included and there was also a variance to kerbside recycling. The full budget for kerbside recycling was no longer required as we did not have to pay Pearce Recycling haulage costs for the recycling and we were currently receiving income on our recyclables. £280,443 of the budget had been redistributed across other areas to meet other budget pressures. Details on the redistribution were provided in Annex B. Other variances highlighted to the Committee were on Batchworth Depot and an increase in water rates and a positive increase in income on waste management and transport subsidy. Trees and Landscapes had requested a budget for the cost of the first cut to implement the actions from the Alternative Grassland Management regimes with any other budget requirements coming through the Period 6 Budget Monitoring. An increase had been requested for playing fields and open spaces, for the water rate bills, and £15,000 had been aside to pay the Real Living Wage to

SLM. There had been a reduction in the SLM management fee for 2022/23 some of which had been offset by extra income coming in from swimming lessons. The SLM management fee would be re-profiled over the term of the contract. On capital the Council had been able to purchase the equipment for the Alternative Grassland Management for less than what was budgeted providing a saving. The Head of Community Services advised that the amount of capital spent this year was all that was needed at this time.

RESOLVED:

Noted the contents of the report.

### **COMMUNITY SAFETY AND PARTNERSHIPS**

#### **LEC 06/22 CITIZENS ADVICE SERVICE IN THREE RIVERS CASTR - ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT FOR THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 1 APRIL 2021 TO 31 MARCH 2022**

The Chair welcomed Peta Mettam, CEO of CASTR and were provided with the Annual Monitoring Report from CASTR and a presentation.

The key points of the presentation were: headline statistics, the top enquiry areas, challenges for clients and the challenges for the service CASTR provide in the coming year and the service priorities in the coming year.

The Interim Head of Community Partnerships advised that the presentation would be circulated to Committee Members along with details on the AGM meeting which was scheduled for 30 November 2022 which Members were all invited to attend.

A Member asked what percentage of the clients were from Three Rivers. The CEO advised that during Covid they had reverted to remote services and because of this the service had been more national but the largest number of clients either worked or lived in the District. There are Ward statistics available which are provided quarterly.

A Member asked if CASTR were receiving financial support from other authorities whose residents are using the TRDC services. The CEO advised that CASTR participate in Advice Line which is Hertfordshire wide but only around 80 Three Rivers clients ring the advice line each month. This service is providing using CASTR's core funding and not under the SLA with TRDC. CASTR meets 100% of the advice line demand from Three Rivers .

If a resident from neighbouring authority visited CASTR offices in for example South Oxhey and had an urgent issue they would receive any urgent assistance and signposting to their local service but would not be supported as ongoing casework. . The TRDC funding CASTR receive is all utilising for Three Rivers based clients.

In response to a question on foodbanks CASTR attend foodbanks to offer advice but do not get involved in co-ordinating donations. .

The Chair wished to record the Committee's thanks to Peta for the presentation and to pass on the thanks of the Committee to the staff and volunteers for all their work which was making a real difference in the community. The Chair encouraged members to attend the CASTR AGM.

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Report and presentation be noted.

## **LEC 07/22 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received its work programme.

In response to a question on the change in the number of meetings scheduled for the Committee there was proposals going to Council next week to reduce the number of meetings from 6 to 4 a year. It was always possible to have special meetings if required.

In response to a question on adding litter to the work programme including what we can do on enforcement and also adding air quality which the Member had raised with the Head of Regulatory Services it was advised by the Lead Member that there had been no evidence provided that air quality was rising above the recommended levels. The Lead Member advised that schools had been provided with educational programmes on air quality.

A Member advised that last year there was an air quality day and Croxley Danes school had measured the air quality outside the school and were found levels were above what they should be. The Member was asked to forward the details to the Lead Member to review and to seek a response from the Head of Regulatory Services.

On litter the Chair did not believe it was an item for the work programme but the Lead Member advised it was an area the Council were conscious of and had been looking into various possibilities and was being progressed. An update may be possible for the November meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the comments and work programme be noted.

## **LEISURE**

### **LEC 07/22 LEISURE FACILITIES MANAGEMENT CONTRACT – SPORTS AND LEISURE MANAGEMENT (SLM) WORKPLAN**

The Council's leisure facilities management contractor, Sports and Leisure Management (SLM), provided its annual presentation to Members to reflect on the previous 12 months work and to outline their work programme for the coming year.

