

14th October, 2011

MEETING	CABINET	
	Councillor Anderson	Leader of the Council - Finance & Strategy
	Councillor S Chaudhry	Community & Leisure
	Councillor A S Dhaliwal	Performance & Accountability
	Councillor Matloob	Opportunity & Skills
	Councillor Pantelic	Education and Children
	Councillor Parmar	Environment & Open Spaces
	Councillor Swindlehurst	Neighbourhoods & Renewal
	Councillor Walsh	Health & Wellbeing
DATE AND TIME:	MONDAY, 17TH OCTOBER, 2011 AT 6.30 PM	
VENUE:	FLEXI HALL, THE CENTRE, FARNHAM ROAD, SLOUGH, BERKSHIRE, SL1 4UT	
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER: (for all enquiries)	CATHERINE MEEK	01753 875011

SUPPLEMENTARY PAPERS

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

* Items 4, 7 and 10; reports were not available for publication with the rest of the agenda.

PART 1

<u>AGENDA ITEM</u>	<u>REPORT TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>	<u>WARD</u>
4.	Medium Term Financial Strategy	1 - 18	All
7.	Looked After Children Review	19 - 32	All
10.	References from Overview and Scrutiny	33 - 36	All
	‘A’- Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Housing Benefit Reforms and the Impact on Slough		
	‘B’- Health Scrutiny Panel: Employment Support for People with Disabilities		

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SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Cabinet

DATE: 17th October 2011

CONTACT OFFICERS: Julie Evans, Strategic Director of Resources & Regeneration

WARD(S): All

PORTFOLIO: Finance and Strategy – Councillor Anderson

PART I
KEY DECISION

Draft Budget Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan 2012/13 to 2015/16

1 **Purpose of Report**

This report sets out the latest projections of the Council's Revenue and Capital Budgets, for the period 2012/2013 to 2015/16. It considers the main assumptions driving the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan; and seeks to provide a sustainable financial platform addressing all known current requirements across the medium term. The paper proposes (as at Appendices A), a strategy for securing savings requirements whilst maintaining the focus on protection for front line services wherever possible.

2 **Recommendations**

The Cabinet is requested to resolve that:

- a) The Council's current projected Revenue Budget for 2012/13 to 2015/16 be noted.
- b) The assumptions underlying the Medium Term Financial Plan be noted.
- c) Approve the overarching savings strategy and targets as set out on Appendix A and request further development of additional proposals to meet remaining budget deficit.
- d) Consider and agree the areas of Directorate based savings proposals for as summarised in para 5.7, and request officers, to implement them with immediate effect where possible.
- e) and agree the specific proposals set out in section 5.15 requesting officers, to implement them with immediate effect where possible.
- f) Any in year under-spends **arising as a result of early implementation of savings**, are allocated as a 50/50 split between; further improving the protection afforded by the general fund balances and agreed directorate based invest to save initiatives.
- g) The Chief Executive as Head of Paid Service and the Strategic Director of Resources as the S 151 Officer in consultation with Commissioners be

authorised to approve changes to the Council's establishment as a result of delivery of the savings as at appendices A.

3 Key Policy Priority Implications

The Revenue and Capital budgets are the Council's financial plans for the forthcoming year. As such, the budgets will allocate resources to enable the delivery of the Council's Key Policy Priorities through the individual departmental and service plans.

