

Letter to Culture, Heritage, Sport, Tourism & Economic Development Committee

I am submitting the following letter under Council Procedure Rule 23.3 to be included on the agenda for the Culture, Heritage, Sport, Tourism & Economic Development Committee on January 18th 2023.

At our last meeting, we were presented with the Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement for Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 developer contributions. The reporting period for this was April 1st 2022 to March 31st 2023. At the time, I noted concern that £4,284,541 of Education infrastructure was unallocated as of March 31st 2023. The report stated the Council is 'currently reviewing demand for infrastructure improvements' for educational infrastructure with the Families Children and Learning directorate. The nature of this review is unclear. Any review must involve listening directly to those who can benefit from this Section 106 money.

Over the years, councils across the UK have had to give back millions of pounds of unallocated section 106 funding even though there is a dire need for infrastructure improvements in our communities. My understanding is that after 5 years developers can appeal for unallocated money to be given back to them. We can give real value for money for our city through better scrutiny and consultation around unallocated Section 106 funding. I welcome the move to Community Infrastructure Levy which gives greater flexibility to use these funds, but we must use every effort to ensure that Section 106 contributions are spent in a way that maximises their utility.

At our last Full Council meeting, I put in a written question on education infrastructure funding. I was glad to receive a response from Cllrs Taylor and Helliwell which stated that they had 'already earmarked some S106 funding to particular projects in our schools and ensured alignment with the geographical limitations placed upon some of the funding.' I believe that information pertaining to this should come before our committee in the interests of transparency.

I would like to draw attention to the work done by other councils such as Babergh and Mid Suffolk district councils which have a dashboard which has made it easier for residents to see information about both section 106 and CIL contributions in relation to developments. Our Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement meanwhile will not be seen by many residents.

Additionally, individual Section 106 allocations contained in the statement were hard to read due to table formatting issues that meant that much information could not be seen. I hope this can be rectified in future.

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This letter requests that a report be made for the Culture, Heritage, Sport, Tourism & Economic Development Committee that shows the geographical limitations placed upon Section 106 contributions for educational infrastructure. It should also outline the total amount unallocated where there are no geographical limitations. This letter also asks that the report outlines in detail the money that Cllrs Taylor and Helliwell stated has already been earmarked for projects in schools.

This letter requests that the Council writes to local schools to enquire about their infrastructure needs to better understand the needs of local schools. The Council should explain the availability of Section 106 educational infrastructure contributions in particular areas so that parents and staff can help inform Council processes.

Yours sincerely,

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