

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL
Friday 10th February 2023

1. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR BAILEY

Re: Independent review of DCC's LADO safeguarding actions relating to John Humphreys and publication of Report.

Please could you explain why did DCC hold up the publication of the report? It was completed in September 2022 but only published some 4 months later following my question to cabinet on 11th January 2023.

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR LEADBETTER

The delay between the initial report being submitted in draft form to the Council and the final version being published was due to officers rightly clarifying certain points contained within the report and agreeing the final content with the report's author. I should also add that, in that time frame, very senior and significant appointment changes occurred, namely the departure of the Director of Children and Young People's Futures and the arrival of the permanent Director for Legal and Democratic Services. I felt it was important that both the new Director for Legal services and the Interim Director of Children and Young People's Futures had the opportunity to consider the contents of the report before publication, as the responsible officers.

2. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR BAILEY

Re: Independent review of DCC's LADO safeguarding actions relating to John Humphreys and views of Senior Officers.

Have any senior officers expressed any concern or reservations about any aspects of the report since it was completed in September 2022?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR LEADBETTER

There were no specific concerns raised directly relating to the report.

3. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR BAILEY

Re: Independent review of DCC's LADO safeguarding actions relating to John Humphreys and multi agency safeguarding meetings

In my written question 1.c at the DCC Cabinet Meeting on 13th July 2022, I referred to three multi agency safeguarding meetings which took place in March April and November 2016. Please clarify why details of the November 2016 meeting was omitted from the report. Please provide full details of matters discussed at the November 2016 meeting and outcomes from it.

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR LEADBETTER

I note your comment about the November 2016 meeting. It would not be appropriate to share the confidential detail of any the multi-agency meetings held. As I have said previously, I am happy to meet Cllr Bailey separately to discuss any aspects of the report that can be shared. The investigator was supplied with all the evidence in relation to all of the meetings.

4. QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR BAILEY Re: Feniton to Sidmouth Cycleway

The creation of a cycleway on the former railway line from Feniton to Sidmouth via Ottery St Mary and Tipton St John would produce considerable benefits including a safe off-road area for very young cyclists, a reduction in local car use, and health benefits. It would also attract visitors to East Devon and would produce a substantial boost to the local economy, especially in Ottery and Sidmouth.

An Ottery community group has worked hard towards achieving a Sidmouth to Feniton cycleway. What plans does the Cabinet Member have to commence delivery of the project?

REPLY BY COUNCILLOR HUGHES

The Sidmouth to Feniton cycle route remains an aspiration for the County Council and there has been investment in cycling infrastructure over several years including the Connect2 bridge and town links in Ottery and development of the cycle network through the Byes and towards the Bowd in Sidmouth. The Sustrans route feasibility work concluded that the trail can only be realised over time and tackling sections as stand-alone projects. Further progress will require external funding and we were disappointed not to secure funding for the section through Harpford Woods between Tipton St John and the Bowd following an unsuccessful Rural Development Programme for England bid in 2019.

Pressures on the capital programme has meant that the County Council has needed to prioritise its limited local funding on completing the missing gaps in its cycling and multi-use trail network. This approach has seen successful completion of the Wray Valley Trail between Bovey Tracey and Moretonhampstead and during 2023/24 we expect to complete the gap in the Stop Line Way between Seaton and Colyford. The priority in the next few years is to complete the remaining sections in the Tarka Trail between Ilfracombe and Hatherleigh and continuing progress with the Teign Estuary Trail between Dawlish and Newton Abbot.

Alongside our continued capital investment, the County Council is developing a Countywide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) to refresh and prioritise its long-distance multi-use trails in line with the Government's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy expectations. I would encourage community groups such as Ottery to engage with this process and make representations in support of schemes like the Sidmouth to Feniton cycle route and giving it the best chance of securing future funding.