

MINUTES OF COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

At an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council of the Borough of Slough held at the Town Hall, Slough on Thursday, 24th February, 2005.

Present:- Councillors Long (in the Chair), Anderson, Arnold, Aziz, Bal, Buchanan, Butt, Chohan, Choudhry, Cryer, Dhaliwal, Dhillon, Dodds, Edwards, Haines, Hayat, Hewitt, Holledge, Howard, Janik, L Khan, S Khan, Maclsaac, Mann, Parmar, Plimmer, Pond, Shine, Small, Smith, Stokes, Swindlehurst, Wright, Zarait and Zeib.

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Burkmar, Grewal, Jenkins, Key, Munkley and Simmons.

PART I

81. Mayor's Announcement – Charity and Public Service Publishing Awards

The Mayor announced that the Borough Council's Communications Team had won the 2004 Charity and Public Service Publishing Awards for the Slough Citizen and that a copy of the Award Certificate was on display in the Council Chamber. She asked the Council to join her in congratulating staff on this achievement.

82. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Bal declared a personal interest in all of the agenda items as two members of his family worked for the Authority. He would however remain in the meeting and vote. Councillor Holledge similarly declared a personal interest as a member of his family worked for the Authority and he would also remain in the meeting and vote.

83. Capital Estimates 2005/06 to 2009/10 and Prudential Indicators

It was moved by Councillor Stokes,
Seconded by Councillor Howard,

“That the recommendation as set out in the report be approved and adopted.”

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor Dodds,
Seconded by Councillor Swindlehurst,

“That the Haymill Centre be reinstated to the capital budget.”

The amendment was put and lost by 12 votes to 17 votes with 1 abstention.

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor Anderson,
Seconded by Councillor Swindlehurst,

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“That the Montem Leisure Centre and Ice Arena be reinstated to the capital budget.”

The amendment was put and lost by 12 votes to 17 votes with 1 abstention.

The substantive motion was then put and carried by 17 votes to 11 votes with 1 abstention.

Resolved -

- (a) That the new capital bids attached as Appendix A and the capital estimates for the financial years 2004/05 to 2009/10 as set out in Appendices B and C to the report to Council be approved.
- (b) That the authorised limit for external debt and the operational boundary for external debt as set out in paragraph 5.20 of the report to Council be approved.
- (c) That the Prudential Indicators as set out in Appendix D to the report to Council be approved.
- (d) That the proposed spend as set out in paragraph 5.12 of the report to Council be determined as the Capital Allowance.

84. Treasury Management Function 2005/06

It was moved by Councillor Stokes,
Seconded by Councillor Howard,

“That the recommendations as set out in the report be approved and adopted.”

The recommendations were put and carried by 17 votes to 2 votes with 10 abstentions.

Resolved -

- (a) That the maturity structure of fixed rate borrowings as set out in paragraph 5.4 of the report to Council be approved.
- (b) That an upper limit of 100% for fixed interest rate and 25% for variable interest rate exposures of the net outstanding principal sums for 2005/06 to 2007/08 be approved.
- (c) That the long term investment restrictions as set out in paragraph 5.10 of the report to Council be approved.
- (d) That the Treasury Management Policy Statement for 2005/06 be approved as set out in Appendix A to the report to Council.

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85. Procedure at Meeting

A suggested procedure for debating the item on the Revenue Budgets and Council Tax had been circulated to all Members of the Council in advance of the meeting.

It was moved by Councillor Stokes,
Seconded by Councillor Smith,

“That in accordance with procedure rule 26.1, rule 15.5 on rules of debate be suspended insofar as is necessary to enable the procedure as circulated to be adopted and that the Council consent to:-

- The Leader of the Council and Commissioners speaking for up to one hour in total on the Revenue Budget proposals for 2005/06.
- Councillor Anderson and Members of the Labour Group speaking for up to one hour in total.
- All subsequent speeches in the debate be limited to three minutes, other than the winding up speech by the Leader of the Council which shall not exceed ten minutes.”

The motion was put and carried.

Resolved - That the proposed procedure for the debate on the Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2005/06 be approved and adopted.

86. Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2005/06

The Commissioner for Resources presented the Joint Administration’s proposals for the Revenue Budget and Council Tax for the 2005/06 financial year. On completion of his speech, the Commissioners for Social Services, Leisure, Cultural and Community Services, Young People’s Services and Community Safety, Housing, Public Protection and Planning, Transport and Legal and Democratic Services spoke on their particular portfolios. The Commission for Planning, Transportation and Legal and Democratic Services also spoke on the Education budget in the absence of the Commissioner.

On completion of the speeches it was moved by Councillor Stokes,
Seconded by Councillor Smith,

- “(a) That a budget requirement of £153,860,328 excluding Parishes be approved.
- (b) That a budget requirement including Parish precepts of £154,050,091 be approved.
- (c) That Band D Council Tax for 2005/06 of £929.33, an increase of 4.99% be approved.
- (d) That the implications of decisions in 2005/06 and the future developments on the medium-term financial position be noted.

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- (e) That the first call on any additional income received via either the Local Authority Business Growth Incentive or the Local Public Service Agreement received during 2005/06 be directed to restore balances.
- (f) That the Departmental savings and growth as set out in Appendix C to the report to Council be approved.
- (g) That the Departmental cash limits for 2005/06 and the two subsequent financial years as shown in Table 7 of the report to Council be approved.
- (h) That the contribution from revenue balances of £2,141,000 for 2005/06 be approved, the balances of £5,599,000 for the year ended 2005/06 be agreed and the projected balances position for the years 2006/07 and 2007/08 be noted.
- (i) That the Basic Amount of Council Tax for Slough including its Parishes for 2005/06 of £934.25 be approved.
- (j) That the Basic Amount of Council Tax for Slough excluding its Parishes for 2005/06 of £929.33 be approved.
- (k) That the Council Tax for the Parishes of Britwell, Colnbrook with Poyle and Wexham Court, excluding the Police and Fire Authority precepts, be approved as £969.00, £961.91 and £975.14 respectively.
- (l) That the Police and Fire Authority precepts for 2005/06 for Band D at £126.28 and £46.16 respectively be noted.
- (m) That the Council note –
 - (i) That 76.7% of Slough Borough Council's budget is funded from Central Government grants.
 - (ii) That the Council Tax, which provides the remainder of the Council's finance, is a regressive tax which has a disproportionate impact on the vulnerable and those with low incomes such as pensioners and single parent families.
 - (iii) That for the Local Government finance system to serve local democracy and local accountability, it is essential that Local Authorities are able to collect a greater proportion of their own income.
 - (iv) That under proposals outlined in the Local Government Association report "Implementing the Combination Option", Local Authorities would be able to raise approximately 75% of the income required to provide local services themselves, reversing the balance between central and local funding.
 - (v) That the "Combination Option" is based mainly around a reformed and more equitable property tax; re localisation of business rates; and the transfer of a proportion of national income tax to fund local

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government directly, with a subsequent reduction in grant to Local Authorities.

- (vi) That the “Combination Option” would allow the tax burden to be spread more evenly across income streams, rather than requiring Council Tax payers to face large and disproportionate increases for additional local spending, and would protect low income earners.

- (n) That the Local Government Association’s proposals for the reform of local government finance through the “Combination Option” be welcomed, that these proposals be supported and that local Members of Parliament be urged to also support reform along these lines.”

The Leader of the Opposition then made a presentation to the Council setting out alternative budget proposals and answered Members’ questions thereon.

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor Chohan,
Seconded by Councillor Swindlehurst,

“That additional street crime wardens be employed to assist the Police and provide a high visibility deterrent.”

The amendment was put and lost by 13 votes to 19 votes with 2 abstentions.

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor Holledge,
Seconded by Councillor Swindlehurst,

“That a new community safety lighting fund be established based not on the needs of cars but on the needs of residents.”

The amendment was put and lost by 13 votes to 20 votes with 2 abstentions.

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor Zeib,
Seconded by Councillor Dodds,

“That a pest control fund be provided to combat the growing menace from rats and other vermin which blight areas of the town.”

The amendment was put and lost by 14 votes to 20 votes with 1 abstention.

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor Small,
Seconded by Councillor Swindlehurst,

“That an Anti-Social Behaviour Order enforcement fund be created to give Officers the resources to pursue and root out anti-social behaviour.”

