

Questions by Members of the Council under Procedure Rule 10.0

Council – 24 January 2022

Questions from Councillor Bell Received on 18 January 2022

Question:

Can officers list the details of the figure for the 'Watford Riverwell Project' in the draft Budget 2022/23 of £10,699,000 in Appendix 6 of the Capital programme 2021 to 2025?

Answer:

The Riverwell project, formally known as Watford Health Campus is a complex project set to redevelop land behind the hospital at Vicarage Road in West Watford over a 10-15 year period. It involves the Council in joint venture with a private company (Kier Property) bringing forward development in phases. To date it has delivered a road connection to the hospital, an industrial zone, and a housing zone comprising 95 homes of which 29 are affordable. There are a significant number of homes under construction, including a family housing phase of 80 units including the delivery of another 23 affordable homes.

The Joint Venture prepares a business plan, which is updated each year which is brought to Cabinet, with a 12 month and 5 year cash flow forecast, which is examined by Cabinet and opposition members.

To take forward a zone, both the council and private sector partner invest monies. In addition, the joint venture raises external debt. The level of external debt is subject to change depending on the capital market conditions at the time. The financial budget referred to in the question is the council's estimated proportion of capital needed for the council's share of investment over the time period of the budget.

Due to the nature of timing changes inherent in development, the timing of this capital expenditure may change due to the rate of house sales, prices and costs. So annual projections are indicative. A proportion of the projection over the next 12 months is to convert a lease of the multi storey car park from West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust to a premium payment, which was discussed by Cabinet, as it reduces over time the Council's funding costs.

Question:

Please provide details of the 'surplus sites' in the draft Budget with a figure of £850,000 also in Appendix 6

Answer:

The surplus site programme generates funding for the council to support our residents and much needed housing, including affordable housing. The Croxley View development, which is part of this programme, is being developed in a joint venture with Watford Community Housing and has delivered 36 affordable homes and a 40 bed temporary housing unit. The second phase is well underway and is delivering 23 affordable homes and 63 private sale units.

The surplus site figure of £850k is to support the land assembly prior to disposal and redevelopment of one of the sites within the programme. This is still subject to commercial negotiations.