

CABINET – 18TH NOVEMBER 2021

ITEM 5 QUESTIONS UNDER CABINET PROCEDURE 10.7

Mr M. Hunt – Bedford Square Gateway Project

- “1. The cost of the Bedford Square Gateway Project published on the webpage is £2.6 million which is being funded by the Council and a grant for £130,000 from the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership. Is this still the estimated final cost?
2. If there are further costs, how does the Council expect these to be funded?
3. With reference to the paving stones, there are concerns in the industry that some imports breach acceptable standards and this led to companies forming the Ethical Trade Initiative. Are the suppliers of the paving stone members of the Ethical Trade Initiative, and if not what assurances have been received that acceptable ethical standards are being met by the suppliers of the paving material?
4. What employment conditions does the authority require of its contractors, and are these formally verified?
5. The authority rightly developed a Climate Change Strategy to minimise the environmental impacts of its own activities and contribute to the improvement of the wider environment through local action. Has the authority measured or estimated the carbon emissions made by the purchase of imported stone in this project and how is this reconciled with the Climate Change Strategy?”

The Leader, or his nominee, will respond:

- 1. Cabinet agreed a reduced scheme at its meeting in December 2020 costed at £2.6m. This is funded by the council’s capital receipts and external funding of £183k from the LLEP Business Rates Pool and £390k from the Business Rate Retention Pilot. In October 2021 a decision was taken to deliver the balance of the scheme which is entirely funded by the £1.7m from the Town Deal.*
- 2. The whole scheme cost has been calculated at £3.869m including contingency sums. If there are any unforeseen expenditure beyond this contingency sum that cannot be met from other sources then these will need to be met by capital receipts.*
- 3. The suppliers, Hardscape, are members of the Ethical Trading Initiative.*
- 4. Procurement of contractors have been undertaken using nationally recognised frameworks provided by Crown Commercial Services (CCS) and ESPO. Suppliers listed on these frameworks have all been pre-qualified by*

the framework provider on a range of criteria including financial stability, track record, experience and professional ability as well as compliance with statutory obligations including under the Equalities Act 2010, Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Health and Safety Policy & Risk Assessments, safeguarding policy. Framework agreements also specify rates of pay for categories of employees, based on industry standard rates. In addition, the framework's terms and conditions are all pre-agreed by the framework provider to ensure that they are fair, transparent and in the best interest of their customers.

The NEC4 contract used by the Council for the construction project also specifies:

- a) The locations and working times that work can take place,*
- b) Competency of named individuals to administer the contract from a contractor perspective and demonstrable experience relating to the work content.*

The construction project is also regulated by the Construction Design & Management Regulations (CDM) 2015, governed by the HSE. This ensures key regulations and standards are met and adhered to on the construction project, including those relating to a safe site and permits to work in specific conditions such as confined spaces with permits issued as required to suitably qualified personnel. The HSE regulations also apply in terms of working hours and specific gaps between shifts.

The Council's appointed NEC4 Project Manager has the ability to remove someone who is not competent from the contract, to approve or reject any replacements if they do not meet the required standard.

- 5. The Climate Change Strategy was updated in December 2019 to include the Council's commitment to being a carbon neutral organisation by 2030 following the climate motion on notice in July 2019 (DD 184 19/20 refers). That commitment is to reducing carbon emissions in the council's own operations rather than to the public realm. Nevertheless, the scheme includes new planters in Devonshire Square and trees in Bedford Square and Devonshire Square which will assist in absorbing air pollution and in reducing the heat island effect in the area.*

The Council was advised on the selection of type and source of materials by its appointed highways and landscape design specialists in consultation with the supplier, involving a visit to the supplier's materials laboratory in Stratford Upon Avon. The factors influencing the type and source of materials selected included the material's cost balanced with the need to be fit for purpose in terms of the use it was to be put to, including capable of bearing the weight of the fairground rides, providing a quality appearance in line with the project objectives, and its durability/lifespan to provide value for money. The source selected for the granite paving and kerbs was judged by the highways and landscape design specialists to be the only one capable of providing the required materials most suited for the purposes of this project. No suitable equivalent locally sourced materials were available.