The amendment was put and lost by 14 votes to 19 votes with 1 abstention.

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor Bal,
Seconded by Councillor Swindlehurst,

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“That the “New Leaf” scheme be introduced to plant trees in every Ward on a rolling basis in consultation with residents.”

The amendment was put and lost by 14 votes to 19 votes with 1 abstention.

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor Dhaliwal,
Seconded by Councillor Choudhry,

“That the plans to charge for adult learning and learning support be scrapped and that proposals be brought forward for additional opening hours for libraries to build on the success of the previous expansion and that the proposals for a dual use library in Chalvey are not cut.”

The amendment was put and lost by 14 votes to 19 votes with 1 abstention.

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor Parmar,
Seconded by Councillor Swindlehurst,

- “(a) That a new zero tolerance cleaning team be created to target fly tipping on ANY Council land and give people a service, not an excuse, that ‘there is no money left’.
- “(b) That the cross party reported byelaws introduced last year so that people can get a response when they report infringements be enforced.”

The amendment was put and lost by 11 votes to 18 votes with 1 abstention.

87. Continuation of Meeting

At 10.45 p.m., during the debate on the Revenue Budget, the Mayor proposed in accordance with procedure rule 8.1 that, in accordance with procedure rule 8.2, the Council resolve to continue past 10.30 p.m. to complete all of its business. The Mayor’s proposal was agreed without a formal vote.

88. Adjournment

At 10.45 p.m., the Mayor proposed and it was agreed that the Council adjourn. The meeting reconvened at 11.00 p.m.

89. Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2005/06 (Continued)

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor Mann,
Seconded by Councillor Swindlehurst,

“That £32,000 of the cuts made to highway maintenance be restored to fund extra reactive repairs so people can see Council action which they report a pothole.”

The amendment was put and lost by 12 votes to 19 votes with 1 abstention, and, on a show of hands, a prior request having been made for a record of the voting,

There voted for the amendment:-

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Councillors Anderson, Bal, Chohan, Choudhry, Dhaliwal, Holledge, Janik, Mann, Parmar, Small, Swindlehurst and Zarait 12

There voted against the amendment:-

Councillors Arnold, Aziz, Buchanan, Butt, Cryer, Dhillon, Edwards, Haines, Hewitt, Howard, L Khan, S Khan, Maclsaac, Plimmer, Pond, Shine, Smith, Stokes and Wright 19

There abstained from voting:-

The Worshipful the Mayor 1

Not present during voting:-

Councillors Dodds, Hayat and Zeib 3

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor Choudhry,
Seconded by Councillor Swindlehurst,

“That the contingency to cover the new licensing laws be reinstated to ensure the Council can effectively administer the additional licensing functions when it takes control of this service.”

The amendment was put and lost by 12 votes to 19 votes with 1 abstention, and, on a show of hands, a prior request having been made for a record of the voting,

There voted for the amendment:-

Councillors Arnold, Aziz, Buchanan, Butt, Cryer, Dhillon, Edwards, Haines, Hewitt, Howard, L Khan, S Khan, Maclsaac, Plimmer, Pond, Shine, Smith, Stokes and Wright 19

There abstained from voting:-

The Worshipful the Mayor 1

Not present during voting:-

Councillors Dodds, Hayat and Zeib 3

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor Anderson,
Seconded by Councillor Swindlehurst,

“That the consultancy budget be reduced and the money redirected into front line services.”

The amendment was put and lost by 12 votes to 19 votes with 1 abstention and, on a show of hands, a prior request having been made for a record of the voting,

There voted for the amendment:-

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Councillors Arnold, Aziz, Buchanan, Butt, Cryer, Dhillon, Edwards, Haines, Hewitt, Howard, L Khan, S Khan, Maclsaac, Plimmer, Pond, Shine, Smith, Stokes and Wright 19

There abstained from voting:-

The Worshipful the Mayor 1

Not present during voting:-

Councillors Dodds, Hayat and Zeib 3

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor Anderson,
Seconded by Councillor Swindlehurst,

“That the Council stop using Government grants to cover up budget failures and remove the ‘red herring’ asylum seeker contingency which has not been used in the last three years.”

The amendment was put and lost by 11 votes to 19 votes with 2 abstentions.

