

Date of issue: Monday, 20 September 2021

MEETING	CABINET	
	Councillor Swindlehurst	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Financial Governance, Economic Development & Council Plans
	Councillor Akram	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Leisure, Culture & Communities
	Councillor Anderson	Sustainable Transport & The Environment
	Councillor Bains	Regulation & Public Protection
	Councillor Carter	Customer Services & Corporate Support
	Councillor Hulme	Children's Services, Lifelong Learning & Skills
	Councillor Mann	Housing, Highways, Planning & Place
	Councillor Pantelic	Social Care & Public Health
DATE AND TIME:	MONDAY, 20TH SEPTEMBER, 2021 AT 6.30 PM	
VENUE:	COUNCIL CHAMBER - OBSERVATORY HOUSE, 25 WINDSOR ROAD, SL1 2EL	
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER: (for all enquiries)	NICHOLAS PONTONE 07749 709 868	

SUPPLEMENTARY PAPERS

The following Papers have been added to the agenda for the above meeting:-

* Item 5 is an updated version of the papers circulated with the agenda.

PART 1

<u>AGENDA ITEM</u>	<u>REPORT TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>	<u>WARD</u>
5.	Recovery and Renewal Plan - Achieving Financial Sustainability	1 - 22	All



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SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Cabinet

DATE: 20 September 2021

SUBJECT: Recovery and Renewal Plan

CHIEF OFFICER: Executive Board

CONTACT OFFICER: Executive Board

WARD(S): All

PORTFOLIO: Councillor James Swindlehurst, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Financial Governance, Economic Development and Council Plans

KEY DECISION: NO

EXEMPT: NO

DECISION SUBJECT TO CALL NO as noting and referring to full council only

APPENDICES: Appendix 1 - Slough Borough Council Recovery Plan

1 Summary and Recommendations

1.1 This report sets out the current plans for the Council's recovery and renewal.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to:

- (a) Note the plans being developed for the recovery and renewal of Slough Borough Council as set out in Appendix 1.
- b) Note the timelines set out in this report to achieve the ambitious timescales set out in the Council's recovery and renewal plan.
- (c) Refer to full Council the current plans for the Council's recovery and renewal plan.

Reason: To ensure that the recovery and renewal programme is established so the Council can return to a position of financial sustainability.

2 Report

- 2.1 On 2nd July 2021 the Council's Director of Finance & s151 Officer issued a report under s114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, which was sent to all Councillors. This advised them that the Council faces "a financial situation of an extremely serious nature". In response to this, we have been working to urgently develop our recovery and renewal plan which is planned to ensure the Council's roadmap to a financially sustainable Council by 2026/27. This will ensure we are able

to navigate out of our current challenges towards a planned financially sustainable future. The current plan is at Appendix 1, however this will be kept under review and updates will be regularly reported to members.

2.2 Options considered:

(a) continue with current policy framework. The priorities of the Council need to move to ensure a financially sustainable future. This option is not recommended.

(b) adapt the current 5-year Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan was due to be overhauled this year but the urgency and focus of the challenge demands a complete focus on recovery. This option is not recommended

Background

2.3 Slough Council faces severe financial challenges and it must be able to plot a path to a sustainable financial future so that it can preserve vital and critical local public services to the most vulnerable in the community. The Council's current balance is estimated to be £56m in deficit, and the forecasts are that this will further deteriorate until it could be above £200m in deficit across the period 2016/17 to 2026/27 if action is not taken.

2.4 The Council's immediate financial position cannot be addressed purely through better "housekeeping", increased council tax income and business rate income. To survive financially as an organisation the Council must focus the resources it has on the most vulnerable residents and corporate priorities, the Council will need to:

- stop funding many services, even those that have historically been seen as "untouchable" reset expenditure on most of those remaining to a level that is financially sustainable
- ensure it continues to meet its statutory responsibilities – and ensure that this is done in the most cost effective and efficient way
- reduce staffing levels
- sell the vast majority of its accumulated assets and significantly reduce the size of the capital programme

2.5 The financial situation beyond 2022/23 is far from secure and, in order to rectify this, the Council is going to have to fundamentally change. It is clear that the scale of this will be radical, but Slough Council can and will seize this as a unique opportunity. The Council now faces a financial challenge that gives it the opportunity to redefine its role in the delivery of public services and delivering outcomes for local residents.

2.6 Slough 2040 outlines the ambitions for the future of Slough. It is a vision shared by our partners and should help direct the Council to how it enables services with focus on protecting the most vulnerable people. We will continue to work with our statutory partners, the voluntary sector, residents and businesses to transform this vision into a reality. However, the role of Slough Council in delivering this vision will have to change. Every department, staff member and councillor will need to sign up to this, and every part of Slough (and its partners) has a key role to play in enabling the success.

