

Item 06 – Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) Priorities

The attached report was considered by the Development & Conservation Advisory Committee on 12 December 2023. The relevant Minute extract is below.

Development & Conservation Advisory Committee (12 December 2023, Minute 28)

The Infrastructure Delivery Officer presented the report, which set out the priorities within the annual Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS), and updated the committee on how recent developer contributions had been spent. The IFS was an annual requirement within CIL legislation, requiring the Council to set out the income and expenditure from CIL and s106 over the last financial year, and the types of infrastructure the Council intended to fund in the coming year.

The officer outlined the evidence base considered in the formation of the proposed priorities. The emerging Local Plan was an important consideration, to ensure that growth was supported and the impact of new developments was considered. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) was also an important consideration. Statements based on ongoing engagement with infrastructure providers, as part of the Local Plan process, were produced in 2022 and 2023.

The proposed priorities for the coming year were largely unchanged, with some refinements based on ongoing engagement with infrastructure providers. These included more specific education and health & social care provisions, needed to support growth within the Local Plan. Members were reminded that the priorities within the IFS were not binding, but provided transparency to developers and communities regarding infrastructure-funding intentions.

In response to questions, officers explained that the ability to deduct the existing floor area from that proposed in calculating the CIL charge was part of national CIL legislation and could not be modified. The discount was intended to assist with the viability of brownfield sites, which could be unviable with an additional CIL payment, which could have knock-on effects on other policy priorities.

Members discussed the increased capacity of Otford Health Services as a priority. It was noted that the number of doctors available was a constraining factor on the delivery of this. Officers explained that the Council worked in partnership with healthcare providers to ensure they were ready to fill these spaces once available. The Council's focus was on ensuring the land-use element of the infrastructure was delivered, even if the personnel element was not.

Members were advised that the junction improvements at Bat & Ball were tied to the development at Sevenoaks Quarry. Details regarding the provision of these improvements would be contained in the S106 agreement for the site, when it was finalised. Data from the transport modelling work undertaken for the Local Plan would feed into further improvements. The review of the CIL Charging Schedule was ongoing, and would be brought to the committee next year.

Members discussed the future of the Community Infrastructure Levy, and potential replacements for larger sites. One suggestion was that CIL be reserved for minor sites, of fewer than 10 units. Larger sites would instead use tailored s106 agreements, which would provide more certainty on when and where the money could be spent.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That the recommendations to Cabinet, as below, be supported:

(a) That the criteria for prioritising infrastructure projects as set out in paragraph 6 should remain.

(b) That the specific projects and types of infrastructure recommended in paragraphs 21-33 of this report are identified in the IFS as having a priority for full or partial funding.