

## **COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS TO CABINET – 5 October**

### **Question 1**

**Councillor Hitchiner, Stoney Street**

**To: Cabinet Member, Transport and Infrastructure**

Am I to take it that Cllr Price is asking the Cabinet to start a journey to gain approval to spend up to £12.3m on a project before it is known whether or not that project has a business case in support, and whether, even with a good business case, finance may not be available to complete it?

There is no obvious rush which requires a decision to be made in this extremely risky.

Can he please follow the example of the previous administration and make decisions based on a current business plan and up to date evidence rather than take the huge risks which this proposal represents?

### **Response**

Subject to the decision of Cabinet, and the support of Full Council to approve the proposed changes to the Capital Programme, we will of course ensure the necessary business cases are presented as part of the decision making process. The proposal to allocate £12.3m is part of that process to ensure we are able to deliver on those commitments.

### **Question 2**

**Councillor Toni Fagan, Birch Ward**

**To: Cabinet member, Adults, Health and Wellbeing**

The removal of Talk Community hub funding from the Capital Programme is a blow to many community groups. Volunteers are on their knees trying to support their communities whilst the state of our community infrastructure crumbles. Since the pandemic most grants have been revenue based to enable the roll-out of additional support and services – meanwhile roofs leak and buildings fall into disrepair – diverting precious voluntary time and energy into trying to keep structures functional for the communities they serve.

Could you please tell me:

1. How many expressions of interest there were for the Hubs Capital Grant Scheme ?
2. The percentage of those expressions of interest which related to the key aims of the Herefordshire Wellbeing Strategy: a) The best start in life for children and b) Good mental wellbeing?

### **Response**

Talk Community remains a key strand of the council's work to support individuals and communities to help themselves and help each other. There are 75 hubs across the county of various sizes based within communities. When this capital money was allocated by the previous administration to create Super Hubs, expressions of interest (EOIs) were invited from all local organisations, not just Talk Community Hubs, to deliver a broader range of integrated and co-located services close to local communities, such as health, counselling, midwifery, health visiting, mental health services and physiotherapy and possibly confidential meetings/clinics.

43 EOIs were submitted in total, far more than would be capable of being funded from the capital allocation. In all cases, I recognise the significant amount of work that people have put into developing their EOIs and I understand the disappointment.

Whilst a few organisations submitted an EOI focusing mainly on repair to their buildings with no added value, it is important to be clear that the money was never intended to be used to cover the costs of existing activities at Talk Community Hubs or to pay for the maintenance or repair of the premises in which they operated. It was, as the title states, to potentially create Super Hubs across the county.

We want to be absolutely sure that any funding will bring a real benefit to communities and that is why we are undertaking a wider, strategic review of the Talk Community approach. The recommendation to take the funding out of the coming year's Capital Programme does not mean that we are dismissing the idea of Super Hubs and I can assure members and those organisations who made their submissions that once we have a better understanding of what is being delivered, how many people it is reaching, where the gaps are etc. we will look again at the Super Hub proposal.

In response to the final part of the question, I can confirm that the EOI did not specifically ask applicants to address the key aims of the Herefordshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. However, 20% of applicants stated they would provide services for 0-5 year olds with 51% of applications stating they would provide mental health support services.