

Statement from Greg Williams, deputy Mayor and Chair of the Mampitts Advisory Committee on behalf of Shaftesbury Town Council.

Thank you for taking the time at cabinet to consider the next stage of the Mampitts project. The residents in the east of Shaftesbury have been promised this community hub for nearly a decade, and we are now at a point where it is closer to reality than ever before. It might not initially seem like that given the change to the condition timelines being recommended by officers, but this new timeline has had the benefit of professional project manager and architectural input in a way the initial application lacked.

To mature the project and develop this more pragmatic plan, Shaftesbury Town Council (STC) has invested nearly £30,000 in this project to date, at risk. This sum excludes the costs of STC personnel time. We have reached the budgetary position where we need early draw down of S106 funds to progress further.

The draw down will enable us to reach RIBA Stage 4 and launch the construction invitation to tender. On receipt of these tenders, we will have much greater certainty of the outturn costs - something I know we are all keen to ascertain considering the increases in the project to date, which we acknowledge.

We make no apology for our ambition for the project to include a first floor, which has driven the cost increase, and from which we can provide space for sorely needed family hub and healthcare services. The eastern ward of Shaftesbury, which I represent along with three other councillors who lead on this project, has its social challenges. These challenges are only going to be compounded by the implementation of the bus gate, further isolating the development from the rest of town.

We must show that STC and DC, working together, can deliver for the whole of Shaftesbury. This project does that. I am also particularly enthused by how we have now forged a closer partnership with DC officers in order to improve delivery certainty.

We recognise the need for stakeholder contributions and grants to close the £0.5m gap between the S106 allocation and the projected outturn. In addition to potential contributions from DC's family hub programme, we have appointed a grants specialist who has experience of the National Lottery Communities Fund in particular. It is in reflecting on their advice that we have not rushed into making the grant application before having evidence of DC's commitment to the project, via this early draw down request in front of you today. Alternative funding sources are also available, as discussed with officers, but in line with the original condition of the S106 award to pursue grant funding, this is what we are prioritising.

Community engagement with the project remains high, and impatient. We have expanded our Mampitts Advisory Committee to members of the public, and together we are looking to move the car park to a safer location behind the hall that also preserves more of the village green space. I could summarise the wider community sentiment in five words – 'just get on with it.' Shaftesbury Town Council asks for the cabinet's consent to do just that.