

CABINET – Meeting held on Monday, 11th April, 2005.

Present: Councillors Stokes (Chair), Cryer, Haines, Howard, Latif Khan, Munkley, Smith and Wright.

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Edwards

Also Present under Rule 29:

Councillors Anderson, Aziz, Arnold, Buchanan, Butt, Choudhry (for part of meeting), Grewal, Hayat, Janik (from minute 215 onwards), Key, Long, Maclsaac, Shine (from minute 204 onwards), Simmons, Sumander Khan and Swindlehurst.

PART I

198. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Latif Khan declared a personal prejudicial interest in agenda item 7 – Future of the Lea School Campus – Consideration of Muslim Faith School Options as he had been a promoter of a Muslim Faith Bid in 2003 and was a founder Trustee of the Stoke Poges Lane Mosque whose Trustee's were promoters (joint) of one of the bids and he also knew many of the people bidding under the two options. He indicated that he would not take part in the debate and would withdraw from the meeting.

Councillor Smith declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 - Future of the Lea School Campus – Consideration of Muslim Faith School Options as he knew some of the individuals involved. However he indicated that he had no preconceived ideas and would approach the item with an open mind.

Councillor Howard declared a personal interest in agenda item 14 – Grants to Voluntary Bodies in 2005/06 as he was Chair of the management committee of the Cippenham Youth Club and agenda item 17 – Indemnification of Acting Returning Officer, Parliamentary By Election as he was an agent and candidate in the forthcoming general election.

Councillor Cryer declared a personal interest in agenda item 14 – Grants to Voluntary Bodies in 2005/06 as his wife was Chair of SCVS.

Councillor Stokes declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 - Future of the Lea School Campus – Consideration of Muslim Faith School Options as he had met some of the individuals associated with both bids. His views and voting decision would be determined on an assessment of the relative quality of each bid.

Councillor Munkley declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 - Future of the Lea School Campus – Consideration of Muslim Faith School Options as both parties had approached him prior to the meeting. He however approached the matter with an open mind.

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Councillor Wright declared a personal interest in agenda item 14 – Grants to Voluntary Bodies in 2005/06 as he was a member of staff and sat on the management committee of the Britwell Youth and Community Project.

A number of Members present under Rule 29 also declared interests as follows:

Councillor Simmons declared a personal interest in agenda item 14 – Grants to Voluntary Bodies in 2005/06 as she was an executive member of the Survival Education Committee.

Councillor Maclsaac declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 - Future of the Lea School Campus – Consideration of Muslim Faith School Options as he knew two of the people involved in the bid.

Councillor Swindlehurst declared a personal interest in agenda item 17 – Indemnification of Acting Returning Officer, Parliamentary Elections/By Elections as he was an agent in the forthcoming elections.

Councillor Buchanan declared a personal interest in agenda item 17 - Indemnification of Acting Returning Officer, Parliamentary Elections/By Elections as he was an election agent in the forthcoming elections.

Councillor Butt declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 – Future of the Lea School Campus – Consideration of Muslim Faith School Options as he was the Finance Secretary of the PWA and concerned parties had contacted him with regard to the bids.

Councillor Sumander Khan declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 - Future of the Lea School Campus – Consideration of Muslim Faith School Options as he had been approached by both bidders.

Councillor Hyatt declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 - Future of the Lea School Campus – Consideration of Muslim Faith School Options as he had been approached by both bidders.

Steven Quayle, Strategic Director of Law and Corporate Governance declared an interest in agenda item 17 - Indemnification of Acting Returning Officer, Parliamentary Elections/By Elections as he was the Acting Returning Officer.

199. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 14th March, 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

200. Heart of Slough Initiative

The Cabinet considered a report on the current status of the Heart of Slough initiative and seeking approval to proceed with the library in the Central Hub. Members were advised that the Master Plan adopted for the Heart of Slough regeneration included art performance space as its focus in the central building and the existing library was to be refurbished. The Council had put in a bid to the Arts Council for a £3m grant. The Arts Council had sought further information on the

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project and their assessor had reported back against Arts Council criteria. A number of issues had been raised by the assessor and these were summarised in the appendix to the report. Three of the issues would have a significant impact on budgets and deliverability.

