
INFRASTRUCTURE, HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES

of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth on Tuesday 11 October 2022 from 7.30pm to 9.22pm.

Councillors present:

Stephen Giles-Medhurst (Lead Member Infrastructure and Planning Policy)
(Co-Chair)
Paul Rainbow (Lead Member Transport and Economic Development) (Co-Chair)
Andrew Scarth (Lead Member for Housing) (Co-Chair)
Martin Trevett (Substitute for D Sokalski) Kevin Raeburn
Philip Hearn Reena Ranger
Abbas Merali Joan King

Also present: Councillor Stephen King, Mrs Nicky Trevett and two members of the public.

Officers Present: Sally Riley, Finance Business Partner
Kimberley Rowley, Head of Regulatory Services
Peter Simons, Senior Transport Planner
Mike Simpson, Committee & Web Officer

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst in the Chair

IHED 1/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Were received from Councillor Dominic Sokalski (Cllr Martin Trevett substituted.)

IHED 2/22 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Infrastructure, Housing and Economic Development Committee held on 22 March 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

In the minutes were some enquiries on housing within the Budget Monitoring report which were addressed thus:

- 17 properties converted in 2021-22, programme will average 40 per year
- All purchasers were otherwise unable to buy a home on the open market in the property area, most meet the definition of 'Covid essential workers'
- All properties sold within 4 weeks of being marketed for sale
- Refurbishment costs between £45-80k per property
- Average first tranche sale was 37.6%

- 1st Tranche sales enough to fund the development/acquisition of 17 additional new build s 106 rented homes

IHED 3/22 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business

IHED 4/22 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

IHED 5/22 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT (PERIOD 4)

The Finance Business Partner introduced the report, which had been to Policy and Resources Committee in July, and which covered the Committee's financial position over the medium term (2022 – 2025) as at Period 4 (end of July), and invited questions.

A member referred to the item about car parking fees and income, and observed that levels were not back up to those pre COVID. It suggested a change in shopping habits since the pandemic, and that maybe the council would need to revisit it's thinking on reinvigorating the High Street and increasing footfall within the shops and its commitment to support local businesses.

The chair said the figures for 2022-23 were in fact higher than the previous year and there clearly was a recovery taking place, not just in Three Rivers but all districts.

The Finance Business Partner said the figures for 2022- 23 will definitely surpass those of 2021- 22, but there was a definite change in people's behaviour post-Covid. For example, very few council employees worked in the office five days a week and was likely to be the same for many businesses in the town. Although the Council was currently above last year's figures, it was not expected that the target would be met. The chair said it seemed that short term parking was in good shape but there was less demand for longer term due to more people working from home. A Member said many shops along Rickmansworth High Street would be feeling the effects of people working from home, and Three Rivers District Council was a big employer within the town, and with so many staff working from home retailers will be severely impacted. It would be helpful if the figures could be broken down between short stay and long stay car parking. The Chair said footfall monitors were now installed in the High Street that would add to this.

A Member asked whether the format of the budget monitoring report could be made clearer in future with a greater distinction between incoming and outgoing sums. The Finance Business Partner would refer the question to the Head of Finance.

The Member asked for clarity on the figures relating to homelessness and refugee funding. The Finance Business Partner responded that the money shown as incoming for refugees is grant money which, when money is paid out, reduces. The Finance Business Partner said unfortunately nobody from housing was at the meeting to provide more detail. The Chair said that the figures shown represented money received from central government. The Member asked how that money was going to be spent. The Finance Business Partner said some of the money was historical, having been received in previous years and had accumulated. A Member asked if there was any way of breaking down what had been spent so far

and on what. The Finance Business Partner said such information can be obtained by a Housing officer.

The Homelessness fund is also one that has built up over the years through grants and will be used as and when necessary and over time will reduce.

A Member said that information regarding Syrian and Afghan refugees would be available in more detail when the Lead Member for Housing's report goes to the meeting of the Full Council next week, and the report is available on the website now.

A Member referenced the Capital Investment programme and said the figures quoted for 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 were significantly lower than 2022/23 and asked if funds had not been allocated yet or whether there was less investment by the Council. The Finance Business Partner said the figures for 2023/24 and 2024/25 were normal figures, and that for 2022/23 was higher than would otherwise be the case because of money not spent during the pandemic was carried over. When projects cannot be completed within the three-year cycle, funds were carried forward as a matter of policy. The Chair said that capital expenditure by all local authorities would be impacted negatively by the increased interest rate levels that were being introduced.

RESOLVED:

That the Budget Monitoring (Period 10) report be noted along with any relevant comments from Members of the committee.