An introduction to the presentation was provided by the Leisure Contracts and Landscape Projects Officer. SLM were awarded a 20 year contract for the management of the Council's leisure venues which is a design, build and

operate and maintain contract which included the redevelopment of building formally known as the Centre and now known as South Oxhey Leisure Centre. The build included a new learner and main swimming pool, additional fitness rooms, spinning room and a café area as well as the redevelopment of the sports hall, fitness rooms, changing rooms and gym. Also included were the upgrading of the 3G pitch at William Penn Leisure Centre. The contact started in July 2018 and this is the fourth annual presentation to the Committee.

The presentation was provided to the Committee by Mark Leahy, Regional Contract Manager, and John Sewell, Area Contract Manager at SLM with the key points being: Adult and Junior Participation Statistics, Sustainability, Everyone Active Strategy, William Penn Solar Thermal, South Oxhey Solar Photovoltaics, Tree Planting, Smaller initiatives, Challenges and Community Development.

Members raised the following questions with responses provided as follows:

Q Were there any plans to engage with health authorities to help those who have mental health issues or invisible disabilities to encourage them to come to the gym.

R There is an exercise and referral scheme with Watford and Three Rivers which was targeted through Doctors surgeries to refer people for exercise. Data is recorded monthly on the number of people using the activities and those who then take on a membership. The Head of Community Services advised that these details would be added to the presentation for next year.

Q Were SLM still working on an anti-obesity strategy as it was not mentioned in the presentation?

R Very much still working on this with the Busy Bees and as part of the South Oxhey Working Group which was tackling obesity in the area. Details can be provided for next year's update.

The snack vending machines at both South Oxhey and William Penn had been removed with healthier options now purchased from the reception area/counter. We will be organising new advertising for healthier options with regard to the vegetable smoothies and other healthier options with 60% of the drink vending machines to be either water or healthier fruit juices and only 30-40% to be low sugar energy drinks. Fruit is available in the café every day.

Q What progress had been made on sustainability and energy improvements?

R Consumption data had been available since we took on the contract and can provide details on how we are improving year on year. The Head of Community Services advised this information could be provided to Members through officers.

Q How many bookings had there been for the Sir James Altham MUGA? They understood that it was in need of refurbishment.

R We can provide the information on the bookings at Sir James Altham MUGA. Major refurbishment and repairs had just been completed to the pitch and they understood the Jets had been using the facility.

Q Could we not get users of the South Oxhey Leisure Centre to use the car park and not park outside in the road?

R The parking was being dealt with by Regulatory Services who are working with Herts County Council to look at the parking arrangements across South Oxhey and not just around the Leisure centre. Signs at the front do ask people to use the car park and not park on the pavement.

Q Could the presentation in future separate out the number of people playing golf from the people hiring the facilities.

Q With some figures provided being in the red for usage at the golf course and William Penn Leisure Centre what were you looking to do increase usage.

R The golf course usage had been impacted by the dance studio and also the reduction in large scale events. The new partnership we have with Colour Path Golf will see usage increase particularly around junior golf and ladies golf. The dance hall space is now being utilised to run the Three Rivers Art for Therapy sessions twice a week, we have also partnered with slimming world and were running group exercise classes. Usage at William Penn post the pandemic had been really good and was increasing year on year and we are seeing new activities increasing. The golf course usage and Fairway Inn usage will be shown separately in next year's presentation

The Chair wished to thank SLM for their great work, presentation and the fantastic community taking place.

RESOLVED:

That the 12 month work plan presented by Sports and Leisure Management is noted; and

That the 12 month work plan presented by Sports and Leisure Management be made available to the Committee after the meeting.

**LEC 09/22 RICKMANSWORTH AQUADROME MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022 - 2027**

The purpose of the report was to present the new Management Plan for Rickmansworth Aquadrome, following extensive public consultation and engagement with stakeholders and to recommend its adoption by the Council. The report included the Management Plan's approach to key topics highlighted at point 2.9 and the proposed projects, highlighted at point 2.16 and within section 5 of the Management Plan.

The final Management Plan will be used to support future external funding applications for the wider project.