4 Other Implications

Financial Implications

4.1 These are contained within the body of the report summarised in table 1 below.

Details	Latest position post Finance Settlement					
		Provisional Settlement		CSR 2010		
	10/11 £'000	11/12 £'000	12/13 £'000	13/14 £'000	14/15 £'000	15/16 £'000
Opening Budget	102,395	103,979	105,107	101,666	101,448	103,404
Total Inflation	1,200	1,150	1,500	2,400	2,200	2,000
Total Previously Agreed Growth *	5,875	2,538	1,232	(211)	22	0
Total Previously Agreed Savings *	(4,051)	(4,423)	(1,835)	(200)	0	0
Total New Savings Mitigating Cuts to Public Sector Spending **	0	(8,011)	(5,012)	(3,830)	0	0
* Shown in Appendix D						
** shown in appendix A						
New Growth (TBA)		50				
LAC permanent allocation of reserve provision			645			
Carbon Emissions Levy			380			
<u>Expected income from specific grant schemes now rolled in to FG</u>						
TOTAL GRANT IMPACT		10,674	133	56	56	56
Contingency - Economic Risk		500	0	500	0	0
Total Pensions Adjustments	0	475	0	500	0	0
Capital Programme Adjustments	(1,440)	(508)	0	750	0	0
Specific Grant & Transfer Adjustments	0	0	964	206	154	154
Council Tax Freeze Grant	0	(1,187)	(1,187)	0	0	0
New Homes Bonus (estimate)	0	(130)	(260)	(390)	(475)	(575)
BUDGET REQUIREMENT	103,979	105,107	101,666	101,448	103,404	105,039
SPECIFIC GRANTS ROLLING INTO FORMULA GRANT		5,524	5,476	5,421	5,367	5,313
FORMULA GRANT	56,756	51,723	46,647	46,181	46,181	46,181
COUNCIL TAX REQUIREMENT	47,223	47,860	47,860	48,817	50,038	51,289
TOTAL ESTIMATED FUNDING AVAILABLE	103,979	105,107	99,983	100,419	101,585	102,783
REMAINING BUDGET GAP	0	0	(1,683)	(1,028)	(1,819)	(2,257)
Annual savings required		(12,434)	(8,530)	(5,058)	(1,819)	(2,257)
Cumulative impact of cuts to public spending secured		(8,011)	(13,023)	(16,853)		

Human Rights Act & Other Legal Implications

- 4.2 The Council has various legal responsibilities around financial matters but, of primary importance: the Council must not plan to spend more than the resources it has available to it in any one year – the Council must set a ‘balanced budget’.
- 4.3 The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) presents the projected financial position of the Council for 2012/13 to 2015/16; and includes:
- Recommended growth and savings options identified to date, to be considered by Members; and
 - A number of key assumptions (summarised below), alongside
 - Highlighted key issues (summarised below)
- 4.4 The 2003 Local Government Bill places a duty on the Council to consider the robustness of budget estimates, the adequacy of reserves and the affordability of its capital programme in preparing its budget for the year.
- 4.5 The cuts to public sector spending apply across the public sector as a whole and place considerable burden on local authorities. Members have requested every effort be made to minimise the impact on the end users of front line operational services, this document sets out the approach to meeting the known savings requirements of the recent CSR, however it does not take into account the implications of the embryonic proposals set out in the localism bill pending further clarity.
- 4.6 There are no other legal or Human Rights Act implications.

Workforce

- 4.7 If agreed, the savings options to be considered will involve the transformation of some services and different delivery methods for others. Every effort will be made to ensure the Council’s contribution to the local economy as major employer will be maintained and where possible enhanced. Further, Member’s remain committed to protecting the interest and welfare of both existing and future staff . Every effort will be made to implement savings measures in a way that reflects that commitment. Compulsory redundancies will only be considered as a last resort. The Council will ensure that HR policies are applied to minimise the impact of decisions for all affected staff by seeking via a combination of voluntary severance or early retirement arrangements, applying innovative Workforce Development Strategies and adopting a pro- active approach to securing redeployment opportunities wherever possible.

5. Supporting Information

The current financial climate

- 5.1 As members will be aware following the change of government in May 2010, the coalition government implemented significant cuts to public sector spending. These cuts are in addition to the efficiency requirements the council already had in place (included on table 1 as “previously agreed savings” and “previously agreed growth”). Further, any new investment in our communities must be contained within the constraints of this severely restricted cash envelope. The cumulative effect of

the impact of the financial pressures affecting the council is summarised in table 2 below.

All Years Summary - Cumulative Impact	£000's
Cumulative App A's	-16,853.00
savings for period in year cuts 2010-11	- 2,566.00
Cumulative Impact Cuts to Public Spending	-19,419.00
Previously agreed savings	- 6,458.00
Total Demand for Savings/Efficiencies	-25,877.00
Allocated for Growth	3,581.00
REDUCTION IN SPENDING POWER (CUTS)	-22,296.00

