
POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**MINUTES**

of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Northway, Rickmansworth on Monday 7 November 2022 from 7.30pm to 8.34pm.

Councillors present:

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| Sarah Nelmes (Chair) | Paul Rainbow (Economic Development and Transport) |
| Stephen Cox | Reena Ranger |
| Philip Hearn | Ciaran Reed |
| Steve Drury (for Cllr Chris Lloyd) | Andrew Scarth |
| Keith Martin (Resources and Shared Services) | Phil Williams (Environment, Climate Change and Sustainability) |
| Abbas Merali | Roger Seabourne (Community Safety and Partnerships) |

Officers Present: Joanne Wagstaffe, Chief Executive
Geof Muggerridge, Director of Community and Environmental Services
Alison Scott, Director of Finance
Kimberley Grout, Executive Head of Service
Ray Figg, Head of Community Services
Emma Sheridan, Interim Head of Community Services
Josh Sills, Head of Customer Experience
Jason Hagland, Strategic Housing Manager
Jess Hodges, Community Biodiversity Officer
Sarah Haythorpe, Principal Committee Manager

PR56/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Chris Lloyd with the substitute Member being Councillor Steve Drury and also an apology for absence from Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst.

PR57/22 MINUTES

The minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 12 September 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

PR58/22 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

None received.

PR59/22 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None received.

POLICY

PR60/22 CORPORATE COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS AND VEXATIOUS & UNREASONABLY PERSISTENT COMPLAINTS POLICIES

The Head of Customer Experience advised that the report proposed amendments and updates to the Council's Corporate Compliments & Complaints Policy and proposed a new Vexatious & Unreasonably Persistent Complaints Policy.

A Member raised a point on the Vexatious and Unreasonably Persistent Complaints policy and asked when a matter would get referred to the police and how extreme it would need to be before it was referred. If staff felt unsafe the matter should be referred and the threat of violence should not be tolerated. The Chief Executive advised that threats of violence were not tolerated and the bar was set very high. There are internal reporting mechanisms for staff if they felt unsafe.

Councillor Stephen Cox proposed, duly seconded, that the Vexatious and Unreasonably Persistent Complaints policy be amended to remove the word "so" from the first line of Paragraph 4.9 of the policy.

In response to a question on whether the policies covered Councillors it was advised Councillor Complaints were covered under the Member Code of Conduct which can be viewed [here](#) and complaints on the Councillor Complaints page [here](#)

On the Corporate Complaints Policy it was requested that the email address for where to send the complaint should be provided in the policy under point 7.2

On being put to the Committee the recommendation that the Policies be adopted with the motion amendment to the Vexatious and Unreasonably Persistent Complaints and that the email address be included in the Corporate Complaints Policy was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being by general assent.

RESOLVED:

Agreed and adopted the amended Corporate Compliments & Complaints Policy with the amendment to include the email address under point 7.2

Agreed and adopted the new Vexatious & Unreasonably Persistent Complaints Policy with the amendment to Paragraph 4.9 of the policy to remove the word 'so' from the first line.

PR61/22 HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY UPDATE 2022

The report provided the Committee with an overview of the proposed changes to the Council's Housing Allocations Policy which had been undertaken following changes to the Housing Services team and changes to job titles. Some other minor changes were made to the policy following updates to various legislation providing additional clarity to customers to improve officer efficiency. The full policy can be found in Appendix One.

A Member asked for clarification on Paragraph 2.9 around a significant child need. At Point 2.6 in the policy it advised that an unborn child would be considered part of a household 4 weeks prior to the due date – was this correct or should it not be after 24 or 26 weeks and is 4 weeks not too late. On the spare room and proof of access to children they appreciated we have constraints on social housing and do not have an endless supply of different properties but if there is a child between each parent, the child's main principal

home would accommodate them with a bedroom but what happens if they go to the other parent and how would we ensure that we are helping to foster good relations.

The Strategic Housing Manager advised that with regard to the question on significant child care needs, the policy adopted in 2020 advised that family connection could be established by a child care need. Some applications were received which were considered using officer discretion. Officers thought about putting significant in, although it is still up to officer discretion, but it could create a precedent of how much significant would be considered.