2.7 The Council's 5 year plan 2020-2025 sets out the priority outcomes for the Council. This was agreed against the then assumed budget position. Many of the outcomes remain important, but it is absolutely right that, given the severe additional financial pressures that

the Council now faces, the Council reviews and refocuses its plan on ensuring that the Council's finances are put back onto a stable footing. The Council needs to significantly, and quickly, restructure and focus on doing the basics well. Over the next 7 months we will be working on a new 5 year plan for approval by full Council in May 2022. This will include a new corporate commitment to rebalancing and prioritising services, focusing on and protecting service and resident outcomes and corporate priorities, whilst also keeping and motivating staff. However, this does mean that the Council needs to look at all services across the council and that no services or outcomes should be considered to be sacrosanct.

2.8 Prior to this the Council needs to make a series of fundamental changes immediately that will allow it to ensure financial sustainability in the near future. Whilst a number of these will be a major challenge, it needs to do so to ensure it can financially deliver the services that residents expect, meet its best value duties and set a balanced budget. These changes need to begin immediately with three key actions:

- By 31st October 2021:
 - Each director with their cabinet member(s) will develop and share their high-level service review setting out what services can be realigned, reduced and/or changed to significantly reduce their call on the budget.
 - A council wide prioritising of the key service areas to be delivered will be undertaken
 - Stakeholder and communication plans will be developed on the budget, budget proposals and the new corporate plan
 - Realign reporting lines to provide clear direction to the organisation pending a more permanent restructure
- By May 2022 – All services will have gone through a radical service review that clearly sets out their future role in delivering Slough 2040 and the refreshed 5 year plan within a sustainable financial envelope. We will also be restructuring services on a rolling programme to reflect the Council's diminished resources
- By May 2023 – We will continue to refine the radical service reviews and shape these linked to how the financial strategy develops over this period.

2.9 The scale of challenge Slough Council faces should not be underestimated. The size of change required needs strong, vibrant, and clear leadership. The Council needs to change the approach and style of its top management leadership and drive the right such leadership culture at all levels of the Council, where staff are empowered to make decisions and lead their teams through the complexities of change and transformation at pace.

2.10 Managers and staff must be trusted and empowered in this new way of working. They will be provided with appropriate support whilst clear expectations are communicated in terms of performance and effectiveness.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1 Financial implications

3.1.1 The consequences of the proposals in this report (when brought together with agenda items 6 and 8) will set the Council on a secure path to financial recovery and a sustainable position going forward

3.2 Legal implications

3.2.1 The Council has a number of statutory duties in relation to strategy and financial management. This includes a best value duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

3.2.2 Decisions in relation to strategy and financial management will need to be made by all levels of the organisation. Full Council will be responsible for estimating and setting the budget for the purpose of setting council tax. Full Council is also responsible for approving the policy framework, which includes a list of prescribed statutory plans and strategies, as well as plans or strategies for the control of the Council's borrowing, investments or capital expenditure or for determining the Council's minimum revenue provision. Decisions made at Full Council level will include responsibility for approving an updated 5-year plan, as well as approval of the Treasury Management Strategy and the Capital Programme. Cabinet is responsible for determining how expenditure will be incurred, so long as this is in accordance with the overall budget and for setting policy outside of the prescribed policy framework. This means that Cabinet should be involved in decision-making around service provision, where these decisions are not within delegated authority for officers.

3.3 Risk management implications

3.3.1 As we focus on our recovery and renewal, we will develop a risk log which links to our corporate risk register.

3.4 Environmental implications

3.4.1 At this stage these are unknown but will be assessed as part of the options appraisal process.

3.5 Equality implications

3.5.1 There will be a number of impacts that these changes will initiate. A full equalities impact assessment is part of every business case being assessed.

3.6 Workforce implications

3.7.1 There will be workforce implications that will result from business cases and changes to the Council's strategic planning. These will be considered and reported on in individual business cases.

3.8 Property implications

3.8.1 Cabinet has received a separate report on the Council's plans to dispose of assets to repay any capitalisation direction and to reduce its borrowing. There will also be property implications arising from some of the service reviews which will be reported on in individual business cases.

4. Background Papers

None

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Executive Summary

Slough Council faces severe financial challenges and it must be able to plot a path to a sustainable financial future so that it can preserve vital and critical local public services to the most vulnerable in the community. The Council's current balance is estimated to be £56m in deficit, and the forecasts are that this will further deteriorate until it could be above £200m in deficit across the period 2016/17 to 2026/27 if action is not taken.

The Council's immediate financial position cannot be addressed purely through better "housekeeping", increased council tax income and business rate income. To survive financially as an organisation the Council must focus the resources it has on the most vulnerable residents and corporate priorities, the Council will need to:

- stop funding many services, even those that have historically been seen as "untouchable"
- reset expenditure on most of those remaining to a level that is financially sustainable
- ensure it continues to meet its statutory responsibilities – and ensure that this is done in the most cost effective and efficient way
- reduce staffing levels
- sell the vast majority of its accumulated assets and significantly reduce the size of the capital programme

The financial situation beyond 2022/23 is far from secure and, in order to rectify this, the Council is going to have to fundamentally change. It is clear that the scale of this will be radical, but Slough Council can and will seize this as a unique opportunity. The Council now faces a financial challenges that gives it the opportunity to redefine its role in the delivery of public services and delivering outcomes for local residents.

