

## History

The recommendation being put before the Cabinet today sadly comes as no surprise to us, though perhaps not for the reason given.

The Civic Plaza Car Park Development project was the only tangible deliverable from the Regeneration Programme. The site was recognised by you as a key site for the regeneration of Havant Town Centre, and by us for the much needed delivery of at least 120 homes. With its cancelation, to all intents and purposes the Regeneration Programme is now on 'life support'.

The project was approved by this Cabinet in October 2018 as the first project in phase 1 of the Regeneration Programme. That recommendation was presented to Council just two weeks later and despite serious objections raised in three separate public deputations, it was passed unanimously with only cursory debate.

The points ignored concerned the excessive exemption of documentation, the lack of any detail on the governance model and the complete disregard for the value that community stakeholders would bring to the project.

On receipt of Homes England Funding, you approved the 'detailed business case' in March 2019. The project schedule presented to that meeting suggested that the business case approved was built on unsound dates and naïve costings.

Section 3.3 of the report confirms this. When the project was put out to competitive tender, the responses received demonstrated that *even with the £3.36M contribution*, the scheme was not viable without additional funding.

An additional £3.6M was then negotiated with Homes England, *on the condition that the level of housing delivered would be higher*. The re-plan resulting from that condition would have inflated costs and pushed the schedule out still further. Section 3.5 infers that by the time you would be able to enter into a development agreement, the project would already have slipped by nine months.

That's a big enough slippage to cause any investor to question their funding, but section 3.6 tells us that Homes England pulled their funding simply by reason of Covid.

To attempt to cover the funding gap, the Cabinet appears to have rushed into the sale of Brockhampton West without effective scrutiny by the public or indeed by the backbench councillors who represent them. Only time will tell whether the price was right or whether you have another 'Potash Terrace' on your hands.

## The world has changed

Over the last twelve months, the ongoing pandemic has changed the way we all live, commute and work. Much of that change will be persistent and all previously

baselined data relating to housing need, commuting patterns and public transport use will need to be recalibrated.

The foundations underpinning the Local Plan 2037 and central Government's imposed housing targets have suffered a seismic shift. Havant Borough Council is not the only authority in this position but as a Conservative Council in a parliamentary constituency with a safe Conservative seat, you ought to be able to work with your MP to successfully lobby a Conservative government.

Your failure to achieve even 75% of the Housing Delivery target in the Ministry's January report make such a radical approach imperative. Instead of stitching up deals between developers and local landowners at the expense of the town, stand up for Havant, push back and hit the 'Reset' button.

### Moving forward

Large development programmes **must** be resilient enough to absorb unexpected change without the need to 'scrap' and 'restart' projects. The Regeneration Programme was always going to be a complex programme of work requiring strong governance and buy in from the whole community and any attempt to initiate a 'Civic Plaza Plus' replacement will fail unless the serious failings of the first attempt are addressed.

### Community Stakeholder Group

In the 70s and 80s, Havant was home to a number of globally renowned research, development and manufacturing companies. The professional staff who worked in those companies are now retired, many with hard won experience in the procurement, design and delivery of complex programmes of work, and the risk, issue and change management disciplines they require.

As local home owners, this experienced community is already fully invested in the future of Havant Town. Their services could be given freely and you might also be surprised at their proven ability to work within commercial confidentiality agreements.

The inclusion of community stakeholders as volunteers in the governance model may present initial challenges, but the benefits will be clear and significant.

Rather than patronize us by offering us roles tending the town centre flowerbeds, please make effective use of the consultancy that we can bring to the Regeneration Programme at no additional cost.