- 5.2 Some further pressures are anticipated in future years as a result of the proposals currently under consultation, for example 10% reduction in Council Tax Benefit funding. However, until further detail concerning the impact of these proposals is known, the Corporate Management Team have adopted a pragmatic approach to planning for major financial change by seeking to secure a sustainable financial position for the future via concentrated savings activities across the next 2 financial years to address the known issues.
- 5.3 Currently under various stages of implementation are a range of proposals affecting future financial stability for Local Authorities including proposals relating to Education and Schools buildings, Council Tax Benefit, Fraud and Benefits Investigations, The transfer of responsibilities for Public Health and a single universal credit benefit system.
- 5.4 Members are asked to consider the timely implementation of the £8.845m of savings across the next 2 financial years, listed at Appendix A, in order that full-year savings will be generated from 1 April 2012.
- 5.5 In an effort to reduce the need for compulsory redundancies, the Leader and Chief Executive have written to all staff seeking any individual expressions of interest. Taking into account their own personal circumstances, staff have been encouraged to consider a range of alternative future employment options – including early retirement, voluntary redundancy and reduced working hours. (attached, Appendix B).
- 5.6 In accordance with current policy, such decisions on early retirement on the grounds of efficiency are delegated to officers provided no discretionary payments apply. The policy also delegates redundancy decisions to officers where groups of less than 5 are affected and requires such matters to be reported as part of the significant decisions process. The workforce planning exercise is likely to affect more than 5 staff however as it is approved by Cabinet, decisions would as a matter of course be undertaken by officers within the current policy framework.
- 5.7 To maximise savings and facilitate swift change Cabinet is asked to agree the Chief Executive as Head of Paid Service and the Strategic Director of Resources as the S 151 Officer in consultation with corporate management team and the appropriate Commissioners, be authorised to approve changes to the Council's establishment, subject to a viable business case, to meet the organisational changes required in light of the budget constraints going forward.

- 5.8 The scale of the cost reductions required alongside Member's explicit objective to afford the greatest protection to our front line services, drives the cross cutting corporate approach to savings set out on appendices A. The workforce planning exercise may provide a window of opportunity, requiring quick decision, that enables efficiency savings to be achieved. Therefore, Cabinet is asked to agree that the Chief Executive in consultation with the leader of the Council can implement alternative management structures if any realistic and appropriate occasions arise. It should be noted ability to take advantage quickly of such opportunities may require a stepped process of change involving one or more temporary measures in advance of a longer term permanent solution. All permanent changes arising as a result of decisions taken by the Leader and Chief Executive would be reported to Members at the next available opportunity.
- 5.9 The primary focus of the second phase (in place by 1st April 2012) of the anticipated savings is, as previously stated focussed in the main away from front line services and where pressures inevitably fall to such services, re-shaping the service to deliver the same or greater benefits to end users more efficiently will be the primary objective.
- 5.10 Officers are currently developing options based on the above. The projected overall shortfall across the medium term period covered in the MTFS at table 1 is £15.629million. Initial savings proposals presented on appendices A provide opportunities of £8.842million, leaving a current deficit across the period of £6.787million. The intention is to explore further opportunities and present options for consideration by members before the end of calendar year. The target figure is based on current projections and may reduce or increase as a result of a number of variables.
- 5.11 For the medium to longer-term, given the scale of the expected funding reductions, it is likely that radical reform of the Council's structure and service provision will be required and in order to meet the objective of protecting service users significant change will be required. Members agreed during the previous budget process that some radical change may well result requiring:
- A different council - fewer staff numbers, probably a smaller proportion staff in direct employment, certainly a smaller management structure;
 - Even greater focus on community needs and priorities; everything will need to be challenged for its value for money and community impact.
 - Fewer universal services and services largely targeted at specific need;
 - A changed relationship with customers and communities, being clear about what can and cannot be done;
 - Getting the right balance between prevention and reactive activity;
 - New models of delivery fit for purpose and delivering priority outcomes;
 - More shared functions with other local authorities and public sector agencies;
 - Increased joint working with public sector colleagues including pooling of resources and services designed around individual and community need.
- 5.12 Work will commence, examining many of the possibilities outlined above, to meet the significant challenges of illustrated on table 1 above.

The Revenue Budget – Latest Projections

5.13 The latest Revenue Budget projections, arising from SBC's current Medium Term Financial Plan for 2011/12 to 2014/15, are set out overleaf. Whilst reviewing these figures, several key assumptions must be noted:

- The Council's pay and prices inflationary uplifts will be managed in accordance with the coalition government's expectations and policies. Service contract increases will be based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI). With the following additional elements :
 - Members have implemented the £250 pay increase to low paid staff This was originally a provision within Government proposals but not one they were able to deliver directly.
 - Inflation is expected to continue to rise above government expectations and an adjustment has been made to reflect this and accommodated within the financial model set out in table 1.
- The 2011 /12 Revenue Budget is expected to provide opportunities within the year. Early implementation of savings proposals will drive some one off gains in year. It is proposed that any such opportunities are maximised and allocated on a 50/50 basis to the following key priority areas:
 - i) Continuing to build on improving the protection of the general fund balances (mitigating further the residual risk identified by the District Auditor)
 - ii) Enabling investment in capacity needed to drive the changes required, where a demonstrable invest to save business case is provided and agreed.
- The current approach to managing in year spend must be maintained as overspends will have a consequent impact on the level of cash reserves and also the budget requirement for the coming year.
- The Collection Fund is assumed to be in balance across all three years. The collection fund is the fund administered by the Council into which all council taxes and business rates are paid; and from which payments are made to the General Funds of precepting authorities and to the national business rate pool. It is therefore assumed that the Council obtains all local taxation due.
- Income from council tax is assumed to be static in 2011/12 and 2012/13, based on the coalition government's stated ambitions to freeze council tax across these two years however it should be noted government funding has been assumed to cover the cost for both years, any reduction in proposed funding levels may impact directly on local tax payers. Thereafter, the MTFP assumes static levels of increase in council tax with no account being taken of the potential disproportional increase in inflation. No assumption has been made for the increase in new properties being built in SBC, which would impact on the level of council tax income generated. Articles in the national press suggest that house-building and mortgage lending rates are currently at a significant low.

In conclusion, primarily related to the funding assumptions noted above, there remains a substantial funding gap for 2012/13 to 2015/16 that will need to be managed.

Reducing the future funding gap – progress to date

- 5.14 In order to achieve a balanced revenue budget, in 2011/12 and beyond, it is clear that a significant amount of work will need to be undertaken by Service Areas and CMT.

Additionally, as table 1 illustrates there remains a substantial funding gap for 2012/13 to 2015/15 that will need to be managed.

- 5.15 The Council currently has proposals for savings for £8.842 million as set out on appendices A and securing these is critical to secure financial stability in future years.

The following summarises a suite of proposed elements of directorate based savings. Each individual Directorate will submit summaries of savings proposals for agreement by Cabinet. Once agreed, the proposals will be subject to appropriate consultation prior to any implementation.

The first suite of proposals relates to the Services Groups within the Resources and Regeneration Directorate and are summarised below.

- £236k (£141k net impact), Estates Facilities and property Maintenance structure changes.
- £100k Strategic Housing structural changes proposal
- £145k Planning/Highways/transport – Structural Changes
- £100k Finance and HR service budget reductions relating to Land-charges ICT licensing charges (£18k), Occupational Health Service contract negotiations (£32k) and Internal Audit tender award (£50k)
- £40k Align opening hours of Chalvey waste with demand
- £75k Improve efficiency in street cleaning
- £41k Seasonal Adjustment to green Waste collections

Total £737k (net impact £642k)

Further specific service based proposals for consideration totally £389k are summarised on Appendix C.

The total proposed savings is £1.126 million.

Growth

- 5.16 To date All managers and directors have been made aware that only essential growth (e.g. contractual, legislative and demand requirements) can be entertained and are likely to be funded by finding compensatory savings. Further, all savings proposals put forward must be realistic, achievable and professionally defensible.

Capital Programme

- 5.17 Members have agreed further explore the potential benefits of a LABV. This will affect the profiling of the capital financing requirements in the period up to formal decision by members. This will be built into the capital financing assumptions and may provide a short-term financial gain.
- 5.18 Members may recall that the total capital spend for 2010/2011 was £42.414m. Considerable progress has been made in delivering long standing commitments, this has had a consequent effect on the reduction in reserves set aside expressly for the purpose of financing such projects. Cabinet agreed on 12th September 2011 that a revised capital programme enabling maximum flexibility for the negotiations around the LABV would be prepared by the Asset Management Group, the outcome of this exercise will form the basis of a recommended 'revised' position across the capital programme over the coming years for consideration by members.
- 5.19 The overall HRA capital programme is £25.357m for the period 2012/13 to 2016/17. The programmed spend for 2011/12 is £7.882m.
- 5.20 In April 2012 the Localism Bill is proposing to introduce an alternative funding mechanism for local authority housing. Known as self-financing, the proposal replaces the current subsidy system whereby the Government determines how much each local authority can spend on its housing service with a system through which local authorities retain the totality of the rent raised and collected in return for taking on a proportion of the national housing debt. The existing and retained HRA ring-fence means that this initiative, which will see the Council borrow between an additional £120 - £140million does not directly affect the General Fund however it will add to the requirement to prudently manage the council's overall borrowing.
- 5.21 Revenue Income Optimisation (RIO) Those functions which currently trade and/or could increase trading are being reviewed for:
- In house income generating opportunity
 - Fees and charges review
 - Third party income generating opportunities.