Slough 2040 outlines the ambitions for the future of Slough. It is a vision shared by our partners and should help direct the Council to how it enables services with focus on protecting the most vulnerable people. We will continue to work with our statutory partners, the voluntary sector, residents and businesses to transform this vision into a reality. However, the role of Slough Council in delivering this vision will have to change. Every department, staff member and councillor will need to sign up to this, and every part of Slough (and its partners) has a key role to play in enabling the success.

The Council's 5 year plan 2020-2025 sets out the priority outcomes for the Council. This was agreed against the then assumed budget position. Many of the outcomes remain important, but it is absolutely right that, given the severe additional financial pressures that the Council now faces, the Council reviews and refocuses its plan on ensuring that the Council's finances are put back onto a stable footing. The Council needs to significantly, and quickly, restructure and focus on doing the basics well. Over the next 7 months we will be working on a new 5 year plan for approval by full Council in May 2022. This will include a new corporate commitment to rebalancing and prioritising services, focusing on and protecting service and resident outcomes and corporate priorities, whilst also keeping and motivating staff. However, this does mean that the Council needs to look at all services across the council and that no services or outcomes should be considered to be sacrosanct.

Prior to this the Council needs to make a series of fundamental changes immediately that will allow it to ensure financial sustainability in the near future. Whilst a number of these will be a major challenge, it needs to do so to ensure it can financially deliver the services that residents expect, meet its best value duties and set a balanced budget. These changes need to begin immediately with three key actions:

- By 31st October 2021:
 - Each director with their cabinet member(s) will develop and share their high-level service review setting out what services can be realigned, reduced and/or changed to significantly reduce their call on the budget.
 - A council wide prioritising of the key service areas to be delivered will be undertaken
 - Stakeholder and communication plans will be developed on the budget, budget proposals and the new corporate plan
 - Realign reporting lines to provide clear direction to the organisation pending a more permanent restructure
- By May 2022 – All services will have gone through a radical service review that clearly sets out their future role in delivering Slough 2040 and the refreshed 5 year plan within a sustainable financial envelope. We will also be restructuring services on a rolling programme to reflect the Council's diminished resources
- By May 2023 – We will continue to refine the radical service reviews and shape these linked to how the financial strategy develops over this period.

The scale of challenge Slough Council faces should not be underestimated. The size of change required needs strong, vibrant, and clear leadership. The Council needs to change the approach and style of its top management leadership and drive the right such leadership culture at all levels of the Council, where staff are empowered to make decisions and lead their teams through the complexities of change and transformation at pace.

Managers and staff must be trusted and empowered in this new way of working. They will be provided with appropriate support whilst clear expectations are communicated in terms of performance and effectiveness.

Section 1: Setting the Strategic Context and Vision

Following ongoing review of Slough Borough Council's finances, the council formally notified MHCLG of its section 114 notice in July 2021.

Slough Council faces severe financial challenges

Slough Council has effectively no reserves and circa £200m plus of unfunded revenue liabilities. This is a stark reality and cannot be overstated in its seriousness. The Council must respond to provide a sustainable financial future right now and into the future. This is crucial for preserving the vital and critical local public services it provides to our most vulnerable residents.

Complete change is needed to recover

Rebuilding from the current position is not an overnight task and nor is it one that can be done by tinkering or tailoring what it has and what it was doing. The Council must undergo wholesale change to establish a firm financial foundation.

Slough Council has a unique and once in a generation opportunity moving forward

Out of this very challenging situation, Slough has a platform for change that it has never seen before and indeed will seize this unique opportunity to redefine its role in the delivery of public service outcomes, building on some of the aspirations of the current plan such as prevention and demand management, localities and digital by default. The Council and its leaders must understand that the cause of this situation is not one they would wish to repeat but it is also not a window to re evaluate that they should now waste.

Section 2: Revisiting and Reconfirming the Slough 2040 Vision

“Slough will be a vibrant, thriving, and innovative town, where people are supported to live happy and fulfilled lives. People will feel safe and valued in their local communities, and proud to call Slough home.”

The Slough 2040 vision outlines the Council's and partners' ambitions for the future of the borough and has been created by engaging with the local people and all partners of Slough. This vision has been developed following wide consultation and the ambition that it seeks to set out is still considered to be valid. However, the Council needs to understand how it can play its part in delivering against this vision within the financial constraints that it faces and, through strong governance, ensure that this remains the case.

The Council's 5 year plan 2020-2025 sets out the priority outcomes for the Council. This was agreed against the then assumed budget position. Many of the outcomes remain important, but it is absolutely right that, given the severe additional financial pressures that the Council now faces, the Council reviews and refocuses its plan on ensuring that the Council's finances are put back onto a stable footing. The Council needs to significantly, and quickly, restructure and enable a focus on doing the basics well. Over the next 7 months we will be working on a new 5 year plan for approval by full Council in May 2022. This will include a new corporate commitment to rebalancing and prioritising services, focusing on and protecting service and resident outcomes and corporate priorities, whilst also keeping and motivating staff. However, this does mean that the Council needs to look at all services across the council and that no services or outcomes should be considered to be sacrosanct. How this is done is set out in Section 3. The Council also needs to transform how it approaches an enabling role in supporting services to meet our residents needs, and act to change the approach to enabling services beyond putting the finances right. This is set out in Section 4.

