

Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 18th December, 2017.

Present:- Councillors Swindlehurst (Chair), Hussain (Vice-Chair), Anderson, Carter, Mann, Nazir, Pantelic and Sadiq

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Smith and Strutton

Apologies for Absence:- None.

PART 1

66. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

67. Minutes of the Meeting held on 20th November 2017

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 20th November 2017 be approved as a correct record.

68. Revised Cabinet Portfolios and Responsibilities 2017-18

The Cabinet formally noted the portfolios and responsible Lead Members appointed by the Leader of the Council, as detailed in Appendix A to the report. A minor change was reported in that the title of the 'Digital Transformation & Performance' portfolio had been amended to 'Transformation & Performance'.

It was also noted that the Leader had appointed Councillor Sabia Hussain as Deputy Leader of the Council in accordance with Part 2 Article 7 (10) of the Constitution.

Resolved –

(a) That the Cabinet portfolios and responsible Lead Members as appointed by the Leader of the Council be noted, subject to an amendment to the 'Digital Transformation & Performance' title to 'Transformation & Performance'.

(b) That the appointment of Councillor Sabia Hussain as Deputy Leader of the Council be noted.

69. Council Taxbases for 2018/19

The Service Lead, Finance introduced a report setting out the Council taxbase for 2018-19 which the Council was required to set by 31st January. The taxbase had increased by 1.3% from 2017-18 with a net increase of 548.7 properties, and the Cabinet noted the taxbase calculations for the parishes and non-parish areas as set out in the report.

Cabinet - 18.12.17

The Council was currently forecasting a breakeven position on the Collection Fund, which would be finalised for the budget setting period. In relation to Business Rates, the Council was yet to receive the NNDR1 form from the Department for Communities and Local Government and it was therefore proposed and agreed that the Section 151 Officer be given delegated authority to complete and return this form, following consultation with the relevant Lead Member. Similar delegations were also approved to adjust the taxbase, if required, to take account of any new Government guidance or property information that was received. The Cabinet also considered and agreed that the level of Council Tax discount for second homes and long-term empty properties remained at 0%.

A Council Tax collection rate of 98.4% had been set for the next year and the Cabinet discussed the option of increasing the target. It was agreed that maintaining a realistic target was appropriate but that the Council should continue to work with Arvato to maximise Council Tax collection, including by encouraging greater use of payments by direct debit.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Cabinet agreed the recommendations as proposed, subject to delegated decisions (e) and (f) being made following consultation with the Lead Member for Corporate Finance & Housing.

Resolved –

- (a) That the level of council tax discount in respect of second homes remain at 0%.
- (b) That the level of discount in respect of long-term empty properties remains at 0%. With the charge of a 50% Empty Home Premium for on properties that have been empty longer than 2 years.
- (c) That the collection rate for the council tax for 2018/19 be set at 98.4%. This was the same rate as for 2017/18.
- (d) In accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 2012 and the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012 the amount calculated by Slough Borough Council as its council taxbase for 2018/19 shall be:

i)	Parish of Britwell	849.3
ii)	Parish of Colnbrook with Poyle	1,885.9
iii)	Parish of Wexham	1,310.2
iv)	Slough Town	37,687.0
v)	All areas	41,723.4
- (e) That the S151 officer, following consultation with the Cabinet Member responsible, be delegated with responsibility to adjust the taxbase following Cabinet due to any changes in Government guidance around this subject and the Collection Fund figures for distribution.

- (f) That the S151 officer, following consultation with the Cabinet Member responsible, be delegated with responsibility to adjust the taxbase following Cabinet should any new property information become available and the Collection Fund figures for distribution require amendment.
- (g) That the S151 officer be delegated with responsibility to set the Business Rates baseline following consultation with the Cabinet Member responsible.

70. 2018/19 Medium Term Financial Strategy - Tranche 1 Savings Proposals

The Service Lead Finance introduced a report that set out the latest position on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and sought approval for savings for inclusion in the 2018/19 revenue budget.

The Council's revenue budget for 2018/19 was £99.54m and there would be a continued reduction in government funding for future years as well as increased demand for services. The Appendix to the report set out £5.27m worth of savings to include in the budget to be considered by the Council for approval in February 2018. The MTFS provided for £1.39m of growth items in the next year and this would be allocated at a later stage. Any growth above this level would most likely require further savings to be identified. Lead Members reviewed the proposed savings outlined in the report and sought clarification on potential impacts of savings including the management review of regulatory services and in legal services.

The Council Tax precept of 3% to support adult social care services had been introduced in the current year and Members asked for more detail on how this funding had been used. The financial pressures on social care were highlighted and the precept had covered the increased costs of demographic growth, inflationary costs to contracts and the new responsibilities under the Care Act.

A number of other issues were discussed including the management actions being taken to reduce the in year overspend in the current year and the capital investment in key leisure schemes including the ice arena, Langley Leisure Centre and Salt Hill Park activity centre all of which were on track to reopen in the first half of 2018. The Cabinet also welcomed the approach being taken to ensure that the MTFS and the Five Year Plan refresh were aligned so there was clarity about how the budget would support the delivery of priority outcomes.