Reserves

- 5.22 SBC's general reserves have increased as planned to £6.384m. Drawing on reserves to fund any budget gaps is a last resort and a clear and timely plan for their replenishment would need to be agreed.

Risks

- 5.23 Budgets are necessarily based on assumptions about what will happen during the next financial year; and therefore there is an inevitable risk that these assumptions might be wrong.
- 5.24 The main foreseen risk is that the proposed savings are not delivered. In an attempt to reduce this risk the budget will be closely monitored via the monthly financial management reports and updated budget information, including savings achieved, will be reported to Cabinet throughout the financial year.

6. **Comments of Other Committees**

6.1 This report was considered and noted by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 11th October, 2011.

7. **Conclusion**

7.1 This paper sets out the latest assessment of the Council's Revenue Budget for the years 2012/2013 to 2015/16.

8. **Appendices**

- A - Detail of £8.842m savings
- B - Workforce Planning letter to staff
- C - Specific Service Based Savings Proposals

Savings mitigating cuts to public sector funding

Area of Activity	Notes	Progress	Savings Banked							
			for 2011/2012			for 2012/2013		for 2013/14	Total savings years 1 - 3	
			EOI's	Other	Total	Target	Value			
			£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
1. Reviewing the Council's approach to income generation, cash and debt management.	3 elements : Management of Old Debt, Processes to improve collection rate (both of these enable us to reduce bad debt provision). 3rd element is an invest to save project (fixed investment costs of £40k) seeking to improve our revenue generating opportunities.	Management of old debt: debt policy change to apply from 10/11 end of year accounts. Sale of old debt clarity needed. Change to processes update needed		(1,081)	(1,081)					(1,081)
		RIO : As detailed on separate summary sheet	0	0	0	(795)	(395)		(400)	(895)
2. Service & organisational Transformation, models (operational services work from last year to secure up to 30% overall cost reduction.)	Provision made to fund repeated EOI exercise with similar assumptions as to costs, alongside phase 2 of org changes	TBC				(3,602)	(1,952)		(1,650)	(7,535)
FYE's previous years changes	areas of recurring under-spending					(600)	(600)			(600)

Area of Activity	Notes	Progress	Savings Banked							
			for 2011/2012			for 2012/2013			for 2013/14	Total savings years 1 - 3
			EOI's £'000	Other £'000	Total £'000	Target £'000	Value £'000		£'000	£'000
3. Final stage of senior management/support services reshaping						(500)	(300)		(200)	(500)
4. Reviewing our assets. Reducing the cost of office accommodation requirements, ensuring value for money in running costs of all Council buildings.	original target not yet met, OTH site further savings and NNDR savings old children's centre					(342)	(342)			(750)
5. Reviewing all major contracts and all commissioned services seeking a minimum 4% saving and securing a change to the basis of inflationary increases.	Includes all cross cutting corporate contracts negotiations and supplier e.g energy/utilities, telephony, catering.	Current year concluded, open book negotiation process for 11/12 savings involving changes to significant contracts underway.				(745)	(150)		(595)	(1,000)
6. Reducing, reshaping and changing, where possible, the way we finance our capital programme to reduce borrowing costs.	Linked to reduction in capital programme, and repackaging of existing debt.	Awaiting the outcome of the asset review/cap programme review.				(500)	(250)		(250)	(1,200)

Area of Activity £'000	Notes	Progress	Savings Banked							
			for 2011/2012			for 2012/2013			for 2013/14	Total savings years 1 - 3
			EOI's £'000	Other £'000	Total £'000	Target £'000	Value £'000		£'000	£'000
7 Increase in commissioned services from the voluntary sector						(253)	(253)			(253)
8 Anticipated savings from the set up of the transactional services centre						(1,400)	(700)		(700)	(1,400)
9 Closure of Wexham Nursery						(105)	(70)		(35)	(105)
10 Additional savings secured in 10/11										(1,332)
(3,830)			0	(1,081)	(1,081)	(8,842)	(5,012)		(3,830)	(16,856)

Date: 3rd October 2011

Directorate: Chief Executive
Contact Name: Ruth Bagley
Contact No: 01753 875000
Fax: 01753 478657
Email: Ruth.bagley@slough.gov.uk

To: All Staff

Dear Colleague,

Planning for the future

We continue to respond to the significant cuts in public sector spending. We made good progress last year in reducing our costs and securing a stable financial base over the medium term and are about half way to our target of £25 million savings over the period 2011 to 2014. Although we have achieved considerable savings on non-staff costs it remains the case that we can only make changes and savings of the scale needed by reducing the number of staff who work for us.

