

Penny Thompson – Chief Executive
Brighton & Hove City Council
Grand Avenue
Hove

25th June 2015

Dear Penny,

Valley Gardens Scheme

We are jointly submitting the following letter under Council Procedure Rule 23.3 to be included on the agenda for the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee meeting of 7th July 2015.

At the Environment, Transport & Sustainability (ETS) Committee meeting 17 March 2015, members considered a report on the Valley Gardens Scheme and agreed the following recommendations:

2.1 That Committee notes progress since October 2014.

2.2 That Committee agrees the next project stage (Landscape and Highways Technical Design) should commence under guidance of the Project Management Board.

Appended to that report was a decision making summary (see below), which states that a decision will be sought from the next ETS Committee meeting on 7 July 2015 to agree to start construction, and with the additional expectation construction will commence in September 2015. Members will also note that a decision was expected to be sought from Policy & Resources (P&R) Committee at its June 2015 meeting. Despite these clear expectations, no report has been forthcoming on Valley Gardens to either June P&R nor July ETS.

The ETS Committee has already democratically agreed the (concept) scheme, and agreed that officers work on the final technical design, leaving the only decision remaining required of the ETS Committee to agree to commence construction. Despite this advanced position we understand the new Labour administration have requested officers review major aspects of the scheme; matters already agreed and beyond the scope of the technical design phase, i.e. road capacity and agreed removal of the Mazda fountain. We accept that the new administration need to be reassured that the scheme will not cause any major disruptions to the flow of traffic, but we feel that these are final design issues and should not hold up the final decision.

We are concerned that this unscheduled delay has no mandate and that the withholding of the scheduled reports to ETS and P&R will simply delay progressing

the scheme. Moreover, we have no official indication from the administration about the final timeline that will see project commencement.

Members will appreciate that a great deal of member and public engagement has already taken place and that substantial funding for the scheme has been generously promised by Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership. This is government funding which needs to be spent by the LEP within tight timescales. We are therefore concerned that the current delay by the administration is causing significant risk to the scheme funding, and in turn risk to delivery of this once in a generation opportunity to improve this vitally important city central site. Moreover, we are concerned that any failure to progress this scheme will impact the confidence of funders for both current and future schemes that will be vital to the on-going success, well-being and prosperity of our city.

So that the project may remain on the timeline agreed at March ETS committee, we call upon members of ETS committee to agree to call on officers to put reports to July full Council covering the matters that were scheduled to be considered at June P&R and July ETS.

Yours sincerely,



Cllrs Pete West & Tony Janio