

**Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet**

**24 March 2020**

---

**Questions from Mel Moden**

**Agenda Item 13 Future Chippenham Update**

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

**Question 1**

Given that we are repeatedly told that there is no money to address the Climate Emergency, where is the financing of £5M for the HiF bid coming from?

**Response**

The Future Chippenham Programme is a capital scheme and can be funded from those sources. Equally once in contract with Homes England the Council will be able to draw down much of this money from HIF funds retrospectively. This report, in the interests of transparency, seeks to indicate the small risk that failure to contract with Homes England and/or the loss of the HIF grant may result in a revenue exposure to the Council of this amount. In those circumstances mitigation methods are also set out

**Question 2**

The bid pre-supposes a number of key issues, and as such is a significant financial risk; there are no guarantees, so why is our money being gambled on this unnecessary bid?

**Response**

Please see the answer to Question 1 above. The Council is being transparent about this small risk which itself is being managed actively and has mitigation measures also set out. The Council believes it is better to seek to take advantage of a £75m grant for the benefit of Chippenham and the County as a whole and does not believe this to be a gamble by any measure

### **Question 3**

Where is the carbon budget for this project? You can't declare a Climate Emergency, and then randomly accept the building of new roads and housing, without any sort of plan as to how these can be made carbon negative, so where is your plan?

### **Response**

As part of its environmental management of the programme a carbon budget will be established and published. This will sit alongside extensive green design features and carbon mitigation measures such that the aim is to see the programme become carbon neutral in line with the Council's overall Policy.

### **Question 4**

At a time when finances of all the population will be stretched by the impacts of CoVid, this is a risk too far; our economy will feel the impact for years, and if you think that is bad, wait until the impact of uncontrollable global heating hits. Why are WC wasting money by continuing to support increasing Wiltshire's carbon footprint, when money needs to be spent on addressing the CoVid emergency, supporting our residents, proving the services they need? And when that is over, money needs to be found to address the Climate Emergency; where is the budget for that?

### **Response**

As well as handling the current unexpected and very serious issues presented by the Covid-19 outbreak the Council must also consider strategic matters that seek to generate income and protect the Council's ability to deliver its core services in the long term. The Future Chippenham scheme is one such strategic programme, among others and the Cabinet believe it is a good investment at this time, taking everything else in to account. It is also worth noting that the risks expressed in the paper have mitigations also set out and that these mitigations will only be necessary in the unlikely event of the Council and Homes England failing to agree a contract between them. Once such contract is achieved the Council will be able to draw down and recover much of the funds spent during 2020-21. The reason this work must be done now is that the HIF fund has an end date in early 2024 and it is better to engage with a managed risk for a smaller sum of money in the short term than lose the opportunity to leverage £75m for the benefit of the County in the long term