- Proximity to residential development.
- Commitment to long term revenue funding to support the facility.
- A reduction in the range of facilities included in the Hub leading to a reduction in the synergies and public benefit which would have an impact on the “footfall”.

Further consultation had been held with the public to establish whether the Council should pursue performance space or library options for the Hub. The majority of those consulted favoured the provision of a new library. Further work on the Master Plan was being lead by English Partnerships consultants and discussions were progressing with Thames Valley University who were now making progress on establishing their operational needs for the site.

Members present under Rule 29 asked for further information with regard to the “noise and congestion” that the assessor felt might be present in the area until three or four in the morning. The Chief Executive advised that there would not be any activity in the performance hub at three and four o’clock in the morning and that the assessor had been advised of this. A view was expressed that the consultation that had been undertaken reversed the previous consultations the Council had undertaken and the methodology and nature of the figures along with revenue implications of the running the facility were questioned.

The Commissioner for Resources questioned the financial viability of the Council proceeding with the arts performance space and reminded Members of the Fulcrum project. Members noted that the West Wing was now available as performance space and Members were concerned that a second performance space would be created which would undermine what Thames Valley University was doing with regard to the enterprise hub and the creation of small businesses.

It was moved, seconded and agreed that Officers should proceed with a new library in the Central Hub building and that plans for the arts performance space should be dropped.

Resolved –

- (a) That following the Arts Council assessment of the performance space proposal and consultation with the public, Officers proceed with a new library in the central hub building and that plans for the arts performance space be dropped.
- (b) The Director of Finance and Property look at future options for the existing library building

201. Local Public Service Agreement

The Cabinet considered a report updating on the targets to be negotiated with the ODPM for a second generation local public service agreement (LPSA2G).

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Resolved –

- (a) That the targets agreed by the ODPM for LPSA2G be noted.
- (b) That Officers be authorised to negotiate and agree Slough's LPSA2G and present the signed agreement to Cabinet in due course.

202. Corporate Plan

The Cabinet considered a draft of the Council's new Corporate Plan which set out the agreed vision, priorities and aims to be delivered over the next three years. Due to the end of year cycle the report had not gone to Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Because of the timescales involved the report was being submitted to the Cabinet for comment and at the same time a copy was being distributed to all Members for their comments. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny indicated that the Committee had been very disappointed not to have been able to consider the draft Corporate Plan. The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) indicated that the deadline for Scrutiny had not been able to be met due to staffing pressures.

Recommended - That the Corporate Plan be approved as a draft for comment by other Members and Officers and that the Assistant Chief Executive be authorised to complete the final Corporate Plan following consultation.

203. Reference from Young People and Community Scrutiny Sub-Committee – Public Internet Access in Slough's Libraries

The Cabinet considered a recommendation from the Young People and Community Scrutiny Sub-Committee with regard to public internet access in Slough's libraries. Councillor Key advised that the Young People and Community Scrutiny Sub-Committee had considered a Member call-in from Councillor Small expressing concern that children were using the public access to computers in Slough's libraries to access chat rooms. The Sub-Committee had given detailed consideration to the issue and expressed its serious concerns that, notwithstanding security measures put in place as prescribed in the report, there was still a danger of children accessing chat rooms which could put them in a situation of potential danger. The Sub-Committee had requested that the Library Internet Security and Access Group, established to review policies discuss issues and recommend appropriate action, should look into a number of issues including:-

- Additional signage that use of chat rooms is not acceptable.
- Introduction of two levels of access – open and limited.
- Monitoring of children's access logs.
- Limiting port access.
- Any software development to enable a complete block of chat rooms.

The Assistant Director (Cultural Services) made a presentation to the meeting with regard to the use of the internet and indicated that whilst there was no room for complacency the risk of misuse of the internet was real but small. The Council

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needed to put robust procedures in place but that there was limited research into this.

Access to the internet was governed by the Council's current filter software Websense which was a market leader. Officers had explored a number of options since the Scrutiny Sub-Committee which included:-

- Remaining with the current position where all children under 18 years of age require written parental consent to access the internet in Slough libraries.
- Through the Council's current filter software Websense place a chat room block on all terminals in each library.
- As above only place the block on selected terminals so that some terminals will be designated all user whilst others would be booked out to adults only.
- Withdraw internet access for all library users under 16 years of age unless accompanied by a parent/guardian whilst using the service.