The Leisure and Landscape Manager explained that the plan had been updated for another 5 year period. One thing which had become clear from

the consultations was the priority for the site needed to be focussed on protecting and enhancing the existing wildlife along with a balance for leisure and recreation. Some issues had been raised with regard to dog control and this was being looked at by the Animal Welfare and Licensing Inspector. There is a PSPO in place around the café in terms of dogs being on leads which we are reviewing with the Inspector. There had been a social media campaign around responsible dog ownership but at the moment things seemed to have improved but this was continuing to be monitored. Some concerns had been reported on duck feeding at the site and proposals in the plan were to remove the duck feeding areas and put in some educational boards on responsible duck feeding. In addition we are reviewing vehicle movement on the site and introducing new procedures around keeping the site safe and secure. Currently the Aquadrome is included in our hire of grounds process but the management plan now looks at that in more detail and includes some restrictions. This will include not allowing hires during peak periods i.e. at weekends or school holidays although existing events like Park Run and the Rickmansworth festival would continue. We will also be reviewing any activities which may be detrimental to the environment for example helium balloons or generators for bouncy castles.

A number of the responses to the consultation requested public swimming but within the management plan it does provide more detail and reconfirms the Council's position regarding swimming and that it is currently not supported. Moving forward we propose to divide the site into formal and informal zones and they are outlined in section 2 of the management plan. The informal sites would be more focussed around biodiversity and wildlife whereas the formal side would be more focussed around the leisure and recreational side of things.

The management plan included a 10 year capital programme along with a series of aspirational projects to meet the objectives of the new management plan. These projects and schemes are not confirmed as they require significant external funding which is an objective of the management plan. Point 2.16 provided details of the projects we would like to see delivered should the funding be secured.

A Member referenced the waste from litterbins and asked whether having it separated for recycling offsite sends the wrong message to the public who may think it is not being recycled.

The Head of Community Services replied that waste from litter bins was not currently separated, but will be restated shortly. It was added that in spite of efforts to encourage proper disposal of waste and recyclable items, contamination continued to be an issue as people generally don't separate rubbish when throwing it away. The Leisure and Landscape Manager said Leisure was working with the Sustainability Team with regard to putting messages on bins which explained that it would be sorted and recycled.

A Member referred to the report on open water swimming and asked what the objections were. The Chair said there were other areas within the District where open water swimming was possible but due to the presence of power boats and other sailing vessels at the Aquadrome there was little appetite for it there, a position supported by members of the Aquadrome Forum.

A Member asked whether the café would extend its opening hours during the summer. The Head of Community Services said they were due to meet with the café owners and would ask the question. The opening times were based on supply and demand but there would be no objection from the Council to extending the hours within reason.

A Member asked how successful the Algae Control Buoys were, and was a review of the efficiency undertaken. The Leisure Contracts and Leisure Projects Officer was advised that they do work, but more would be required although they are expensive. Algae was more prevalent this year due to the extreme summer heat. The Chair said there was noticeably less algae in the lakes that were fitted with the equipment. The Member asked if there was scope to increase and improve algae control in view of the plans to invest in the Aquadrome. The Chair said it was a point worth considering in order to improve the water quality in the lakes.

A Member referenced the problem of litterbins attracting rats and asked if it was possible that animal-proof bins could be invested in.

A Member referred to asbestos management and asked when checks would be made, and until such time was there a risk to people and dogs. The officer replied that air quality had been checked at the Aquadrome and there was no risk to people or animals.

A Member asked whether anything would be done to attract younger people to the Aquadrome. The Leisure and Landscape Manager said that as well as the regular parkrun, there was the play area and outdoor fitness equipment, and there was scope to look at more things. BLYM and other young people's clubs did not feature in the stats. The Chair said the aim is to encourage people using open spaces not just exercise.

A Member asked if tables can be installed whereby disabled people can ride up to and be able to get out of their wheelchair. It was advised such furniture is under consideration.

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

RESOLVED:

1. Adopt the new 5 year Rickmansworth Aquadrome Management Plan (2022 – 2027);
2. Adopt the Management Plan's approach to key topics highlighted at point 2.9 and the proposed projects, highlighted at point 2.16 and within section 5 of the Management Plan; and
3. For Officers to apply for funding, including CIL, where relevant, HS2 and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

**CHAIR**