IHED 6/22 LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN (LCWIP) PROPOSED DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

The Senior Transport Planner introduced the report which sought approval for public consultation on the proposed Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) ahead of reporting back to the IHED committee. It would then be referred to the Policy and Resources Committee before expected adoption by the Full Council.

The LCWIP, which was two years in the making, is a new, strategic approach to planning sustainable active travel networks, developed to support the aims and objectives of the *National Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy* and required to enable the local Highway, Traffic and Transport Authority, the County Council, to apply for national funding for these routes.

The LCWIP process enables the identification of cycling and walking improvements required at the local level. The process enables a long-term approach to developing local cycling and walking networks over a ten-year period and is a vital component of the Government's strategy to increase the number of trips made by both forms of active travel.

The LCWIP has been developed jointly with the County Council (a requirement) and Watford Borough Council (a logical partner given the distribution of settlements in the District around the Watford conurbation, and a partner which was required by the County Council). Other neighbouring Local Authorities have been consulted as part of the LCWIP process as were a range of relevant stakeholders, including all District Council (and other partner Local Authority) Members.

The report was delivered in two parts, the first being an overarching presentation of the scheme, followed by an area-specific one which provided Members with the opportunity to comment and ask questions.

The initial process is due to begin late autumn and is expected to take between six and eight weeks. The scheme will comprise potential cycling and walking routes within the district, plus a technical report. It will consist of six stages and was a long and very ambitious process. The project included an analysis of how many people cycle/walk to work and would consider natural barriers such as rivers, canals and the M25, and is based on an assessment of what and where the demand is.

A member was very pleased to see the scheme had finally reached this point in the process and was very supportive of it.

Councillor Martin Trevett left the meeting due to ill health.

The chair invited questions on the overarching element of the policy and asked Members to bear in mind that some of the constraints and limitations were subject to government policy. Depending on the consultation outcome this proposal should ensure money is available further down the line to develop and improve these routes.

A Member asked what the Council expected to obtain from the public consultation because, as things stood, there was too little information for people to be able to make informed comments. The Senior Transport Planner said the consultation would be based on the wider Plan but also the interventions proposed. The Chair said it is important that the public is encouraged to engage with this type of consultation, and Watford Borough Council had recently run a very successful consultation.

A Member asked what kind of consultations had already been rolled out and what kind of feedback was received prior to the proposed main public consultation. The Senior Transport Planner replied that there had been two stakeholder consultations, and local interest groups including cycling groups had also provided feedback on the proposals to date.

A Member said any plan going to consultation that included maps had to be very clear, otherwise members of the public would just not engage with it. The Member asked whether there would be two separate consultations for walking and cycling, and whether they would go out at the same time. The consultations would consist of separate questions for cycling and walking but they would be out simultaneously.

The Member expressed concern at mixing cyclists with pedestrians. There were many visually-impaired people in the ward which the Member represented, who would have little chance of hearing a cyclist approaching along the same pathway. The Senior Transport Planner said the current standards published in 2020 strongly promote segregated routes running side by side for cyclists and walkers. Ideally they would not be expected to share the same section of pathway.

A Member said it was very important to get schools involved in the scheme. The Member had witnessed a child being knocked off a bicycle in slow moving traffic

a short while ago and it was evident that safer cycling opportunities were essential.

The Senior Transport Planner then invited questions from Members of the Committee. A Member asked what targets were in place in relation to the walking scheme. There were no quantitative targets per se but the scheme aimed to provide better walking access to areas that were not currently accessible and the plans showed the specific improvements that were envisaged and how they would help to improve access.

A Member asked how such a scheme could be future-proofed when there were so many different transit demands and requirements within the district, as Moor Park and Eastbury residents would have different needs from those in South Oxhey, and people in Chorleywood had access to a Tube line which would impact the number of local people who would walk or cycle to work. The Senior Transport Planner replied that government guidance was that the scheme should benefit people from all types of background and that the national standard was clearly planned to be inclusive.

The Senior Transport Planner described the specific plans for individual areas within the district. It was emphasised that this was an indicative, high-level planning document which featured suggestions of what could possibly be achieved but not necessarily what would be, and that further work was required. A point of interest was that two routes within Three Rivers which had not been prioritised by this authority were identified as priorities by Watford Borough Council in its report.

A member said set the project presented a good opportunity to develop the Ebury Way as a cycling route and enhance what is already in place.

A Member inferred that South Oxhey was not a priority within this plan. The Senior Transport Planner replied that although routes between Watford and South Oxhey were not a priority in the Three Rivers plan, they were in the Watford proposals. The Member expressed concerns about how the proposed plans would increase traffic congestion near the shops in South Oxhey.

