

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

1 December 2020

From Kim Stuckey

To Cllr Philip Whitehead – Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development, MCI and Communications

Item 8 – Consultation to Inform the Wiltshire Local Plan Review

Statement

The HIF Bid is obviously a key component of delivering the 9,225 housing numbers outlined in the Chippenham Settlement Statement. In a media article "HIF Bid: More strings attached than a puppet", Essex Council have been clear with the public and media by clearly outlining the risks associated with their HIF Bid in their Grant Determination Agreement report to Cabinet. Obviously, there was no contractual issue in doing this with Homes England. In contrast Wiltshire Council have been obfuscating and hiding any risks behind a need to "Part 2" the decision.

In the interests of transparency with the public and media, can Wiltshire Council simply answer the same points on risk, put in the public domain by Essex.

Question 1

Is the HIF grant funding claimed in arrears, and is it reliant on housing numbers being delivered?

Response

Not all HIF funding is claimed in arrears. The funding agreement includes a housing delivery projection which is delivered.

Question 2

Is Wiltshire Council, through Stone Circle, under an absolute obligation to deliver the housing on Council owned land?

Response

The Council is not obliged to employ specific developers for development on its own land.

Question 3

Are there any compulsory purchase orders required to deliver the HIF bid?

Response

The funding agreement includes a compulsory purchase strategy that will be implemented if agreement cannot be reached with landowners concerning planning permissions granted.

Question 4

Can Wiltshire Council draw down anything other than preliminary costs until it has acquired the whole of the land for the whole project with clean title?

Response

Yes the Council can draw down funds in advance of acquiring land for development.

Question 5

Will the funds be drawn down in tranches? Are there conditions to be complied with for each tranche?

Response

Funds will be drawn down in tranches subject to submitting invoices providing evidence of our costs

Question 6

Has Wiltshire Council committed in the GDA to raising a sum from developer contributions? How much is this? If the developers negotiate their way out of the full contributions does Wiltshire Council need to make up the shortfall?

Response

There is no legal commitment for the Council to recover the entire HIF funding or any specific sum, but the Council must have a Recovery Strategy for the purpose of raising money for the scheme. The Recovery Strategy which is to be attached to the GDA provides a statement of principle that developments that have impact on the road infrastructure will be required to contribute via a future section 106 supplementary planning document (SPD) which will be based on a new local plan policy. If such an SPD is adopted, there is very little chance that developers will negotiate their way out of making contributions. The Council is not required by the GDA to make up any shortfall

Question 7

Does Wiltshire have the requirement to oversee housing delivery within the HIF Bid? If these housing outputs are reduced or delayed does Homes England have a right under the GDA to cease further funding?

Response

The funding for the road must be fully drawn down by 31 March 2024. The Council has a legal commitment to completely deliver housing on its own land, as well as to facilitate the delivery of the rest of the housing by 2045.