Section 3: This all starts (and continues) by getting the finances and governance right now and prioritise the most vulnerable and highest priority services to residents

Slough Council faces a financial situation of an extremely serious nature and is forecasting a significant estimated unfunded financial deficit forecast if action is not taken immediately.

The Council's current balance is estimated to be £56m in the red, and the forecasts are that, if action is not taken now, this will get further worse until it could be above £200m in the red across the period 2016/17 to 2026/27.

The projected in-year spending on services is significantly above the approved revenue budget and the Council has no useable revenue reserves. The additional in-year deficit for 2021/22 is estimated to be £56 million. This is not a position that is going to be addressed purely through better 'housekeeping', increased council tax income and business rate income. It requires the Council to:

- stop funding many services, even those that may have historically been seen as "untouchable"
- reset expenditure on all service areas to a level that is financially sustainable
- ensure it continues to meet its statutory responsibilities – and ensure that this is done in the most cost effective and efficient way
- reduce staffing levels
- sell the vast majority of its accumulated assets and significantly reduce the size of the capital programme
- and take a series of future challenging and difficult decisions

The financial situation beyond 2022/23 is not secure and, in order to rectify this, we are going to have to fundamentally change as a Council.

3a. Resolving 2021/22 and setting us up for 2022/23 financially

The Council's immediate focus needs to be on making a series of challenging decisions and putting in place a robust action plan that will keep Slough financially solvent. This will aim at protecting the vital services, but there will be a need to make hard decisions about the prioritising of the use of the councils' reducing budget. This will not be easy, but failure to do this will prevent the Council having the ability to change Slough longer-term.

This includes:

- preventing any spending (irrespective of department or funding source) that is not aligned to front-line critical services, corporate priorities or has a clear payback of less than 6-months
- stopping all transformation activity associated with the Our Futures programme where there is no clear benefits case that has been agreed and captured as part of the budget process, and with a high confidence that these savings will be delivered
- moving net borrowing into a sustainable position for an organisation the size of Slough whilst budgeting for the capitalisation directive of £200m being agreed. This will buy the time needed to make the changes set out in Section 3b
 - This is not free money however, and the Council will need to demonstrate how it will transform the organisation to ensure that it will never need to draw upon financial support again, but can also "repay" the amount that it has capitalised over the next 5 years. The incorrect accounting and budgeting of resources of the last 5 years will otherwise be a burden on society for generations to come.

Further detail on the approach to these actions is set out in the finance action plan and debt reduction papers elsewhere on this agenda. Adherence to these actions is critical to ensuring that the Council remains an ongoing concern over the rest of this financial year. As such, governance has been put in place to regularly review the position to ensure that both the actions agreed are being completed and that the desired financial impact is realised.

Practical steps the Council will take, with effect from now, are:

- ensuring there is proper alignment of budgets that allows clear financial accountability
- ensuring robust budgets are properly prepared and managed
- embedding change before consequential budget savings are taken
- verifying the strength and resilience of the Council's IT infrastructure
- embedding sound governance practices
- cleansing of both performance and financial data to help staff make informed decisions
- ensuring proactive management responses to internal and external reviews
- embedding business book principles and options appraisals across all services, and especially support services
- investing in more effective and higher quality training and development to officers and Members
- developing and embedding a fully functioning Scrutiny service with appropriate support to conduct its business
- putting in place proper client management of the Council companies including appropriate governance, performance management and financial reporting

To be clear - failure to deliver this action plan will mean the Council cannot function as an organisation. This will likely lead to intervention from central government where decisions will be taken out of the Council's hands, and the decisions on the range of services that will be provided for Slough residents may be imposed on us.

3b. How the Council will need to change to ensure financial sustainability in the near term

Slough Council needs to significantly, and quickly, restructure so that fewer staff do fewer things, focusing on doing the basics well. This will include a new corporate commitment to rebalancing and prioritising services, focusing on and protecting service and resident outcomes and corporate priorities, whilst also keeping and motivating staff. The Council needs to look at all services across the council and no services or outcomes should be considered to be sacrosanct. There is a need to challenge each other, and embrace a culture where this is not seen as an attack on our professional judgement, but an approach where solutions are sought that are best for residents and not for the traditional departmental and service silos.

The Council needs to make a series of fundamental changes immediately that will allow it to ensure financial sustainability in the near future. Whilst a number of these will be a challenge, it needs to do so to ensure it can financially deliver the services that residents need and expect.

Capital Infrastructure

The Council needs to reduce infrastructure to the absolute minimum so that it can afford to service the associated debt of the essential remaining assets that it will continue to hold. This will mean that the Council will have a very significantly smaller infrastructure and will enable services from fewer buildings. To achieve this, the days of having departmentally

occupied and managed buildings must end. The few buildings that are retained will become hubs for the communities where residents can access a range of services .