The Senior Transport Planner presented five priority routes for cycling and walking. A Member referenced the cost of such a project and the Chair replied that funding may come from various pots as and when made available by central government, but unless plans were in place when money did become available, no work would ever be done.

A member asked whether any research had been undertaken on the effects of traffic congestion between Three Rivers and Watford. The roads were busy commuter routes, and it was asked how they would be impacted by the plans for cycling and walking lanes. It was replied that no research or analysis had yet taken place. The Chair said that in places where cycle routes had been implemented, such as in Watford, it had the knock-on effect of reducing traffic speed which might be considered to be a good thing.

A Member asked how the plans would work with proposed routes near schools where, during drop-off and pick-up times there was a lot of parked cars and congestion. The Senior Transport Planner said schools have a responsibility to introduce Travel Plans that could for example encourage parents to park away from school gates and cited Rickmansworth School as being one that was

proactive in travel planning, and Travel Plans would help towards the construction of cycling and walking routes.

The Senior Transport Planner said the route between the Reach Free School and Maple Cross towards Denham near the HS2 had good potential for grant funding from HS2.

In response to some questions about greater detail, the Chair reiterated that this was a document being prepared for consultation after which a final public version would be prepared with an assessment of each route. A key consideration would be the assessment of value for money, which included consideration of benefits to other issues such as air quality and health.

The Senior Transport Planner said Chorleywood presented a particular challenge in terms of cycling and walking routes because there were only three roads into the village and therefore very little scope for alternative options. The proposed plan suggested a cycling route across the common, and ward councillors had advised that they were supportive in principle but stated that this was subject to the views of the Parish Council which manages the Common, and had historically objected to cycle routes across the Common. A Member said it was unlikely to be an option because it was understood that cycling was forbidden on Chorleywood common. The Senior Transport Planner replied that options had been researched and if it wasn't feasible the concept would not have been included in the proposal, highlighting that the proposed plan contains an explanation that this route was preferred in order to avoid the alternative control on traffic on Common Road; but that the alternative option was available if required. The Chair when the document was said the public consultation document should emphasis the fact that the legalities have been checked.

A Member said the proposed cycle route along the quiet, rural Shepherds Way between Chorleywood and William Penn would impact negatively the residents at the top end of the lane, and this would need to be considered when going out to consultation. The Senior Transport Planner said feedback had been received from a stakeholder who represented the Chorleywood Residents Association and who was supportive of the proposals. The design of the route was not fixed but could include variations, for example an 'Access Only' arrangement might be a solution. The Member said access to the residential care home by emergency services was also a potential issue.

A Member said using a word other than 'intervention' would be beneficial, and the Senior Transport Planner said a request had been received from the South Oxhey Members to use 'Friendly English' in the report.

The Chair said Three Rivers was not in a position, financially and otherwise, to have investigated in detail all routes being considered, but along with Watford Borough and Hertfordshire County Council had chosen several routes to prioritise for more detailed investigation at this stage; other routes would be investigated in detail in the future.

The conversation returned to Ebury Way and whether lighting might be installed along the route. The Senior Transport Planner said the possibility of solar lighting on some sections had been investigated and it was an option. The Chair said cycling along Ebury Way until it reached Rickmansworth, where the surface became very rough and dangerous. The Senior Transport Planner replied that a 'Cyclists Dismount' sign was in place there for that reason. The Chair said there

was a problem with tree roots breaking through the pavement surface, and the Senior Transport Planner agreed this issue would have to be addressed as a Cyclists Dismount sign was not an option on a cycling route. A member asked whether Tolpits Lane could be prioritised as a walking route because it had great potential for use by residents of Rickmansworth and Moor Park and Eastbury.

On being put to the vote, the Chair declared that the recommendations were CARRIED, the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

That Members' feedback on the proposals and agreement is given to proceed with a public consultation exercise.

The decision be delegated to the DCES, in consultation with the Lead Member for Transport and Economic Development, to consider any further comments received on the proposals and incorporate, as appropriate, into the Plan prior to public consultation.

The outcomes of consultation to be submitted to the relevant committees (P&R and IHED) ahead of formal adoption, expected later this financial year.

IHED 7/22 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee's updated work programme was discussed, and the Head of Regulatory Services mentioned further updates to be implemented.

A Member asked if it was possible to utilise a more user-friendly map on website, and thereby consolidate the information thereupon.

The Senior Transport Planner said the map used was probably as user-friendly as it gets.

A Member asked about Parking Bays for the Disabled and electric vehicle charging points, which were answered by the Senior Transport Planner.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee's work programme be noted.

CHAIR