

WRITTEN QUESTIONS – FULL COUNCIL – 24 FEBRUARY 2021

1. MINUTE 311 – CABINET – 4 FEBRUARY 2021

Questions submitted by Councillor A Wilce and the response of the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration

I am led to understand that the costs of the Cullompton Town Centre Relief Road project have increased by a further £5M, this additional cost falling to this Council.

With the Council's current financial situation, needing to rob Peter to pay Paul in order to balance the budget, and

1. the reduction in expected s106 contributions as a result of the Planning Inspectorate's decision,
2. the commitment to lend almost £70M to 3RDL,
3. the possibility of breaching HIF loan conditions,
4. the scrapping of the New Homes Bonus
5. the scrapping of the Community Infrastructure Levy and
6. the unknown financial effect of COVID on housebuilding and the housing market

Is the project viable?

And, given the fact that

1. the building of the road flies in the face of the Council's climate change ambitions and
2. there is the possibility of a legal challenge on that basis (as per the Transport Action Group v HMG)

shouldn't serious consideration be given to scrapping the project and pushing instead for transport infrastructure improvements paid for by the Government, or the County Council as the Highway Authority?

RESPONSE

Planning permission was granted for the Cullompton relief road on 22nd January 2021, marking a major step forward for the project.

This Housing Infrastructure Fund project has previously been the subject of decisions by Cabinet at key stages and reports to Scrutiny and Audit Committees.

Close liaison over all aspects of the project continues with Homes England as part of the ongoing monitoring process.

The road continues to be a vital piece of infrastructure for Cullompton to improve air quality and the environment in the town centre (including enabling the £1.2m investment in the town via the Heritage Action Zone), unlock growth that is planned and hence deliver much of the Local Plan.

We also continue to work closely with Devon County Council within their role as our delivery partner. The County Council is currently reviewing next steps following the grant of planning permission including programme and costings. It is anticipated that these aspects will be updated. Officers are currently part of this review process and anticipate a further report to Cabinet to update on the project in the next few months. Any future cost revisions relating to this key infrastructure project will of course be brought back to Cabinet for consideration.