This approach will allow the disposal of a significant number of surplus assets and allow the repayment of debt. We will:

- commence a proactive, but orderly disposal process to generate capital receipts which will be used firstly to finance any Capitalisation Directions received and secondly to repay existing external borrowing and,
- conduct a procurement exercise in line with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, to obtain the support of external organisations who can assist the Council with an ambitious programme of asset disposals over the next four to five years

Third Party Expenditure

The Council buys supplies and services of many types from third parties, partners, related organisations etc in order to provide Slough residents with the full range of services they expect and deserve. The Council will be undertaking a scrupulous review of spend with suppliers, to:

- make sure that residents are getting the best value for money
- make sure that everything third party suppliers deliver is of sufficient quality
- find ways to save money without reducing benefits to residents

The Council will tighten governance and oversight of third-party expenditure to ensure that every penny spent outside the organisation delivers value, and to help identify opportunities for saving money which can then be invested in community services. Expenditure will be reviewed against contracts with third party suppliers, the market will be tested to ensure the best deal is had, and opportunities to consolidate contracts will be reviewed and identified to ensure contracts are achieving the greatest value and providing economies of scale. Where appropriate, partners will be involved in this work, and every opportunity will be taken through the review of third-party spend to help drive a more efficient and commercial approach to the use of public money.

3c. What needs to happen to secure longer term financial good governance

In order to lock in financial stewardship over the longer term, we need to ensure we have the appropriate processes and governance in place, with lead officers accountable for their areas and their transformation.

Governance structure and accountability to be agreed:

Governance	Information
Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny	<p>The Council and Cabinet have legal obligations to manage the finances of Slough. As do the three Council wide statutory officers and the Executive Board. The additional governance suggested below does not alter or detract from this but is designed to enhance the information that will be presented and provide further levels of assurance.</p> <p>Scrutiny will need to play an ever-more important role in holding decision makers to account and help improve local services through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing and challenging decisions taken by other parts of the Council

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking investigations into services / policy areas which are of interest / concern to residents • Making recommendations to improve services
Strategic Leadership Team	The senior officer leadership team accountable for the design and delivery of the Corporate Recovery and Renewal Plan 2022-2027 and the implementation of the MTFs 2022-2027. This work then being scrutinised, approved and overseen by Lead Members and Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny
Lead Members and Executive Directors	The Lead Members and Executive Directors began meeting weekly to drive through the necessary actions when the S114 notice was issued. To put matters on a more sustainable footing going forward they will meet on a fortnightly basis to review the progress of the above in order that executive directors and their lead members can come together to discuss issues and ensure the generation of regular reports for Cabinet and other appropriate governance meetings. Financial reporting will be scrutinised on a monthly basis
MHCLG / HM Treasury	The Council is awaiting the outcome from an independent review that MHCLG have commissioned. Whilst the findings and recommendations have not yet been seen, it is envisaged that MHCLG and / or HM Treasury will expect additional governance and reporting to them. This could range from regular formal reporting to them, supported by independence assurance, through to appointed commissioners who will form part of the above governance.

3d. Priorities for the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT)

To help SLT prioritise for Members consideration the difficult and challenging decisions that need to be made, in a logical and transparent way, a clear framework will be developed. This framework will include considerations such as:

- **Statutory services:** to what degree does the Council have a legal obligation to provide a service or outcome to residents? Just because a service has a statutory element, or is funded through local sources, does not mean that the level of service delivered will not be considered for reduction. No services should be protected, and the reviews will cover all services.
- **Return on Investment:** investments to generate savings will be made in the short-term (within the financial context) where these demonstrate a clear and robust benefits case that saves money within an acceptable time period.
- **Locality agenda:** community - led approaches are important to us for providing good local resident outcomes and creating a strong local economy. The Council understands that different communities across Slough have different assets, needs and have a range of skills/resources of their own and this will be considered in the Council's decision making utilising data and insight
- **Skills development:** The Council is going to change significantly over the coming years and staffing levels will reduce. However, the Council must focus on

developing the skills and capabilities of remaining staff to provide them with the skills they need in to thrive in a changing organisation

- Partnerships: working with partners to deliver our local statutory partnership responsibilities as well as ensuring that local partners are supporting the delivery of council priorities.

Section 4: Things that we need to change and act on to move beyond putting the finances right – 2023/24

Slough will focus on serving its residents within the resources it has today and in the future. Whilst the manner in which the Council has been reminded of the finite and scarce nature of these resources has been very sharp, it means that the council now has a unique window to leverage that understanding, to prioritise and to be a greater enabler for change in our residents lives. The ideas below represent some examples of early thinking which will be worked up in the timeframe shown. Some will materialise, others will change and new ones will emerge. All of these are subject to consultation, consideration and appropriate governance going forward.

4a. Meeting Residents' Needs

While some services are and have been reviewed, the Council has not reviewed how it delivers all of its services for a number of years. Many services have continued to be delivered in the same way that they have for c. 10 years. Furthermore, the expectations and needs of residents have evolved over this period, and there is a feeling that not all of our services are providing what is needed today.