Members of the Cabinet thanked Councillor Small for raising the issue and indicated that they wanted to strike a balance between protection of children and access to the tools of life. Members of the Cabinet generally agreed that secondary school age children (11 years old) should be able to have use of the internet for their studies. It was therefore moved, seconded and agreed that internet access be withdrawn for all library users under 11 years of age unless accompanied by a parent/guardian whilst using the service.

Resolved –

- (a) That, until further notice, internet access be withdrawn for all library users under 11 years of age unless accompanied by a parent/guardian while using the service.
- (b) That the following issues raised by the Sub-Committee be considered by the Library Internet Security and Access Group.
 - Introduction of two levels of access, open and limited.
 - Monitoring of children's access logs.
 - Limiting port access.
 - Any software developments to enable a complete block of chat rooms.

(Councillors Key and Arnold left the meeting).

204. Slough Corporate Parenting Panel

The Council considered a report setting out proposals for the implementation of a Slough Corporate Parenting Panel. This would improve the services to Looked After Children and Young People and offer elected Members the opportunity to play an active role in the planning, monitoring and delivery of services to this vulnerable group.

Resolved –

- (a) That a Slough Corporate Parenting Panel be established.

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- (b) That the membership and terms of reference for the Panel be as set out in Appendix A to the report.
- (c) That two Members serving on the Young People and Community Scrutiny Sub-Committee and two other Members be nominated as Members of the Panel.

205. Voluntary Sector Grants Programme 2005/06

The Cabinet considered a report reviewing activities for 2004/05 and making recommendations for 2005/06 grant to core voluntary sector organisations with long term funding agreements and to determine applications for community grants. The report set out the detailed recommendations and monitoring for individual organisations. The Commissioner for Young People's Services and Community Safety spoke to the report and the recommendations. The Commissioner for Resources, indicated that as Chair of the Cippenham Youth Club Management Committee, the Youth Club had received the same grants for two years and that it was inadequate.

The Commissioner for Social Services indicated that he was generally happy with the recommendations but that he was concerned to ensure sufficient time and funding were devoted to the Change Up and Compact proposals.

Resolved –

- (a) That grant levels for 2005/06 for identified individual organisations with long term funding be agreed and in kind support be noted.
- (b) That specific action to monitor organisations be agreed.
- (c) That extensions to community grants for year 1 be agreed subject to monitoring as identified.
- (d) That the application for new community grant for SHOC, Aik Saath, and Interactive Enterprises/Slough Youth Festival be agreed for one year subject to monitoring.
- (e) That the additional funds available in the grants budget from 2005/06 be used to support infrastructure and capacity building in the voluntary community sector. Specifically the development of the Compact with the voluntary sector and to receive proposals related to Change Up and Capacity Building.
- (f) That responsibility for grant funding and monitoring for the Day Centre Older People's Service, Britwell and Cippenham Youth Centres be transferred to the appropriate Directorates during 2005 to take effect from April, 2006.

206. Best Value Review Integrated Transport and Highways

The Cabinet received a six months progress report on implementing the Best Value Review – Integrated Transport and Highways Improvement Plan.

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Resolved –

- (a) That progress on implementing the Action Plan be noted.
- (b) That further progress be monitored via the Green and Built Environment Directorate and Service Plans.

207. South East Plan – Draft for Public Consultation

The Cabinet received a progress report on the preparation of the South East Plan and seeking views on a suggested draft response. Members present under Rule 29 indicated that they felt the consultation was flawed as it focused on housing numbers only. The Chair of Planning Committee indicated that the Planning Committee had unanimously supported the proposed response. The Commissioner for Planning, Transport, Legal and Democratic Services indicated that as a principal Planning Authority Slough had roles both in contributing to the Plan as a whole and in preparing the sub-regional elements. The publication of the draft South East Plan gave the Council an opportunity to set out the key issues it wished to be taken on board at regional and sub-regional level. The emphasis in the Plan's vision was on creating a healthy region and was supported by the Council with the emphasis on sustainable development and prudent use of resources in the environment and steady sustainable economic growth.

Resolved –

- (a) That the suggested draft response be submitted to SEERA.
- (b) That a further report be submitted in due course on the proposed district housing allocations.

