

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

24 March 2020

Question from Paul Ranson

Agenda Item 13 Future Chippenham Update

To Councillor Philip Whitehead Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development

Question 1

Why is this meeting going ahead at a time when all public meetings and gatherings are being postponed due to Covid-19?

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

Regarding funding for the road from HIF, why hasn't due process been followed from the outset?

Response

In applying to MHCLG via the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) the Council followed every element of protocol and process required of it. Equally as contract negotiations with Homes England proceed and the Future Chippenham programme is advanced

the Council will continue to ensure it abides by all procedural requirements at every stage

Question 3

If the land in question was specifically ruled out in the Chippenham Site Allocation Plan, how can it be now allocated for the road?

Response

The Council has been awarded a grant from HIF for the construction of a connector or distributor road that unlocks land for new developments. The Council made the application, and the government made the award knowing that the land is unallocated. The next step is for the Council to negotiate a contract with Homes England that will govern the conditions under which the Council will be able to draw down and use the funds. Central to those conditions is the requirement that the Future Chippenham programme secures planning permission first for the road and subsequently for all other development. The planning process is entirely independent from any applicant for any planning permission and this programme will have to make its case like any other and seek to win approval in the proper manner.