The Council will therefore instigate a series of service reviews that will radically re-engineer all services in a prioritised way. The outcome of this will be to stop some entire services, or to completely reshape the way that outcomes are delivered. This will follow a standard approach (including a clear Zero Base of the budget which will take effect from 2023/24):

- each director /cabinet member to report back to Lead Members and Directors, initially **within four weeks** to share all initial ideas – **by 31.10.2021**
- each director/ cabinet members to report back in detail to Lead Members and Directors monthly over a period of 8 months (i.e. by May 2022) all radical service reviews to be undertaken

This will be intense, and there is a risk that it may distract from delivering services, but we have to fundamentally challenge the way things are delivered today.

The Council will engage with residents in this and use it over the long term to change and evolve the social contract with communities in the borough.

Several local authorities have had great success with involving residents and communities directly in the business of improving local neighbourhoods. “**Participatory Budgeting**” involves engaging residents and sometimes community organisations to decide how best to use limited amounts of funding to have dramatic and lasting impact on communities and neighbourhoods. Glasgow, Tower Hamlets, and the London Borough of Ealing have all had success with using small amounts of seed funding to tackle issues like unemployment, mental health and various social inequalities. Provided the projects are well-planned and investment of time is made in stakeholder engagement, costs are typically low, and returns can be substantial. Slough will actively pursue options for Participatory Budgeting as one of several ways to keep costs low whilst protecting and where possible enhancing community services.

At the heart of all our future working will be a co-production and co-design ethos ensuring that residents, communities, partners and local businesses are at the core of all of our changes.

4b. Community & Society

The Council will focus on identifying the needs of the most vulnerable in the community and society and will aim to ensure more preventative work by commissioning the right support for them before they hit crisis.

Slough will draw in best practise examples of Early Intervention and Prevention from across the UK and internationally, to ensure that its highly limited resources are used in an evidence-based, targeted manner to help those in the greatest need. There are some particularly vulnerable members of the community who have significant needs which often span across different agencies – and therefore need help not just from the Council, but from strategic partners like Health, Police, and those in the Education system. Slough will step up to being a more dynamic community leader, bringing partners together to share information and resources to ensure that the most vulnerable get the right help at the right time, and that all agencies make the appropriate contributions in terms of people and financial resources to achieve this.

In addition, the Council will strengthen its approach to managing demand, so that those most in need receive the support they need in a timely and efficient manner. To achieve this, it will create a consistent and effective “front door” approach, and integrate services so that there is a “One-Slough” approach and appropriate outcome driven decision-making wherever the need may present itself. Managing demand effectively does not necessarily mean providing additional services: in fact, some of the best “demand management” approaches which Slough will learn from and incorporate actually involve empowering and enabling individuals to be as independent as possible. Switching the Council’s mindset from “direct provider” to “compassionate enabler” will play an important role in helping to redesign services to provide better outcomes in more cost-effective ways.

In relation to **homelessness**, aside from being a national emergency, the homeless crisis has cost councils over £1 billion in 2018-2019 according to Shelter – a 78% increase in five years. Enfield Council took a human-centred and data-led approach to radically transform their housing and homelessness service.

The new service:

- improves outcomes for vulnerable residents in the borough, with temporary accommodation being truly temporary
- ensures the Council intervenes in potential homelessness cases earlier and reduces the number of households reaching ‘crisis point’
- increases partnership working across sectors and with those experiencing homelessness
- drives an improvement in how staff engage with and treat residents
- generates financial savings
- transforms the property procurement approach, with collaboration with neighbouring boroughs at its core.

Example initiative: Predictive Analytics, Single Front Door, demand management in Children’s Services, transforming services for children and young people on the edge of the care system

4c. Leading from the front: leadership and management

The scale of challenge Slough Council faces should not be underestimated. The size of change required needs strong, vibrant, and clear leadership. The Council needs to change the approach and style of its top management leadership and drive the right such leadership culture at all levels of the Council, where staff are empowered to make decisions and lead their teams through the complexities of change and transformation at pace.

Managers and staff must be trusted and empowered in this new way of working. They will be provided with appropriate support whilst clear expectations are communicated in terms of performance and effectiveness.

Example initiatives: management organisation, technology - enabled care, single front door, demand management, contract management

4d. Technology - enabled support

A myriad of technologies will impact the public sector and in particular local government in the coming years. Advancements in technology offer tremendous potential to accelerate transformation – but also the potential for the disruption of current business and operating models. When harnessed effectively as a strategic tool, they can provide the missing link to help deliver better outcomes for citizens in a more sustainable way.

To truly harness this potential, it is important to understand the **current technology and digital** devices that people are already accessing within their homes, digital photo frames, facetime, reminders, smart home technology and wearables. Building upon the strength-based approach by improving the digital inclusion of vulnerable people in the community through training and upskilling so that they are able to make best use of the technologies that are on offer.