208. Indemnification of Acting Returning Officer – Parliamentary Elections/By Elections

The Cabinet considered a report seeking the appointment of Mr S M Quayle, Director of Law and Corporate Governance as the Acting Returning Officer for Parliamentary Elections/By Elections and to authorise the Council to indemnify the Acting Returning Officer where the Council's standard insurance policy did not cover the risk/problem that required indemnification.

Recommended –

- (a) That Mr S M Quayle, Director of Law and Corporate Governance, whose responsibilities include acting as the Council's Electoral Registration Officer be appointed Acting Returning Officer for all Parliamentary Elections/By Elections.
- (b) That the legal position and status of the Acting Returning Officer as it relates to the carrying out of his official duties in Parliamentary Elections/By Elections be noted.

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- (c) That the Acting Returning Officer be fully indemnified against all costs, claims, demands, expenses, fees and charges that he incurs as a result of errors or omissions that occur in the carrying out of his official duties (including any other person employed by or officially acting for him) in Parliamentary Elections/By Elections which are not payable under the Council's public liability and officials' indemnity insurance.

209. Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) Update

The Cabinet considered a report detailing ongoing performance issues within the Neighbourhood Housing Service and to consider the timetable for setting up a successful Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) to take over the management of the Council's housing properties and land. The Chair indicated that progress with the ALMO was disappointing but that an Action Plan had been put in place. The outcome of the work that had been undertaken was that it was now felt that 31st July, 2005 was not feasible for the establishment of the ALMO. He proposed that having considered the implications the Cabinet considers that this date should be delayed until December, 2005 at the latest to facilitate a two star inspection. The Commissioner for Housing drew attention to a typographical error in paragraph 5.1 of the report where reference should be made to establishing an ALMO Board and legally transferring the management of the Council's housing stock to the ALMO.

A Member present under Rule 29, asked why action had not been taken sooner and why only three indicators had been used in the performance table in the report when there were many more. The Commissioner for Housing indicated that key indicators had been used in the report to draw attention to the progress the Council had made with those key indicators. There were plans in place to improve all indicators and to achieve stability the establishment of the ALMO needed to be delayed until December, 2005. The latest figures received did show an improvement and that the Council was making progress on urgent repairs and response times. Whilst the establishment of the ALMO would be delayed until December the brand would be launched in July as planned. The Strategic Director for Community and Cultural Services indicated in response to concerns from Rule 29 Members about the delay that detailed project plans had been put in place which addressed all the issues that had been raised. A mock inspection in December/January would put the Council in good position for its real inspection. Members acknowledged that if the Council were not to achieve a two star rating in the inspection that there would be funding issues. The Chief Executive indicated that the Corporate Management Team had recognised the establishment of the ALMO as a major corporate challenge for the Council. It had been prioritised and interim arrangements had been put in place with regard to the restructuring to enable the Strategic Director to concentrate on the establishment of the ALMO.

Resolved – That the current performance issues relating to Neighbourhood Housing and the action proposed to address these issues be noted and, having considered the implications, that the establishment of the ALMO be delayed to December 2005.

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210. Housing Strategy 2005/10

The Cabinet considered an updated version of the "Living in Slough" housing strategy for submission to the Office for the Deputy Prime Minister in order to achieve 'fit for purpose' status for the strategy. The Commissioner for Housing indicated that the year end figures would be added and would be put into the Members' Room.

Resolved – That the "Living in Slough" housing strategy be agreed for submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

211. Waste Management and Recycling Action Plan

The Cabinet received a report on the waste and recycling performance and were asked to agree an Action Plan to improve the Council's recycling rate to minimise waste for final disposal.

Resolved –

- (a) That waste and recycling performance be noted.
- (b) That the Action Plan be endorsed.
- (c) That Officers investigate the feasibility of a pilot compulsory recycling scheme.

212. Asset Management Plan 2005/08

The Cabinet considered a report detailing some of the key issues relating to the use of property assets and seeking approval to the Asset Management Action Plan.

Resolved –

- (a) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (b) That the Asset Management Action Plan 2005/08 be approved.

213. Proposed Sale and Lease of Two Parcels of Land North of St Ethelbert's School, Wexham

The Cabinet considered a report detailing the terms agreed for the sale and lease of two parcels of land to the north of St Ethelbert's School to the Slough Sikh Educational Gurmat Trust. Members placed on record their congratulations to the Assistant Director (Property Services) for achieving the terms stated.

