

EXECUTIVE

- * Councillor Caroline Reeves (Chairman)
- * Councillor Fiona White (Vice-Chairman)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| * Councillor Joss Bigmore | * Councillor Julia McShane |
| * Councillor Angela Goodwin | * Councillor John Rigg |
| * Councillor David Goodwin | * Councillor Pauline Searle |
| * Councillor Jan Harwood | * Councillor James Steel |

*Present

[. . . .]

EX78 WALNUT BRIDGE - APPLICATION FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDING

The Chairman asked councillors present at the meeting to note that the appendices to the committee report contained exempt information about infrastructure costs designated as such under Paragraph 3, of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. Discussion of those appendices would require the meeting to exclude the public.

It was further noted there was an error in the report to the Executive on page 158 para 3.17 (f). The figure should read “£500,000”.

The Lead Councillor for Planning, Regeneration and Housing Delivery introduced the report. It was acknowledged that the replacement of Walnut Bridge had a long history, initially identified in 2012 in the Guildford Interim Town Centre Framework and again in 2014 when it was identified as a priority in the Guildford Town and Approaches Movement Study (GTAMS). The project was subsequently awarded LEP funding as part of the “Unlocking Guildford, Guildford Town Centre Transport Package” in 2014. It formed one of a number of projects and interventions which together would help alleviate congestion in the Town Centre.

In July 2016, the Executive had formally approved the project to replace Walnut Bridge. The replacement would provide improved access to the town centre from the station and was in anticipation of the significant developments expected in the immediate area. There was concern that the existing Bridge was too narrow to accommodate the increasing flow of pedestrians and cyclists. The new Bridge would be wider than the existing bridge, facilitate two-way cycle flow and be fully accessible. It would also lie on a more obvious alignment to encourage use by new and infrequent users as well as local people familiar to the area. Additionally, it would be seen as a catalyst for regeneration in the Bedford Plaza and Bedford Wharf area thereby becoming a critical access corridor from the Station through to the High Street. Finally, it would encourage more sustainable travel and reduce the need for cyclists to have to use the Gyratory. The bridge had received planning permission in 2018.

The Executive was informed that it was proposed to reincorporate the Bedford Plaza Public Realm works into the Bridge project primarily because the lighting design of Bedford Plaza including the Bridge had been included in these works. The planning permission for the Bridge required that the public realm works be completed within six months of the completion of the Bridge. This would mean that it was possible the Bridge could not be opened after completion until public realm works were completed unless a temporary lighting system was installed. There was therefore a case to be made for these to be undertaken with the Bridge works. This could allow for economies of scale, savings in mobilisation costs etc. and could provide some additional funding from its £500,000 budget to be brought into the Bridge project.

The Executive were asked to consider three recommendations. To address a funding gap in the Walnut Bridge project by means of a transfer from the capital contingency fund of £450,000. Secondly, that the Bedford Plaza Public realm works be incorporated within the Walnut Bridge Project. Finally, £350,000 be transferred from the provisional to approved capital budget to fund the public realm work.

Prior to the formal consideration of the matter, Mr David Smith addressed the Executive in support of the replacement of Walnut Bridge as soon as possible.

During the formal debate, it was generally agreed that Walnut Bridge should be replaced at some stage, but the discussion centred on the cost, design and timing of the project. Two members of the Executive were opposed to providing additional funding to support the proposed design. There were concerns expressed that the level of the increased cost of the project was not acceptable. It was further argued that the project should be put on hold or a temporary structure be installed until there was a more suitable design in keeping with the proposed new Bedford Wharf public realm landscape.

In response, there were arguments concerning the immediate safety of the bridge, the safety of users of the bridge, the impact of the existing design on accessibility and the role of the bridge in realising sustainable transport plans for the town centre. It was argued that a delay in completion of the bridge would not be acceptable to local people. It was noted that if the design of the bridge were changed a new planning application could be required so increasing the cost and timescales further and that the LEP funding would need to be returned if not utilised for the bridge project within the year possibly making the project unfeasible. The meeting heard that should the Executive approve the recommendations infrastructure spending would attract further funding in the future and that there may be some flexibility on the design of the bridge within the parameters of the existing planning permission.

There followed a discussion concerning the designation of some financial information as exempt. It was explained that contractor bids as part of the tendering process must be kept confidential. Once a contract had been agreed the overall budget would be reported to the Corporate Governance and Standards Committee along with regular updates to the Executive as the project progressed. Revised budget figures would also be reported at the end of the year and would become public in due course.

In order to consider the exempt information referred to the above, the Executive

RESOLVED:

That, under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and Regulation 5 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, the public be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of information contained in the Appendices to the report on the grounds that it

involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the 1972 Act.

Having considered the matter and readmitted the public to the meeting, the Executive

RESOLVED:

- (1) That a virement of £450,000 be transferred from the capital contingency fund for the Walnut Bridge Project
- (2) That the Bedford Plaza Public realm works be incorporated within the Walnut Bridge Project.
- (3) That £350,000 be transferred from the provisional to approved capital budget to fund the public realm work.

Reasons:

It had become apparent that there was a funding gap and a virement of £450k was required to get this project completed.

The assimilation of the Bedford Plaza Public Realm works into the Bridge project was twofold:

1. To combine the lighting design for both schemes within the main Bridge Contract and
2. To leverage some of the associated budget for use on the Bridge project through economies of scale and mobilisation costs etc.

The budget for the public realm works would need to be transferred to the approved budget to enable the work to proceed.