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham are working to embed a technology first culture whilst retaining independence for individual service users/care recipients. The table in Appendix 1 below outlines some of the current and emerging technologies in the market, and how they can be used to deliver better outcomes for complex client groups

4e. Working with partners

The challenges Slough Borough Council faces in the coming years cannot be tackled successfully by working on its own. The historic challenges which have accumulated in recent years, combined with the new challenges the Council faces following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, mean that it needs to transform the way it works with partners. There must be a “One Slough” approach which extends beyond the remit of the Council as a service provider, and which brings partners across public services together to think about how best to use the collective resources to improve residents’ lives.

In practical terms this means joining up services with those provided by partners – for example to provide better services for groups or individuals with complex and multiple needs; sharing information more effectively; commissioning and paying for services jointly where that will deliver better value for money; and getting better value for money by buying things jointly with partners.

As a priority, the Council will work with partners in local public services to agree a clear plan for the coming years which will set out how to work collectively to protect and enhance services for Slough residents and visitors. This plan will set out how Adults and Children’s

services will work with their Health colleagues to ensure a cost-effective approach to providing services for some of the most vulnerable residents; how the Council will work with the Police to keep communities safe; and how the Council will work together with local communities to deliver the services that matter most to them.

4f. Investing in people and culture

The Council has incredible people working hard and tirelessly to deliver services to the most vulnerable residents. However, there has not been consistent investment in the right skills and culture to allow people to thrive.

The Council therefore needs to understand where it needs to make the right kind of investment in people, and shift the culture to one that embraces change, promotes and rewards new ideas, and puts the resident at the heart of everything that we do. In order to meet the challenges ahead and make the most of the opportunities to do things differently, people will need to work together and support each other. In practice, this will mean thinking about residents and communities in terms of their needs, pooling resources, joining up services, sharing information, moving away from old-fashioned “siloes” ways of working, and moving towards more flexible, agile, and joined up ways of supporting residents.

Key to achieving all this will be to ensure that people have the skills, capabilities, and competencies to transform and improve services across the Council. This will involve modernising the way the Council works and delivers and enables access to services – for example through better use of strategic commissioning, more effective use of cost-effective technologies and systems. Modernising the approach will require staff to develop new skills and capabilities, and the Council will support them in this journey.

The Council will take a strategic approach to learning, training and development, meaning that it will make sure managers have the training and development support they need to lead change effectively, and that their teams are equipped to tackle the challenges and opportunities ahead.

4g. Enabling Services - Providing our people with the right tools and technology

Staff within the Council need the right tools and quality infrastructure to deliver excellent services to the borough’s communities.

This includes technology that is reliable and effective, and a property estate that is modern and designed around the needs of residents rather than traditional departmental silos. The right tools and infrastructure will help stretch the limited resources and deliver more for less. Given the pressures on finances in the coming years, the Council will ensure that any investment required to ensure it is equipped to deliver will be subject to a robust and evidence-based business case, and effective governance arrangements are in place to make sure projects which depend on investment are delivered to time, cost and quality.

The Council will have to invest in certain services that will allow the Council to function properly i.e. a small number of corporate services – these will be:

- **Finance** – the service has been reduced in capacity and skills to a level that it cannot function effectively – no proper accounts for 5 years, imbalanced budgets, wasteful use of the resources it does have, poor financial governance
- **ICT** – the Council will review its core infrastructure (including the cyber security maturity) and identify the roadmap of activities that may be required to improve

- the infrastructure required, and deliver the assurance to leadership and constituents that it is acting securely and safely.
- **HR** – the Council will take a strategic approach to learning, training and development and will invest in cultural change. It will support, enable, and empower staff, whilst setting clear expectations in relation to performance, standards, and effectiveness
- **Data analysis** – the Council will develop performance management dashboards to enable informed decision making

Example initiatives: CRM, ERP, Analytics,

4h. Developing a more commercial approach

The Council will need to develop a new approach to working in a commercial manner with its third party and external suppliers. To be successful this will need to consider expenditure in categories across the Council, and recognise the professional capability required to commission outcomes, set up contracts for success at the start, and to manage these successfully. This approach will be applied across all our external spend – whether it is a small and local organisation, a large global organisation, or one of our arm's length bodies or trusts.

4i. Enabling regeneration

We will have very much a smaller property estate and capital programme. The days of borrowing to deliver construction/regeneration outcomes are over and we will need to think innovatively as to how we can work in partnership with the private sector and other government bodies to drive regeneration of Slough, bring in new businesses to drive the economy and create new jobs, and provide homes for the our residents.

Section 5: Balancing the Risks and Opportunity

The Council faces significant challenges in the years to come, in terms of ensuring the books are balanced, community services are protected, and the right type of support is available at the right time to enable local communities to flourish and thrive.

To achieve these outcomes, the Council will take an approach that balances a prudent and scrupulous approach to risk management with a bold and determined approach to identifying and seizing opportunities.