Resolved –

- (a) That 7.11 acres (approximately) of land be sold to the Slough Sikh Educational Gurmat Trust for the sum of £1,250,000 and on the terms outlined in paragraph 5.7 of the report.

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- (b) That 1.41 acres (approximately) of land be leased to the Slough Sikh Educational Gurmat Trust on the terms outlined in the report.
- (c) That Officers be authorised to conclude terms for the sale and lease.

214. Contracts in Excess of £250,000 for Financial Year 2005/06

The Cabinet considered a report detailing the proposed contracts in excess of £250,000 to be let in 2005/06.

Resolved – That the list of Contracts attached at Appendix A to the report be endorsed.

215. Monitoring Reports

The Cabinet considered the following monitoring/performance review reports:-

- Human Resources monitoring statistics to January, 2005.
- General Fund budget monitoring to February, 2005.
- Capital Programme 2004/05 monitoring to February, 2005. In answer to a question from Rule 29 Members with regard to capital spending the Commissioner for Resources advised that the capital spend was now 68% of the budget.
- Findings from the SBC staff attitude survey 2004. Rule 29 Members indicated their view that the return rates from front line services had not been good and asked what details had been released to the Employment and 78908 Appeals Committee with regard to this. The Chief Executive advised that the Employment and Appeals Committee was to discuss the results of the staff attitude survey at its next meeting. She indicated that the survey had been undertaken at the same time as the Council was being reorganised and that this may have had an effect. The Director of Human Resources undertook to look into the level of detail that was being provided to Members of the Employment Committee.
- Gambling reform.
- Executive Forward Plan.

Resolved – That the Monitoring Reports be noted.

(The meeting was adjourned from 8.50 p.m. to 9.00 p.m.).

216. Education and Children's Services Directorate Restructure

The Cabinet considered a report detailing the results of the recent consultation on the restructuring proposal for the Education and Children's Services Directorate. The Strategic Director of Education and Children's Services tabled the responses to the consultation and indicated that the majority had supported the principles of the restructure and many of the points raised would be helpful to the new senior management team when finalising the detailed of branch structures.

Resolved – That the restructuring proposals be approved.

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217. School Inspection Reports

The Cabinet received the outcome of schools' Ofsted inspections over the past six months. The report related to Activate, Wexham, Ryvers and Slough Centre Nursery. Leadership and management were judged to be satisfactory in all schools. In one leadership and management were thought excellent. Schools were judged to provide good, very good and excellent value for money.

Resolved –

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That congratulations be conveyed to the schools concerned.

218. Admission Arrangements 2006/07 School Year

The Cabinet considered a report on the Council's admission proposals for 2006/07 school year.

Recommended – That the admission arrangements for 2006/07 as set out in Appendix A to the report be adopted.

219. Review of the Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education

The Cabinet considered a report seeking approval to the appointment of an Agreed Syllabus Conference (ASC) to oversee the review of the Slough Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education which was required to be carried out every five years.

Resolved – That an agreed syllabus conference comprising identical membership to the Slough Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education be convened for 2005/06 municipal year for the purpose of reviewing and recommending to the LEA a new agreed syllabus for religious education for use in Slough's schools.

(Councillor Latif Khan left the meeting).

220. Decision on the Future of the Lea School Campus – Consideration of Muslim Faith School Options

The Cabinet considered a report on whether to proceed with its decision to amalgamate Lea Infant and Junior Schools to create a non-denominational community primary school or whether to delay implementation of its decision in order to support consultation and application for funding by Muslim faith school promoters.

The Director of Law and Corporate Governance advised that correspondence had been exchanged prior to the meeting with the bidders with regard to what could and could not be discussed in the Part I and Part II sections of the meeting. All the information in support of each bid had had to be submitted by the start of the meeting. Both bids had therefore been circulated to members of the Cabinet as exempt information as the bidding process had been incomplete up to the start of

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the meeting. Both bidders had been invited to make a short presentation to the meeting.