As in the previous year we are determined to minimise the impact of any reduction in staff numbers. Planning ahead is the only way we will be successful, so we are writing to all staff today to seek your input. We want, wherever possible, to accommodate individual wishes and needs when we make staff changes.

Normally we would only have limited information about people's intentions to retire from or leave the Council or aspirations to move from one internal role to another. We haven't to date explicitly encouraged people to think about reducing their working hours or taking periods of unpaid leave or sabbaticals. However, we are now asking you to consider your options and tell us about your plans and aspirations. By knowing what flexibility we have, we will be better able to plan our course through the next couple of uncertain years and to reduce the impact and extent of any compulsory redundancies.

These are the particular areas around which we'd like to understand your intentions:

- **Retirement**

We would like to know if you are planning to retire in the next two years to give us an indication of your intentions. If you have retirement provision protected under the '85-rule' (i.e. where you have reached 55 and your age and service together equal 85 or more) you may want to consider accessing your pension this way. You would have been made aware of the changes to this rule in 2006. If you are uncertain about your eligibility, please check with Human Resources.

If you are over 55 or over 60, you may have different opportunities to access your pension which you may wish to pursue. Currently the age at which people access their pension with their employers' consent is 55. You may be aware of a national review of public sector pensions, although there is no certainty about what, when, or if any changes may apply.

- **Working hours**

We are happy to consider requests to reduce working hours, either permanently or for a defined period of time. You may want to consider a different working pattern, for example job sharing or a 30 hour week.

- **Unpaid leave / Sabbatical**

You may like to consider taking a period of unpaid leave to, for example, travel, study, spend time with your family or learn a new skill. We will be happy to consider such requests.

- **Career development**

If you'd like to move to another part of the Council please share your aspirations with us. Staff movement within the organisation contributes to the flexibility we will need. Please remember that the Council's recruitment and selection criteria would still apply and that you would be expected to demonstrate your suitability for any role, alongside completing a probationary period.

- **Redundancy**

We would like to hear from anyone who wishes to express an interest in redundancy in the current and next financial year. Any posts vacated in this way will constitute a formal redundancy and be deleted from our structure. We must be sure services can continue functioning properly without them so we cannot automatically agree to any request. Redundancies agreed as a result of this expression of interest will benefit from the current generous redundancy package. However, please be aware that the Council may be required, or need to change its policy in the future.

We recognise that sharing plans and wishes with us may feel uncomfortable. We are in no doubt how committed our staff are to their jobs. Responding to this request will in no way be interpreted as a lack of commitment to the Council, or a commitment to proceeding with any plans or options shared with us if acceptable.

We do not expect to hear from everyone as a result of this letter. You may read this and think that none of these options is relevant. If you do express an interest in any of them, we will not hold you to it. Nor can we guarantee being able to meet your request. We will have to look at whether your wishes meet service needs. It's possible that we will run one or more similar exercises in the future to take account of the fact that people's circumstances change.

We are trying to match individuals' plans and aspirations to two corporate needs: reducing costs and maintaining excellent services. We won't therefore be able to consider people's plans in isolation, but will need to understand the complete picture before taking decisions. We will also be using other measures to reduce the risks to staff. For example we will try to reduce our wage bill by not replacing people who leave and using vacated roles as redeployment opportunities for others whose own jobs might be at risk.

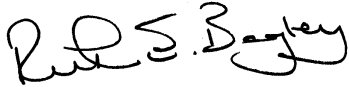
Attached to this letter is a form which provides you with an opportunity to express your interest in any of the options above. If you wish to explore any of the options described above, please return your completed form by Friday, 28th October so we can provide you with further information. You can also request a one-to-one briefing session with Human Resources to find out more.

At this stage completing the expression of interest form involves no commitment on either side and your interest will be treated in confidence. Once you have all the information you need, if you still wish to pursue one of the options, you will need to make a formal request to the HR team. This will be shared with your Director to help CMT decide if your request is possible within the needs of the business.

We expect to have made final decisions by the end of January 2012 at the latest.

We hope we have got across in this letter the purpose of understanding your plans and aspirations in more detail. The next round of all staff briefings will be in November, so you'll have the chance to ask Ruth questions directly before the deadline for confirming your expression of interest. In the meantime, if you have any questions about your personal situation, the changes to the pension rules or anything else please talk to the HR Business Partnership team or to your Assistant Director or Head of Service.