The Executive Head of Service advised that in relation to the unborn child there was no proposed change in the updated policy which was agreed in 2020. The rationale for not changing the date was the Council make referrals to housing providers and quite often they will not accept an unborn baby as part of household until the baby is born. The Council put the stage into the policy as a middle ground for us and the housing providers. On the spare room, it was not proposed to make any changes as there is case law on this and if we were to go against that we would be setting a dangerous precedent. Although the Council have nomination rights it is for the housing provider to accept or reject any nominations the Council put forward.

On being to the Committee the updated policy was declared CARRIED by the Chair the voting being by general assent.

RESOLVED:

Approved the changes to the Housing Allocations Policy and the report go forward to IHED for information and any comments.

PR62/22 DRAFT THREE RIVERS NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY

The Community Biodiversity Officer advised that the purpose of the report was to summarise the content and implications of the draft Three Rivers Nature Recovery Strategy and recommend that the draft Strategy be released for a period of public consultation. Appendix A detailed the draft Nature Recovery Strategy. This would be a new document for the Council which would address the Council's approach to nature conservation, habitat management and enhancement. This draft Three Rivers Nature Recovery Strategy is not a local Nature Recovery Strategy as per the Environment Act of 2021 as these would be created at a larger scale than District level and would answer key points as part of the legislation.

The Council's strategy would be accompanied by a 5 year action plan which would identify and prioritise actions to be undertaken for biodiversity and the local community both on Council owned land and when working in partnership with other organisations and landowners in the District. The costs of implementing the actions were yet to be fully assessed and would be dependent on both the outcome of the development work and also the success of external funding which may require the need to reassess the priorities. It was intended that the strategy would dovetail in with existing strategies (Climate Change and Tree Strategy) and would cover three main areas with details provided in the report on each area. The recommendation was to go out for public consultation from December 2022 for a 6 week period.

The Lead Member was happy to move the recommendation and welcomed the strategy coming forward and felt the report and strategy were very good and thanked officers for all the work undertaken. On point 38 of the strategy

the square kilometres needed to be included and with regard to the Withey Beds they felt they were within Moor Park.

A Member asked how we were going to sell the strategy and action plan and how we would look to generate input.

The Community Biodiversity Officer advised that the distribution of the consultation would be via social media, the website, through the Consultations Officer and Communications Team, an online survey and we would hope Councillors would help to distribute the survey amongst their Wards. Posters could also be placed at some of our key sites and details provided through newsletters and through existing contacts. Consultation would also be undertaken with our stakeholders.

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

RESOLVED:

Approved the draft strategy as outlined in Appendix A;

For the draft strategy to undertake a 6-week period of public consultation; and

For the final strategy to be presented at the 13 March 2023 Policy and Resources Committee and the 15 March 2023 Leisure, Environment and Community Committee.

RESOURCES

PR63/22 MOTION UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 11

Under Rule 11(5) of the Council Constitution it was agreed by the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chair of Council that the following motion be referred to the Policy and Resources Committee. The proposer and seconder of the motion will be invited to the meeting to present the motion under new Rule 11(11).

Councillor Abbas Merali proposed the motion, seconded by Councillor Ciaran Reed

This Council is concerned that Community Infrastructure Levy money is being spent in an ad hoc reactive manner with no overall strategy and prioritisation framework. This Council resolves that a strategy will be developed to identify what the key infrastructure requirements and priorities are for Three Rivers to ensure this money is being best used to benefit all of our residents in accordance with the published criteria for CIL spending.

On being put to the Committee the motion was declared LOST by the Chair the voting being 4 For, 7 Against and 1 Abstention.

RESOLVED:

Motion Lost

RESOURCES

PR64/22 STRATEGIC CORPORATE AND SERVICE PLANNING 2023-2026

The Interim Head of Community Partnerships advised that this report enabled the Committee to comment on the first draft Corporate Framework 2023-26 and the emerging draft Service Plans of those Council Services which report into this Committee, prior to the commencement of wider consultation on the draft Corporate Framework. This will be the first of a number of occasions where they will be able to comment and provide suggestions for the development of the framework.

