

**Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet**

**2 February 2021**

**Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation and Questions from Councillors**

**Questions from Chris Caswill about the Chippenham HIF**

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

**Question 1 (21-71)**

At the January Cabinet meeting I asked about the publication of the paper and Minute of the Part II discussion of the Council's response to Homes England on the HIF Bid, which was correctly assumed to be about the Grant Determination Agreement. The response was that "This has not been published", which is factually correct. Will you now confirm, one way or another, if :

- (a) You will publish the Part II papers, redacted as necessary, as I believe you said you would in answer to my question at the December 2020 Cabinet meeting? And if not, why not?

**Response:**

The Council will not publish information that is commercially sensitive and would be prejudicial to its current interests.

- (b) You will publish the Grant Determination Agreement, so that the public can at the right time take an informed view of the pros and cons of the Future Chippenham plans for HIF-funded distributor roads in Chippenham? And if not, why not?

**Response:**

The GDA will be published when the commercial nature of the contents will not prejudice the Council as it contains current commercially sensitive information.

**Question 2 (21-72)**

Future Chippenham are currently consulting on routes for the HIF-funded distributor roads in Chippenham, which are explicitly proposed to facilitate up to 7500 new houses around the town. However no decision has as yet been taken on additional houses for Chippenham, and indeed a first preliminary consultation on that subject is running concurrently. How can any view be properly taken by the public on the roads absent decisions on housing, and how can the Future Chippenham consultation be legitimate in these circumstances?

**Response:**

The Future Chippenham consultation is specifically on the road route options that have been identified to establish a preferred route option for the distributor road to the east and south of Chippenham. This allows the project to progress the preliminary stages of the road design in a timely manner and utilise the HIF funding to do so.

**Question 3 (21-73)**

Given that the Council has declared a Climate Emergency, and committed to being carbon neutral by 2030, why is there no carbon budget for either the HIF-funded distributor roads in Chippenham, nor for the massive housing increase around the town which was central to the HI Bid and is now central to the preliminary Local Plan consultation?

**Response:**

As part of the options for the distributor road options the climate impact is being identified and considered.

**Question 4 (21-74)**

The previous Cabinet meeting was held on 5 January, just after the Christmas break. This meant that Democratic Services were not in the office to receive and process public questions and statements on the date which was given as the deadline for guaranteed responses. No one begrudges hard working officers a decent Christmas and New Year break, but the effect of this timing was that answers to questions delivered on time were not answered at the Cabinet meeting, and in my case not until 19<sup>th</sup> January, two weeks later. Assuming we have elections this year, we don't know who will be chairing Cabinet meetings next year, but will you now agree to recommend to the Chief Executive that any future January Cabinet meetings will be held sufficiently distant from the Christmas break to enable the normal democratic process of Cabinet questions and answers to happen effectively?

**Response:**

Public Questions for Cabinet on 5 January 2021 were processed by Democratic Services following the deadline for statements and questions in the period leading up to the Christmas break. The public were informed that, due to officer leave across the organisation between Christmas and the New Year, responses may not be circulated until after the meeting. The public are welcome to submit questions in advance and do not need to wait until near the deadline, particularly where questions are unrelated to items on the agenda.

The date for the corresponding Cabinet meeting in 2022 is set for 11 January 2022, one week later than the date set for 2021.

**Supplementary Question**

Question 1 was repeated as a supplementary question, see above.

**Response:**

Homes England have been asked whether they are content for the GDA to be published with redaction. Their response is awaited.