The Director of Law and Corporate Governance advised that the Cabinet could take the whole item in public but that in his view it was not appropriate to release the personal and financial information contained within the bids. He therefore recommended that the presentations be in Part II because there could be a competitive advantage to one bidder over the other if the presentations were in Part I and the bidders would be able to make full presentations which included their financial and personal affairs. Following the presentations the non-personal and non-financial information contained in the bids could be released to the press and public and the actual debate and decision taken in public as the item had a significant impact for Slough residents and the public were entitled to and needed to see and hear the decision making process as far as possible.

As one of the bidders had claimed that their bid was copyright the Director of Law and Corporate Governance advised that the Department of Constitutional Affairs had indicated that there would be no breach in copyright if information was released under the Freedom of Information Act. Although the Council had not had a request for the bids under the Freedom of Information Act the Director of Law and Corporate Governance could see no reason why they would not be released following the meeting if such a request was received.

Councillor Janik presented a petition of 440 signatures which read:-

“We are interested in a Muslim school in Slough. We ask in the name of democracy, public openness and accountability that when the Council’s Cabinet examines both sets of proposals for a Muslim school (1) all the information without exception is made public; (2) all the discussions and decisions shall take place in public and (3) there shall be no secret or confidential meeting behind closed doors.”

Members of the Cabinet made a number of points which included:-

- An acknowledgement that there should be financial confidentiality but that, in all other respects, the decision and discussion should be in the public domain. The press and public should be able to hear the case and how bidders intended to run the school.
- An acknowledgement that the bidders would have put their bid together with the presumption that their financial information would be kept confidential.
- An acknowledgement that if one bidder presented in Part I the second bidder could have an unfair competitive advantage having heard the first bidder make the presentation.

It was agreed unanimously that the presentation by both bidders would be in private to enable the bidders to make a full presentation which included their financial and personal affairs as it was still part of the tender process and that following this the bid documents without the financial and personal information could be released to the public. The debate and decision would be taken in Part I.

The Commissioner for Education introduced the report and set out the background to the decision that had been made and the tendering process that had been undertaken. A Member present under Rule 29 asked whether a scoring exercise

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had been undertaken on the two bids or whether there was a recommendation from Officers. The Commissioner for Education advised that a matrix to judge the bids against would be circulated. The Strategic Director of Education and Children's Services advised that a panel of experts had been convened to technically evaluate the bids and this would be available in Part II if required.

Resolved - That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the presentations from the two bidders as they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (other than the Authority) and terms proposed or to be proposed by or to the Authority in the course of negotiations for the contract for the acquisition or disposal of property or supply goods or services as defined in paragraphs 7 and 9 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

PART II

An assessment matrix to compare voluntary aided (Muslim) Primary School proposals was circulated.

Allied Education Trust

Mr Akram Khan Cheema OBE presented the Allied Education Trust bid. Following his presentation Members of the Cabinet asked a number of detailed questions including:-

- Specific information with regard to the funding pledges that had been received to date.
- Whether two parent governors was adequate for the governing body. Mr Cheema advised that the proposal was in line with the statutory guidance on school governors.
- A view that the proposal was invigorating but that there were issues of concern with regard to the Targeted Capital Fund Submission and the supplementary Papers that had been circulated with regard to this. Mr Cheema advised that the form that was being referred to included notes for guidance but that the main proposal that would be submitted covered the special needs issue in full.
- A concern that there was not enough evidence in the bid as to how revenue funding money would be raised. Mr Cheema indicated the means by which the Trust was to raise revenue funds but that no detailed figures could be released at this stage.

The Chair thanked Mr Cheema and other Members of the Allied Education Trust for their presentation. It was noted that the bid from the Allied Education Trust was now to be treated as Part I with the exception of the Targeted Capital Fund information.

Slough Islamic Schools Project

Mr Zafar Ali presented the Slough Islamic Schools Project bid. In addition to the papers that had been circulated an updated revised Targeted Capital Fund

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Submission was tabled along with two letters pledging money. Following the presentation Cabinet Members asked why the Targeted Capital Fund Submission had not been provided earlier. Mr Ali advised that the original bid as circulated had contained the information and that the revised bid had not added anything new.

A Member present under Rule 29 indicated that the bid document stated that someone supported the bid whereas he had evidence that this was not the case. The Chair asked the Member to leave the Chamber as he felt that his contribution was inappropriate.

The Chair thanked Mr Ali for his presentation. Mr Ali withdrew from the meeting. It was noted that the bid from the Slough Islamic Schools Project was now to be treated as Part I with the exception of the Targeted Capital Fund Submission and personal information.