In practical terms, this means it will have to:

- strengthen leadership and governance arrangements and do everything it can to ensure it retains control over key decisions which affect the future of the Council and local community
- balance aspirations for long-term transformation with short-term actions to control spend and protect services. Strategies will need to deliver quick wins and immediate benefits, whilst laying the foundations for bigger positive change in years to come
- carefully weigh opportunities which require investment to deliver, to ensure that Slough residents are getting the best value for money from decision-making
- build on some of the good local practice that is already in place, whilst driving a culture which embraces change and improvement
- support, enable and empower staff, whilst setting clear expectations in relation to performance, standards, and effectiveness

- take a balanced and proportionate view of performance: The Council will focus appropriately on the budget and financial management but will not forget that it is here to serve the local communities and that residents are the top priority. This means it will have to strengthen its approach to resource management, whilst improving the way it works with local communities to ensure that decisions affecting residents are always taken with their best interests and priorities in mind.

Section 6: Next Steps

Immediate (Now to May 2022)

- **By 31.10.2021:** Each Director / cabinet member to report back to Lead Members and Directors initially **within four weeks** to share their high-level service reviews e.g. setting out what services can be realigned, reduced and/or changed to significantly reduce their call on the budget
- A **council wide prioritising** of the key service areas to be delivered will be undertaken
- **Stakeholder engagement:** Throughout the programme the Council will engage all stakeholders in open and transparent communication on where the programme is at and why. A stakeholder and communications plan will be developed and implemented. Stakeholders will include inspection and Government bodies, residents, business, staff, partners etc.
- **Radical service reviews** to be undertaken
- **Restructure of services** on a rolling programme to reflect the Council's diminished resources while realigning reporting lines to provide clear direction to the organisation pending a more permanent restructure
- Slough will have a recommendation for a **detailed delivery plan** for savings over the period of the MTFS – which will be to 31/3/26

Next (May 2022 to May 2023)

- Continue to refine the initial service reviews

Beyond (May 2023 onwards)

- Zero base of the budget will take effect from 2023/24

Appendix 1

Type of technology	Example Provider	Types of complex clients	Impact
Smart devices, connectivity support and sensors supported by applications	Alcove, Alcuris, Intelligent Lilli	Learning Disabilities, Mental Health, Older people with dementia	<p>Smart devices can support people to manage their own physical environment more independently. Simple to use video phones have been shown to reduce isolation and serve as a more efficient way of accessing services.</p> <p>Coupled with AI capabilities, this can help to understand people's behaviours to support more informed choices about their health and wellbeing. It also provides information to the user on who could support them if required.</p>
Robotics	Universities	Physical Disabilities, Frailty, and dementia	Support with daily tasks in a range of different settings. This will significantly improve workforce resilience and focus. For example, this can reduce the need for double handed care.
Gaming software	My Cognition	Mental Health	Support to assess and manage mental health conditions with less practitioner intervention, promoting selfcare. Emerging platforms for physical fitness, skills development, and citizen participation, whilst not tailored for complex groups, should still be considered as opportunities to deliver outcomes.
Smart devices supported by applications to help with daily living tasks	Autonome, Orcha	Learning disabilities	Media electronic whiteboards and apps to help with organisational and planning promoting independence in daily tasks with communication styles tailored to audiences. Results have demonstrated a reduced reliance on care, barrier currently is connecting the data into reviews and care planning.
Virtual Reality (VR)	Anster, Microsoft	Dementia, Learning Disabilities, Sensory Disabilities, Mental Health	<p>A key prevention tool in "emotional understanding" and empathy to create a positive impact on the relationships in challenging family environments.</p> <p>For people with dementia VR can help them with memory recall and to reduce aggression improving their interactions with caregivers.</p> <p>Similarly, VR can benefit children and adults with an array of disabilities by providing a safe and immersive learning experience that will nudge behaviours.</p> <p>Condition-specific simulations as an educational tool for both paid and informal carers to helping them 'see through the eyes'</p>

Type of technology	Example Provider	Types of complex clients	Impact
			<p>of the vulnerable person, so they can provide more 'empathetic' care.</p> <p>Virtual meeting rooms to increase efficiency of service models.</p>
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Many	Learning Disabilities, Sensory Disabilities, Mental Health, Cognitive Impairment	<p>AI is a rapidly evolving technology that harnesses the ability of machines to learn and perform cognitive functions incorporating learning, problem-solving, speech recognition and planning. Given this context the use of AI is potentially vast. Some examples include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Predictive analysis: (see 1) 2) Adaptive Learning: (see 2) 3) Reading, writing, and speaking: This includes grammar and speech recognition apps and software. This type of solution can be used for supporting people with learning disabilities into employment and accessing the job market.
Productivity Tools	everyLIFE, Alcuris		<p>Increased collaboration, visibility, communication and availability of work tasks, information and records, can support the development of shared care records, and digital care planning facilitate better joined up working between health and care professionals and providers supporting a seamless and integrated approach to care planning and delivery.</p> <p>Enabling commissioners and families to monitor the quality of care being provided, the real time identification of risks (e.g. falls, medication compliance) as well as streamlining the referral process for a number of pathways (e.g. home from hospital, end of life care) to support an immediate response from providers.</p>

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