Significant concerns were raised about the impact of reductions to First bus services and Members asked what resources the Council could use to work with other operators to retain as many services as possible. It was confirmed that appropriate support up to £165k for some bus services affected by the First Bus route changes could be made under delegated authority, using

Cabinet - 18.12.17

earmarked reserves. The relevant Cabinet Members would be involved in discussions to provide replacement services were appropriate.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Cabinet noted the current position on the MTFFS model and approved the savings proposals for inclusion in the revenue budget to be recommended to full Council on 22nd February 2018.

Resolved –

- (a) The Medium Term Financial Strategy contained within the report be noted.
- (b) The savings listed in Appendix A to the report be approved.
- (c) The alignment between the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Five Year Plan at section 6 and the draft outline framework for the refresh of the Five Year Plan for 2018/19 – 2022/23 at Appendix B to the report be noted.

71. Council Tax Support Scheme 2018-19

The Director of Finance & Resources introduced a report which sought approval of the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2018-19.

There had been a major review of the scheme for the 2016-17 financial year and it was proposed that this scheme be continued for the next year, with the annual uprating of relevant premiums, applicable amounts, non-dependent deductions and appropriate welfare benefit changes. In view of the roll out of Universal Credit in Slough, Members highlighted the possible increased need for support and agreed that the relevant schemes and support should be monitored and adjusted if required. The Cabinet agreed the scheme as set out in Appendix A to the report.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Council Tax Support Scheme adopted by Slough Borough Council be continued for the 2017-18 financial year and uprate the relevant premiums, applicable amounts, non dependant deductions and to reflect the changes in the housing benefits regulations as defined in the scheme in line with the statement from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).
- (b) That the Council Tax Support scheme as detailed in appendix A to the report be approved.

72. Approval of Funding to James Elliman Homes for Acquisition of 15 New Build Flats

(The Interim Director of Place & Development was a Council appointed director of James Elliman Homes and he left the room for the duration of this item)

The Service Lead Strategic Housing introduced a report that sought approval to provide £2m funding in 2019/20 through a loan facility to James Elliman Homes to acquire 15 newly built affordable flats on a development in the town centre.

An opportunity had arisen to acquire the flats below market value as under planning obligations they were the “affordable” element of the scheme. The acquisition would help the Council deliver priorities in the Housing Strategy to provide more quality affordable homes in Slough. The purchase would include a mixture of 1 and 2 bed properties and eligible groups for the new homes would include key workers, care leavers and homeless families.

The Cabinet welcomed the contribution that the acquisition of the flats could make to the Housing Strategy, particularly by making the homes available to key workers such as teachers and social workers. It was also recognised to be a good opportunity to purchase the flats at a price below market value and Lead Members approved the recommendations.

Resolved –

- (a) That funding of £2m be approved to acquire 15 new build flats by James Elliman Homes through a new loan facility arrangement with James Elliman Homes to the value of £2 Million in 2019/20.
- (b) That the £2m for affordable homes (James Elliman Homes) be included in the General Fund Capital Programme for 2019/20 to be approved by Council on 22nd February 2018.

73. Slough Half Marathon

The Lead Member for Environment & Leisure introduced a report that sought agreement for officers to progress with the work to deliver a half marathon in Slough in October 2018.

Slough had not hosted such an event since 2001 and a new half marathon could deliver a wide range of benefits in support of the leisure strategy aims to get “more people, more active, more often”. In addition to the 13.1 mile half marathon, there would a 5km fun run and a wide range of other activities to seek to engage local people in what would be a major community event. Members welcomed the proposal and emphasised the importance of maximising the opportunities to engage as many people as possible, either as participants, volunteers or visitors to the range of activities on the day.

Cabinet - 18.12.17

The Cabinet discussed the proposed route, traffic management, event plan, volunteering, communications and finances. It was anticipated that the event would be self-financing through sponsorship and entry fees, however, the Cabinet agreed that a firm commitment should be made to support the event for a minimum of three years.

The route and traffic management issues were discussed and it was noted that up to 190 roads would be effected with partial closures during the morning of the event which would be held on a Sunday morning. Detailed planning had already started on the traffic management arrangements and the Cabinet discussed the idea of promoting it as "car free day" which would be used to encourage walking, cycling and public transport. Information and communication with residents was also recognised to be important and it was noted that this would begin from the launch of the event on 26th January 2018.

The Cabinet welcomed the proposal which it was felt could deliver major opportunities for the town and it was agreed that officers would work with the Lead Members for Environment & Leisure, Planning & Transport and Health & Social Care to maximise the event.

Resolved – That agreement is given to officers to progress the work to deliver a half marathon in October 2018, following consultation with the relevant Cabinet Members.

74. References from Overview & Scrutiny

There were no references from Overview & Scrutiny.

75. Notification of Forthcoming Decisions

The Cabinet considered and endorsed the Notification of Key Decisions published on 18th November 2017 which set out the decisions expected to be taken by the Cabinet over the next three months.

Resolved – That the published Notification of Decisions be endorsed.

76. Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the items in Part 2 of the Agenda, as they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding the information) as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (amended).

The following is a summary of the matters considered during Part II of the agenda.

Cabinet - 18.12.17

77. Part II Minutes - 20th November 2017

Resolved – That the Part II minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 20th November 2017 be approved as a correct record.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.33 pm and closed at 7.45 pm)