

**Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet**

**13 October 2020**

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**Questions from Cllr Nick Murry**

**Agenda Item 10 – Chippenham Housing Infrastructure Fund**

**To Cllr Philip Whitehead – Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development, MCI and Communications**

**Statement:**

The consequences of the HIF bid proposals are not only hugely significant, and risky, in financial terms for Wiltshire Council (and its taxpayers) but have substantial and far reaching consequences for the people of Chippenham, Calne and wider North Wiltshire; not least through their implications for the Local Plan, which will have to be reshaped to accommodate them, replacing far smaller numbers of houses (3,000) in locations that were yet to be determined, with an urban extension (7,500 houses) the size of Calne, in a single location to the East of Chippenham. In addition to creating an even larger commuter town (for which an upgrading of J17 will be required), generating more carbon emissions and embedding yet more car dependency into our place-making, the loss of three county farms (critical to our future) and the substantial environmental damage (Avon and Marden valleys) that would be caused, seems not to count for anything. These are massively important proposals, which have been developed covertly (and the details of which are still not being shared), have bypassed any public consultation (including consultation with the impacted parish councils) and have circumvented the entire democratic process, with elected members (other than Cabinet members, none of which speak for Chippenham) having no say whatsoever.

**Question 1:**

How can it be possible that the decisions about these proposals have been, and continue to be made without any discussion or involvement of Full Council?

**Response:**

The current decision before Cabinet is to accept the grant offer, this is subject to Homes England agreeing a recovery plan that will safeguard the council against financial risk.

The matter of growth at Chippenham will be considered as part of the Local Plan process, and ultimately the draft Local Plan will be considered by Full Council.

**Question 2:**

Is this allowed by the Council's Constitution (please explain how) and if so, does it not raise a serious question about how the Constitution upholds core principles of transparency, inclusion, integrity, accountability (of members to their electorate) and democratic process?

**Response:**

See response above. The wider implications around growth at Chippenham will be considered as part of the Local Plan process which will also be subject to consultation and ultimately the draft Local Plan will be considered by full Council.