Members of the Cabinet asked the Strategic Director of Education and Children's Services how much money had been pledged for each bid.

The Director advised of the amounts of the pledges to date. Councillor Smith reminded Members that the sums related to different amounts that each bid needed to find to finance their proposals. The Director of Education and Children's Services advised that in her view a 'safe' estimate of the minimum funds needed would be in the region of £1m. Members discussed how certain the pledges were. A Member present under Rule 29 indicated that neither bid had sufficient funding. The Chief Executive advised that the Council's audit officers could be asked to interview those who had pledged and it would be possible to select a bidder subject to further work on their financial stability.

Following this discussion it was agreed that all parties should be allowed back into the Chamber and that the meeting would resume in public.

PART I

The Chair thanked both bidders for their presentation and indicated that the matter was now open to debate. Members discussed the proposals and made a number of comments including:-

- A view that the SISP bid had a more robust multi-faith aspect and had demonstrated that they had more relevant experience.
- The SISP bid had a larger sum reported to have been pledged.
- The view that neither proposal had satisfied Members completely on financial stability and that the pledges needed to be more concrete.
- A view that the SISP bid was more comprehensive with the depth of work and consultation that had taken place.
- A view that the SISP bid was more professionally presented.

Members present under Rule 29 indicated:-

- That more than half of the SISP bid had been produced by others and consisted of published documentation whereas the bid from the Allied Education Trust was an original document.

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- A view that both bidders should be asked to join together to submit one bid and that there would then be a possibility of the pledges being combined.

In response to a question with regard to the officers' views, the Strategic Director of Education and Children's Services indicated that when the bids had been received they had not contained sufficient financial information. The Allied Education Trust had been the stronger bid but now that the Targeted Capital Fund submission had been provided the Slough Islamic Schools Project bid was the stronger of the two.

The Commissioner for Education indicated his view that the Allied Education bid was both inspirational and dynamic but that the Targeted Capital Fund submission provided by SISP was better and he regretted that the two bidders could not work together. Having heard all the Cabinet Members' views he was prepared to propose that, on the basis that the bid was more comprehensive and on the understanding that it could be carried through in a financially viable manner with secure funding that the SISP project bid be supported. This proposal was put to the meeting and carried unanimously.

Resolved - That implementation of Members' decision to amalgamate Lea Infant and Junior Schools be delayed in order to support consultation and Targeted Capital Fund submission by the Slough Islamic Schools Project.

221. Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Schools – Update and Selection of Preferred Bidder

The Cabinet considered a report detailing progress made since the last report to the Cabinet in March, 2005 on progress on evaluation of the three bid submissions and the ongoing work on the approved affordability strategy.

Members present under Rule 29 sought information with regard to the community use of sporting facilities and the management of leisure facilities and timescales. Officers advised that enhanced sporting facilities would be available for community use and the level of charges was likely to be in line with what was charged currently, it was for the Council to decide where to place the management of the facilities and that proposals from the preferred bidders would be analysed and Members advised via update reports which would be provided to the Cabinet following selection of the preferred bidder. In discussing the item Members considered whether to move into Part II of the meeting to discuss issues with regard to the financial implications of the PFI proposal and this was agreed.

Resolved – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of this item as it involved exempt information with regard to the amount of expenditure proposed to be incurred by the Authority under any particular contract for the acquisition of property or supply of goods and services or any terms proposed or to be proposed by or to the Authority in the course of negotiations for a contract for the acquisition or disposal of property or the supply of goods and services as defined in paragraphs 8 and 9 of Part I Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

PART II

The Cabinet considered a Part II report with regard to this item setting out issues with regard to the evaluation of the three bid submissions and the ongoing work on the approved affordability strategy. Members agreement was sought to a contingency with regard to the affordability strategy and the Part II report set out in detail the financial implications of the affordability strategy.

Resolved –

- (a) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (b) That the PFI Project Board report back to the Cabinet in June following selection of the preferred bidder.
- (c) That the current position with the evaluation and ranking of the three bid submissions be noted.
- (d) That the recommendation contained in the Part II report with regard to the affordability strategy be endorsed.

Chair.

(Note: The meeting opened at 6.30 p.m. and closed at 11.50 p.m.)