

**Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet**

**24 March 2020**

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**Question from Lucy Ranson**

**Agenda Item 13 Future Chippenham Update**

**To Councillor Philip Whitehead Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development**

**Question 1**

Why is this meeting still going ahead when due to Corvid-19, we're being told by the government to self-isolate/keep away from mass gatherings?

**Response**

The Cabinet has responsibility for determining the **significant executive** decisions within the Council. A number of decisions to be made by the Cabinet at their meeting on 24 March 2020 have deadlines attached and are time limited. Delaying a decision would impact greatly on future projects and service provision.

Councillors must be physically present at any formally constituted meeting to be part of the quorum, vote and thereby take decisions. At present this is a legal requirement (Schedule 12 to the Local Government Act 1972), although arrangements are in place for members of the public to continue to engage in democratic meetings via written statements and questions. The council is considering practicable alternatives that will maintain robust, open and transparent governance, whilst having a primary duty to the health of residents, staff and councillors at this time.

**Question 2**

Why has this project has been rushed through without proper public consultation?

**Response**

The Council across its full range of services is significantly affected by the Corona virus outbreak and its response to the needs flowing from that will take precedence.

Equally the Council will not compromise its intention to consult with the public about many aspects of the Future Chippenham programme and that will take place as soon as it is safe and practical to do so.

The first such engagement will be to seek review and comment on route options for the road to be funded by the HIF award which we had hoped to commence in late April. It will not be possible to hold public events at this point in time so, as an alternative, we are looking at technological methods to begin the consultation process, to be followed up with appropriate events when it is safe to do so.

As you will know a great many factors must be accounted for in determining the route of a new road from archaeology, ground conditions, engineering options suitability for its intended purpose, among many others. Included in these factors are the views of the public and the Council will only determine a preferred route when the public's views have been received. Once every factor has been considered and a preferred route is available that too will be offered for consultation before being finalised and becoming part of the subsequent planning application.

### **Question 3**

Why, given the increased incidence of flooding, is this road, which will enable the building of housing estates still being proposed as it will increase flooding in the Marden and Avon Valley?

### **Response**

As part of its preparation to submit a viable planning application to the Local Planning Authority the Council will need to prepare a thorough Environmental Statement. That will include an in-depth examination of flood risk and no development will take place that increases that flood risk. There will be stringent requirements placed on Future Chippenham, as with every developer, to understand and fully mitigate any flood consequences that may emerge in the design process. All such factors will be taken in to account in the design stage.