Yours sincerely



Ruth Bagley
Chief Executive



Rob Anderson
Leader

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE - EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FORM

Please PRINT your details on the form below highlighting the options you wish to pursue,
and return in an envelope marked 'Confidential' to
Shaista Baig, HR Support Officer, Human Resources, Ground Floor West,
St Martins Place by **9.00 am, on Friday, 28th October 2011.**

Alternatively you can email your expressions of interest to planningforthefuture@slough.gov.uk

Name:	Directorate:
Employee Number:	Section:
Job Title:	Date of Birth:
Pension Scheme: Berkshire Local Government Pension Scheme <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers Pension Scheme <input type="checkbox"/> Not in the Pension Scheme <input type="checkbox"/>	Current Working Hours*: Hours per week

I may wish to pursue the following options (*please tick all that apply*):

<input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary Redundancy	Preferred date for this to be effective
<input type="checkbox"/> Retirement	Preferred date for this to be effective Please note to be eligible for early retirement you must be age 55 or over at the date of termination.
<input type="checkbox"/> Reduced hours per week	From hours tohours Preferred date for this to be effective
<input type="checkbox"/> Sabbatical	From: / / To : / / (dates)
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Please specify alternative options for consideration	

PLEASE NOTE:

- **There is no commitment on either side by submitting this form.** Expression of Interest forms must be received in Human Resources by **9.00 am, on 28th October 2011.**
- If you wish to have a 1:1 meeting with Human Resources to discuss the above, please contact **Shaista Baig, HR Support Officer on 01753 875063, or email planningforthefuture@slough.gov.uk** for an appointment.
- All forecast figures generated for retirements and redundancies will be based on current salaries and will provide a good indication of benefits.

Resources and Regeneration

Transport and Planning
Savings Options 2012-14

Appendix C

Service Area and function	Saving Option description	Amount (Capital / Revenue)	Date the option can become operational
Transport			
Public Transport	Retain unutilised budgetary provision for Youth Bus scheme.	32k revenue	12/13
Concessionary bus permit scheme	Renegotiate the reimbursement package for the concessionary bus permit scheme with all bus operators.	70k revenue	12/13
Traffic Management	Negotiate transfer to schools of Travel planning services delivered by the centrally funded Bike It officer.	15k revenue	12/13
Road safety	Reorganisation of Thames valley Safer Roads partnership result in savings	40k revenue	12/13
3 rd Party Commercial Fees	Increase Developer s38/278 street-works and commercial building control income.	56k revenue	12/13
Rights of Way	Improved efficiency in Rights of Way budget	20k revenue	12/13
Regional Planning	Reducing budget allocation to reflect national policy that resulted in the winding up of some statutory partners.	76k revenue	12/13
Public Transport	Retender all bus contracts for 'socially necessary' routes which supplement the commercially provided routes through the main bus operators.	25k revenue	12/13
Street Lighting	Operate Street Lighting Maintenance budget more efficiently	50K revenue	12/13
Emergency Planning			
Emergency Officer Rota	Combine two emergency duty rotas (ECO and LALO) into one.	5k	12/13

Total:£ 389k

costs for looked after children and is separated from the operational costs of the Children and Families budget to enable accurate monitoring.

- c) That the projects identified above are funded on an 'invest to save' basis over a two year period to decrease the number of children who are looked after per head of population; and to decrease placement costs.
- d) That these projects, alongside those covered by the safeguarding improvement plan, are included in the SBC 'Gold' Projects to enable effective management, monitoring and monthly reporting to members.

3. Community Strategy Priorities

Celebrating diversity, enabling inclusion

- By identifying and prioritising services for looked after children in the Slough population and targeting services to ensure that this vulnerable group of children and young people have the best possible life chances

Adding years to Life and Life to years

- Through focussing on meeting the health needs of looked after children and young people

Being Safe, Feeling Safe

- By providing suitable, cost-effective placements for children and young people in short term care to meet their identified needs before their long term plans are finalised.
- By providing long term 'forever' families for children and young people who cannot return home, offering stability and security during childhood and in moving into independence
- By carrying out our statutory role as a local authority to provide services for children in care as corporate parents
- By ensuring that children and young people who are looked after have the standards of care and life opportunities that we would want for our own children
- By working effectively with partner agencies so that they also contribute to improved outcomes for looked after children and young people

Prosperity for All

- By promoting educational achievement which gives children and young people in care and leaving care enjoyment in learning and increased opportunities for success in adult life

4. Other Implications

4.1 Financial Effects

The base budget allocation will require budget growth funding of £645k from 1st April 2012, this will be incorporated within the budget planning process currently underway.