The Chair advised they would not take individual comments on the Corporate Framework as it would be going out for public consultation and Members would have the opportunity to comment then.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 35(b) a member of the public spoke on the report.

The Chair referred Members to the vision which stated “a great place to live, work and visit. We want Three Rivers to be a District which is inclusive and where people feel they are welcome and safe, have access to good quality housing, where local infrastructure supports healthy lifestyles and addresses health inequalities, where our most vulnerable residents are supported, takes action to mitigate and adapt to the climate emergency and where local people, organisations and businesses benefit from the prosperity of the District.” They felt this document showed that people are front and centre of this piece of work.

A Member asked if gaps could be put between the paragraphs. The Interim Head of Community Partnerships advised that before the framework goes out for consultation it would be formatted and designed with pictures.

Members raised points on elections, including the words families, accessibility, democracy, enhancement of details on housing communities, travel and transport to the High Street and co-operation with other Councils

A Member advised that their group would be voting for the process not the content.

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

RESOLVED:

Provided comments on the draft Corporate Framework presented to P&R which was given approval for consultation.

PR65/22 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The report requested that the revenue and capital budget variations as shown in the table at paragraph 5.1 be approved and incorporated into the three-year medium-term financial plan.

The Shared Director of Finance advised that Point 1.2 talked about the end of Period 4 but it was the end of Period 6 to 30 September. A key change being reported this time was around the pay award which had now been settled and had been built into budgets. The amount was £1,925 per person and is a fixed amount for all employees across the scale. There were a number of small variances which brought the amount down slightly and there had also been some realignment of budgets to reflect the appointment of the Executive Head of Service. On Point 2.2.1 in terms of the reserve position moving forward when we

set the Medium Term Financial Statement we are expecting fair funding to come in and changes to business rates not to come in until 2023/24 which will see the income looking slightly better than when we set the budget which would improve the reserve position. We don't change business rates or council tax during the year due to the technical accounting and the way they work.

A Member raised a point on the presentation which was not transparent and would benefit from a more user friendly presentation which contains gross revenue and gross expenses rather than just the net amount. The Shared Director of Finance said included was the key income amounts but would take the point away.

A Member asked if there was contingency plan in place if the world of inflation got even worse and we continue to have additional amounts of deficit in 2023/24 and the reserve balance reduces.

The Shared Director of Finance said officers were looking at the budget strategy for next year to come to P&R in January. We recommend a minimum level of reserves of £2 million and that was what the Council were working to preserve. The Council are awaiting the Chancellors statement on 17 November and there is concern we may get a late settlement.

A Member referred to specific savings which are identified to counter depleting reserves and wondered when there would be clarity around potential savings and where they might be and what impact on public services they may have.

The Chair said we have to await details on the settlement. The Shared Director of Finance advised that the budget strategy is brought forward to P&R in January and then onto Full Council in February. There is a timetable set out for Members who wish to bring budget proposals forward.

A Member asked about kerbside recycling as there had been some savings which had been moved to other areas but wanted to understand why the full budget had not been used? We had transferred some money to garden waste but understood it should be cost neutral so wondered if it was making money, losing money or cost neutral. On decriminalised parking we have a reduced income on PCNs partly due to the reduced Three Rivers car parks. The car parks have not returned to pre pandemic levels due to behaviour changes and wondered if there was any way Members could see which car parks are making what money and where the usage is and to understand if the Rickmansworth car parks have returned to pre pandemic levels or not since they are the only ones being charged at a different rate from any other in the District. A written response would be provided.

The Shared Director of Finance advised that on kerbside recycling we got a big hit on income during Covid and adjusted the budget expecting that to continue but had now recovered slightly and we were getting some income in. We set a cost recovery position for Green Waste when we set the budget and can only do this once a year. Like everyone we are experiencing increased costs of fuel.

On being put to the Committee the recommendation was declared CARRIED with the voting being 8 For, 0 Against and 4 Abstentions.

RECOMMEND:

That the revenue and capital budget variations as shown in the table at paragraph 5.1 be approved and incorporated into the three-year medium-term financial plan

The Committee's received their work programme.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be agreed.

CHAIR