

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

8 October 2019

**Questions from Chris Caswill – Agenda Item 7 – Chippenham Housing
Infrastructure Fund Bid**

**To Councillor Philip Whitehead – Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member
for Economic Development**

Question 1

In what way or ways is the building of £75 million of new concrete and tarmac roads across the Avon Valley and the land south of Chippenham consistent with the climate emergency adopted by both Wiltshire Council and the Chippenham Town Council?

Response

Wiltshire is required to deliver over 2000 new homes per annum.

The issue of climate change and our acknowledgment of a climate emergency does not remove the requirement for critical infrastructure to improve peoples' lives, deliver new housing or grow our economy. Options to deliver the required infrastructure will be analysed under criteria that include sustainability.

Question 2

Did Wiltshire Council request Chippenham Town Council to exclude the public from its discussion of this issue? If so, what was the justification for that?

Response

No.

Question 3

Given that this Cabinet has never discussed this Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) Bid in public, and the Chippenham TC meeting was apparently held behind closed doors, how can this bid claim that it has public support (as is required by the scheme)?

Response

The council as local planning authority have been engaging with representatives of the local community through the town and parish councils about potential development options at the town.

There is a general recognition that if significant levels of growth are to be planned at Chippenham, then this would need to be underpinned by front-loading highways and other infrastructure.

Question 4

On 24 September, Wiltshire Council issued a press release with the title “Bid for £75 M improvements in Chippenham put forward to Government”. Amongst the improvements promoted in this press release were open space, health, an improved sense of community, new public green space, cycling and walking routes, a multi-story car park, a leisure centre, and an improved town centre. The rules of the HIF scheme make it clear that it provides road infrastructure to support development. So, will you take this opportunity to make it clear that the other facilities set out in the press release will not be provided by HIF funding, and to at least regret that the public may have been misled by the press release claims.

Response

The Housing Infrastructure Fund Forward Fund can include all of these things.

(Reference:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/625525/HIF_Forward_Funding_supporting_document_accessible.pdf)

Question 5

Will you now agree to make public at least the main elements of the HIF bid, for example the routes and characteristics of the proposed roads, and which HIF fund the application has been submitted to?

Response

The main elements of the HIF bid will be made public as part of the forthcoming community consultation and engagement process.

The infrastructure and development proposed are intended to put in vital infrastructure first to support the ongoing growth of Chippenham over the next twenty years.

As highlighted in the response to the previous question, the HIF fund application was submitted for Forward Funding.