

QUESTION BY MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC

Please return your completed question form to Democratic Support, Plymouth City Council, Ballard House, West Hoe Road, Plymouth, PL1 3BJ or email:

democraticsupport@plymouth.gov.uk

Question to be submitted no later than 5 clear working days before the meeting.

Question submitted by: Mark Thomas
To the Cabinet Member or Chair for: Tudor Evans, Leader of the Council
To be asked at the next (Council, Cabinet or Planning Committee) Meeting: Cabinet
Date: 07 July 2025
Question (to be no longer than 50 words): Please explain in detail, why so many improvement projects (Central Park, Royal Parade, Armada Way) are still unfinished and over budget under your leadership?
Will you be attending the meeting in person to ask your question? Yes
Response: (for completion by City Council officers and Cabinet Members / Chairs) Under my leadership Plymouth City Council has always had an ambitious programme investing in jobs, housing, and the infrastructure that the city needs to grow so local people and in particular future generations of young people can thrive. As Leader, my role is to oversee the whole capital programme with individual Cabinet Members and Service Directors responsible for the delivery of specific projects. Our capital programme currently contains 316 projects and has a total value of just over £351 million. The overall programme is shifting constantly as new funding streams are secured from successful bids we have made, thereby reducing the costs of projects to council tax payers. Inevitably in a highly complex, multi-layered, set of sub-programmes involving many projects of varying sizes, the scope and therefore project programmes of individual schemes may change in response to delivery challenges on the ground. It must also be remembered that the context within which all of our projects are being delivered by dedicated city council staff is unprecedented. We continue to see the effects of COVID, BREXIT, the

Ukrainian war, and global instability disrupting supply chains for materials and severely impacting on the availability of contractors and labour. This has led to contract price inflation as contractors factor in these risks to their tender prices. Those are the realities of what we have to grapple with every day. Of course we can learn lessons from how projects are delivered and we do. The Chief Executive chairs a Capital Programme Officer Group which considers all the businesses cases for individual capital projects reviewing project benefits, risks, planned spend and project timescales amongst other factors.

Turning to the three project referred to: in relation to Royal Parade, I am very happy to announce that early this morning the works started on site. It's taken longer than we anticipated to get contractors appointed to carry out these works for a variety of reasons. We also decided to schedule construction after two key city centre events had taken place to minimise the impact on people enjoying them – an example of flexible management of the programme to achieve wider regeneration benefits. Whilst the costs for Royal Parade are higher than the original estimate, largely due to a longer working programme, this was offset through securing extra funding from a government Bus Grant which means there is no additional funding required from the City Council. The scheme is expected to be completed in early April 2026.

In relation to Central Park, which of course started under a previous Administration, a conflicting interpretation of the contract between the City Council and the contractor led to them leaving the site until the matter was resolved. In the meantime, we have procured an alternative contractor who had previously worked on the site and so were familiar with the park enabling them to mobilise quickly to deliver the remaining works at pace. We anticipate the project being completed in Autumn 2025 and have been providing regular updates to stakeholders and on our web site in relation to the progress so far.

In relation to Armada Way, as Councillor Lowry said as part of his update to the Cabinet meeting held on 09 June 2025, the project is currently being delivered at pace, on time and to budget. He also reported that 10 additional trees would be planted as part of the first phase of works. Again, there have been regular web site updates, numerous social media posts, and a regular newsletter on progress with city centre projects sent to all councillors, alongside regular updates to the City Centre Company. The Armada Way Independent Learning Review identified the full financial implications of the events and circumstances arising from the original Armada Way decision by a previous Administration, highlighting additional costs to the project due to the interruption to the project totalling £3,323,251.