

QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

<p>1. COUNCILLOR IAN SNOWDON</p> <p>Given that only two bids were received for this £155m liability infrastructure contract with one ruled out as non-compliant can the Cabinet Member explain how residents can have confidence that this award represents genuine value for money, especially when the project carries a £16m risk allowance, and must meet Homes England's hard March 2028 funding deadline, and has already faced delays and escalating inflationary pressures? Furthermore, what safeguards are in place to prevent the Council being forced into further cost exposure if the preferred bidder, selected through such limited competition, encounters unforeseen challenges during construction of the bridge over the very busy railway line?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>Although only two bids were received, both were submitted by contractors who are fully qualified to execute the works, and who have already been through a competitive tender process to be on the Pagabo Framework that was used. As part of the tender process, contractors provided their experience and demonstrated their approach to completing the bridge works. The Preferred Bidder presented comprehensive details of their construction methodology and put forward a team with substantial rail expertise.</p> <p>The Preferred Bidder's submission was compliant with the tender documentation and satisfied all evaluation criteria. In support of the value offered, the Preferred Bidder's pricing submission demonstrates market alignment through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmarking within the tender process. • Reference to the existing cost plan and budget estimate. • Assessment of the overall tender price in relation to the total budget estimate, which has also been reviewed by third party cost consultants. <p>The overall contingency allowance for the scheme is approximately 18% of the construction cost. This is considered suitable for this stage of the project.</p> <p>The £155 million Network Rail Liability will be addressed through an Owner Controlled Insurance Policy incorporating contractual financial loss coverage. The contractor will be added to this policy, thereby reducing risk to the council. Additionally, the contractor will enter third party collateral warranties where developers are adjacent to the works.</p>
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	<p>Council officers are confident that the competence of the Preferred Bidder to successfully deliver these works was demonstrated through the tender process.</p>
<p>2. COUNCILLOR IAN SNOWDON</p> <p>As Cabinet Member, with only one compliant bid submitted, what reassurance can you provide to communities in Didcot, and the surrounding villages that the contractor chosen will minimise disruption, manage construction responsibly, and keep the project on programme so residents aren't left living with prolonged noise, traffic delays and uncertainty?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>Although the DSB scheme is complex, much of the work can be completed offline, which will minimise the impact on existing roads. Traffic management will be necessary but kept to a minimum and agreed and co-ordinated through the council's Network Management team.</p> <p>As with all construction contracts, the contractor must follow the requirements set out in the planning permission regarding noise, working hours and other construction management matters. The programme will be closely managed by the Council's client team, together with a dedicated contract management and supervision team, to minimise delays and ensure compliance.</p>