

COUNTY COUNCIL – 7 DECEMBER 2021

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

1. Question from Bernard Brown, Battle, East Sussex

At the SELEP Accountability Board meeting on 10 September a senior officer reported it was hoped the Temporary Connection of the Queensway Gateway Road to the A21 would open in late November 2021.

At the SELEP Accountability Board meeting on 19 November a senior officer reported it is now hoped the Temporary Signalled Connection will be open in early Summer 2022.

In July this year a Senior East Sussex County Council Officer in a press statement on the Queensway Gateway Road said, "This is not our project."

At the last Full Council meeting in October the Leader of the Council, in reply to a question, also said, "This is not our project".

However, on 19 November at the South East Local Enterprise Partnership Accountability Board meeting, the CEO of SELEP gave this answer to a question on the Queensway Gateway Project:

"SELEP and Essex County Council, as the Accountable Body, contract with East Sussex County Council through a Service Level Agreement, which sets out the Grant Responsibilities of both the Accountable Body and East Sussex County Council. East Sussex County Council is responsible for delivery of the Project and is required under the terms of the Service Level Agreement to enter into an agreement with any third party delivery partners, i.e. Sea Change Sussex, which sets out the relevant rights and obligations imposed on East Sussex County Council under the terms of the Service Level Agreement".

With this response firmly in mind my Question is in 5 parts.

Will the Council now confirm that as the supporter of the promoter of the original project submission; the body signing a Service Level Agreement with SELEP to undertake the project; the body receiving the funds the project from Essex County Council as the Accountable Body for SELEP; the body Contracting the third Party Delivery partner for the project; the body responsible for making payment of the cash to the delivery partner and the body responsible for delivering the project to SELEP, that this is the County's project and now correct what I am sure was an unintentionally misleading statement?

Will the Council care to apologise to residents and taxpayers for the reports issued by the County on this project over the last 15 months which have been consistently, wildly, inaccurate in projecting the opening date of both the Temporary and Permanent connection of the Queensway Gateway Road to the A21.

Will the Council clarify the situation and either confirm or deny that it is their intention to support a Project Case Change to SELEP to make the so-called, as yet incomplete, Temporary Connection the final and permanent connection?

Will the Council confirm that all the cash allocated to the Queensway Gateway Road and the North Bexhill Access Road projects has been paid to the delivery partner and that all the cash allocated to the Queensway Gateway Road and the North

Bexhill Access Road projects has been spent and has been spent only in accordance with the purposes specifically approved by SELEP and contained in the individual project conditions of the SLA between the County and SELEP?

Will the Council confirm that, following SELEP withdrawing the £3.5million award to the Hastings Fast Track Business Solutions Getting Building Fund project, the County is having to repay the advance of £804,365 received for this project. Will the Council confirm no advance payment had been made to the third party delivery partner for this project using these funds or any other County funds.

Response by the Leader and Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development

1. This is not an ESCC project to be undertaken by the County Council. The project is wholly led by the project promoter SCS, who will own the land and be responsible for securing the permissions and entering into the construction contract for delivery of the project. By way of clarification, ESCC's role is as a funding conduits for releasing the grant provided by SELEP and overseeing the delivery by the project promoter.
2. The County Council has used the information that has been provided to us by the project promoter, SCS who are responsible for delivery of the project.
3. ESCC have not been asked to submit a change request to SELEP by the scheme promoter at this stage, so I'm afraid we cannot clarify the situation as requested.
4. I can confirm that the cash/funding has been paid to the delivery partner on both projects and has been spent in accordance with the purposes approved by SELEP and in the conditions of the SLA between the County and SELEP.
5. I can confirm that the County Council will repay the advance received for this project and that no advance payment have been made to the third party delivery partner for this project using these funds or any other County Council funds.