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor Janik,
Seconded by Councillor Small,

“That this Council resolves to expand the services available to the residents of Slough at the Haymill Centre, Burnham Lane in the Ward of the Leader and Deputy Leader of Slough particularly for elderly residents and to rename an existing facility within the site as the Stoke Centre for Community Enhancement and Fulfilment, and to continually and properly fund the existing services for the youth and young people of our Borough already carried out at this community location by extremely dedicated and very hard working staff for which we thank most sincerely. The cost of this proposal is £100,000 and is to be funded by the savings listed on page 4 of Labour’s Alternative Budget.”

The amendment was put and lost by 12 votes to 17 votes with 3 abstentions and, on a show of hands, a prior request having been made for a record of the voting,

There voted for the amendment:-

Councillors Anderson, Bal, Chohan, Choudhry, Dhaliwal, Hollege, Janik, Mann, Parmer, Small, Swindlehurst and Zarait 12

There voted against the amendment:-

Councillors Arnold, Aziz, Buchanan, Butt, Cryer, Edwards, Haines, Hewitt, Howard, L Khan, S Khan, Maclsaac, Plimmer, Pond, Shine, Smith and Stokes 17

There abstained from voting:-

The Worshipful the Mayor and Councillors Dhillon and Wright 3

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Not present during voting:-

Councillors Dodds, Grewal and Zeib 3

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor Janik,
Seconded by Councillor Mann,

“That this Council resolves to fund additional services amounting to £100,000 annually at the Montem Sports Centre site to encourage and promote the well being of local residents and in particular the over 60’s for whom regular exercise is so important. This proposal is to be funded from efficiency savings within the non-salary part of the Council’s essential services.”

The amendment was put and lost by 3 votes to 17 votes with 2 abstentions and, on a show of hands, a prior request having been made for a record of the voting,

There voted for the amendment:-

Councillors Janik, Mann and Parmar 3

There voted against the amendment:-

Councillors Arnold, Aziz, Buchanan, Butt, Cryer, Edwards, Haines, Hewitt, Howard, L Khan, S Khan, Maclsaac, Plimmer, Pond, Shine, Smith and Stokes
..... 17

There abstained from voting:-

The Worshipful the Mayor and Councillor Wright 2
Not present during voting:-

Councillors Anderson, Bal, Chohan, Choudhry, Dhaliwal, Dhillon, Dodds, Hayat, Holledge, Small, Swindlehurst, Zarait and Zeib 13

The substantive motion was then put and carried by 21 votes to 0 votes with 2 abstentions.

Resolved –

- “(a) That a budget requirement of £153,860,328 excluding Parishes be approved.
- (b) That a budget requirement including Parish precepts of £154,050,091 be approved.
- (c) That Band D Council Tax for 2005/06 of £929.33, an increase of 4.99% be approved.
- (d) That the implications of decisions in 2005/06 and the future developments on the medium-term financial position be noted.

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- (e) That the first call on any additional income received via either the Local Authority Business Growth Incentive or the Local Public Service Agreement received during 2005/06 be directed to restore balances.
- (f) That the Departmental savings and growth as set out in Appendix C to the report to Council be approved.
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 - (iii) That for the Local Government finance system to serve local democracy and local accountability, it is essential that Local Authorities are able to collect a greater proportion of their own income.
 - (iv) That under proposals outlined in the Local Government Association report "Implementing the Combination Option", Local Authorities would be able to raise approximately 75% of the income required to provide local services themselves, reversing the balance between central and local funding.
 - (v) That the "Combination Option" is based mainly around a reformed and more equitable property tax; re localisation of business rates; and the transfer of a proportion of national income tax to fund local

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government directly, with a subsequent reduction in grant to Local Authorities.

- (vi) That the “Combination Option” would allow the tax burden to be spread more evenly across income streams, rather than requiring Council Tax payers to face large and disproportionate increases for additional local spending, and would protect low income earners.
- (n) That the Local Government Association’s proposals for the reform of local government finance through the “Combination Option” be welcomed, that these proposals be supported and that local Members of Parliament be urged to also support reform along these lines.”

Chair

(Note: The meeting opened at 7.00 p.m. and closed at 12.17 a.m.)