

## **COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 23 July 2020**

### **Question 1**

**Councillor Paul Symonds, Ross East Ward**

**To: leader of the council**

In light of the proposed decision regarding the core strategy review, including community infrastructure levy, will the Leader please provide all Members with a proposed project plan for this showing when a report on adoption of CIL will be submitted for scrutiny.

### **Response**

The report referenced by Cllr Symonds, which is currently in preparation, is due for a decision by the end of September and will include a recommendation regarding the preparation of a CIL alongside the Core Strategy Update. It will include a project timetable for the process required to develop, consider and adopt a CIL alongside the Core Strategy Update and this will be available for members to review as soon as the report is published. We will ensure that there are appropriate opportunities for scrutiny during the preparation of both the Core Strategy update and CIL, at key stages during the Core Strategy update process.

### **Supplementary Question**

I take it then, that in the 12 months since this Council requested Cabinet to bring forward proposals for adopting Community Infrastructure Levy no work has been done to make this happen. Can the Leader therefore advise why this request has been ignored, or provide evidence of any work undertaken?

Whilst flooding and Coronavirus have been huge challenges, there were at least 6 months prior to these in which work could have been done to update previous draft proposals for Members' consideration. Whilst there were floods last year too of course, I don't imagine that led to the immediate disbandment of the strategic planning team.

A cynical person might think that the intention is to delay any decision until Herefordshire Council ensures it has captured all the income from planned major developments through s106, rendering adoption of CIL an academic exercise of little actual financial benefit to Town and Parish Councils.

### **Response**

My belief Councillor Symonds is that this is a genuine delay - we have had exceptional circumstances. We are very open to either having a CIL or saying the current arrangement, we have no preconceived idea about which it should be so the process does need to be gone through correctly. There is a timetable in the answer which has been given and that will be followed through.

### **Question 2**

**Councillor Nigel Shaw, Bromyard Bringsty Ward**

**To: cabinet member, commissioning, procurement and assets**

I would appreciate, in order to understand the financial rationale, a little more information in respect of Maylord Shopping Centre. Could such information as any rents outstanding from the

last quarter day (Jun 24th) and the business rate valuation for all units and empty units be made available?

### **Response**

Thank you for your question Cllr Shaw.

We have 54 units in which the rateable value ranges from £6,000 to £94,500.

The question of arrears is somewhat complicated in that the previous owners invoiced the tenants for the June quarter rent, some of who made payment. The council's management company, Montagu Evans, is liaising with both the previous owner and the respective tenants to resolve this as soon as possible.

Given the complexities and potentially commercially sensitive information, I am happy to arrange a briefing for you, with officers, to go through the areas you have questioned including a full list of the rateable values for the premises within the Maylord purchase.

### **Supplementary Question**

Thank you for your answer. I am concerned that the Council does not have an accurate grasp on the finances of its new purchase. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss the economics of the centre further with officers. I would also welcome an opportunity to speak with the new centre manager who I understand has been in place only since March.

To attempt to make a commercial success of this acquisition will likely need an investment of several million pounds. I hope that the administration recognise that and I look forward to seeing a costed business plan being published soon.

Prior to this quarter rent arrears stood at over £1/4 million and service charge arrears at over £60k, the main debt being from the immediate previous quarter. Has the new managing agent been given instructions to minimise the landlords shortfalls through a business rates minimisation program and by vigorously chasing rent and service charge debts?

### **Response**

Written response provided:

As per my original response, I am happy to arrange a more detailed briefing with officers to brief you on the details you have requested. I can confirm that our agents Montague Evans are instructed to minimise landlord shortfalls and actively pursue the payment of rent and service charges due. I would also be happy to introduce you to the staff managing the site on the Council's behalf.