

PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 25 June 2019

Question 1

Mr R Palgrave, How Caple

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

At Cabinet on 31 Jan 2019, the response to public question number 3 was that expenditure on the SWTP in the year ending March 2019 would deliver among other things, "Completion of the full business case for the South Wye Transport Package for submission and sign off to Department for Transport". In the light of this commitment to complete the business case last financial year, can you explain why an Officer Decision on 4 June to spend a further £283k on the SWTP was described as being necessary to "continue to develop the business case and progress the South Wye Transport Package, including appraisal of options"?

Response

The response provided to the question asked on 31 January 2019 assumed completion of the business case for submission by end of that financial year, against forecast expenditure. Actual expenditure was lower than forecast and the officer decision authorises the expenditure in the current financial year – it did not authorise additional expenditure. The decision taken on 4 June 2019 set out funding for scheme activities in 2019/2020 to end of June which included finalising the business case to a revised programme and consideration of options for the SWTP as the new administration had not at that time made a decision on the status of the SWTP. I anticipate some further expenditure on ground works necessary to preserve planning consent whilst consideration is given to future actions by the new administration. Those options would be to continue with progression of the scheme, pause and review the scheme, or cancel it.

Supplementary Question

I understand that the options for the South Wye Transport Package (SWTP) are now to progress the scheme, to pause and review the scheme or to cancel the scheme. If the scheme is paused or cancelled, when the active travel measures in the SWTP be progressed and is the original funding allocation of £8m confirmed by Councillor Price at the November 2017 Cabinet meeting secured whether or not the southern link road goes ahead?

Answer

First of all, the £8m figure for active travel measures was an incorrect statement by Councillor Price, previous cabinet member. So we agreed as an authority on this particular scheme to spend £5m on active travel measures. Now whether the scheme is paused, reviewed, cancelled or progressed as it is, this administration is fully committed to the active travel measure elements of that scheme and will continue them in some shape or form.

Question 2

Ms K Sharp, Hereford

To: cabinet member, infrastructure and transport

The Department for Transport granted £5.1million to Herefordshire Council in November 2018 to improve the County's very poor, and sometimes downright dangerous, road surfaces. How then can an officer of the Council just 3 months later decide to allocate up to £1million of revenue funding from the Local Transport Plan 'End to End Network Improvement service' of public realm annual plan 2018/19 to the capital South Wye Transport Package project?

Response

I understand that officers have not taken decisions to allocate £1m of revenue funding from the Local Transport to the South Wye Transport Project.

Two operational decisions taken by officers (on 14 May and 4 June) cumulatively allocated some £443k of Local Transport Plan funding to the South Wye Transport project. This is in accordance with the decision taken by the then cabinet member on 8 March which confirmed that in 2019/2020 spend in advance of a full business case being signed off by the Department for Transport would be funded from the Local Transport Plan budget.

These decisions will not lead to any reduction in highways maintenance work already planned for this financial year.