4.2 The one off allocation can be funded in year utilising the £500k windfall funds secured in year arising as a result of prior years over provision of funding for concessionary travel, topped up by £326k of the contingency provision with the current years revenue budget.

Historical information

4.1.1 Table 1 below provides an overview of the increase in the number of looked after children, the financial effects on the LAC budget and compensatory savings made within the directorate (sources of the various compensatory savings are detailed at Appendix 1). The Directorate outturn figures indicate at first glance the mechanism for containing the rises in costs was appropriate and largely successful. The 21% increase in the number of LAC since January 2005 did not impact materially at a financial level until financial year 2009/2010, primarily because the funding levels were increased in financial year 2006/2007 when the baseline was moved to fund associated costs of 147 children looked after. The relatively small pressures between 2007 and 2010 were largely due to increased costs of care and longer time spent in care rather than the increase in numbers of children looked after at that time.

4.1.2 The jump in numbers of children looked after between Jan 09 and Jan 10 is consistent with the national picture in the wake of the Baby P case which attracted media interest in November 2008. The subsequent increase in child protection issues accounts for the time lag to the inevitable associated increase in numbers of looked after children and changed landscape of safeguarding across the country.

Table 1

	06/07 Budget Baseline	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12 August
Number of Looked After Children	147	116	133	151	169	187
Annual Increase in cost from baseline budget		176	202	500	172	889
Cumulative effect		176	378	878	1050	1939
Compensatory savings (Appendix 1)		-597	404	-653	-783	-889
Directorate Outturn		-421	506*	-153	-611	0**

* including non operational items

** Including £600k contingency

4.1.3 A rise in the number of looked after children impacts on other areas in addition to the placement budgets outlined in this paper. For example, the increase in child protection and looked after children created additional financial pressures which have been met from within the service. This includes:

- Family group conferences
- Contact
- Social work time

- Independent Reviewing Officer time
- Court fees (recently increased nationally)
- Legal costs

4.1.4 The details of these costs are not included in this paper, but are available.

4.1.5 The legacy of the increase in looked after children is not simply a result of increased numbers and associated costs. Changes in the courts system have resulted in major delays in cases coming to court, delaying decisions about children's future placements. Government have instigated a national enquiry into this. There is also evidence of increasingly complex cases, and larger numbers of younger children coming into care as a result of parental substance abuse and domestic abuse, with a consequent rise in long-term care costs. Since 2009, the natural focus of the service (consistent with trends nationally) has been in relation to safeguarding and gate-keeping around the numbers of children coming into the care system. The Council's recent OFSTED safeguarding report focuses even more attention on sharpening professional practices in this area. The additional resource requirement of the improvement plan has been separately financed by the council and as such does not impact onerously on the ongoing revenue requirements. However it does continue to concentrate the capacity of the service at the point of entry to care. This leaves limited resources and capacity to address other key aspects of the process; including preventative work to address the issues that contribute to children being at risk in the first place, such as alcohol and drug abuse, and the movement of those children in our care into more suitable long term care solutions such as adoption or special guardianship.

4.1.6 Analyses of the areas of compensatory savings (appendix 1) indicate the short term opportunistic nature of the approach used to identify appropriate areas for cross funding the rising costs on LAC. Some component parts of budget utilised in previous years continue to be available and continue to enable the service to meet its day to day budget needs via the agreed cash envelope, (incorporating the one off £600k allocation for 11/12). Other elements are no longer available due to either the one off nature of these grants, or the funding source being withdrawn as part of the government spending cuts. The impact on the children already in our care, of the skewed focusing of resources and capacity in LAC costs and safeguarding issues is a matter that needs to be addressed outside of the standard revenue allocation.

4.1.7 The details above illustrate the financial impact of the increase in the number of looked after children (those entering care) since 2010 when the numbers exceeded the increased budget for LAC placements agreed 2006-7. No formal budget growth for LAC placements has been agreed as over the years the service has made compensatory savings across other areas to accommodate the growth in demand. With the exception of £232k one off amounts the current year's offsetting savings are sustainable provided the LAC numbers remain at their present level. It is proposed that a growth bid to allocate the one off £600k current years funding on a permanent basis is incorporated into the 12/13 budget process.

4.2 Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

These proposals enable elected members to fulfil their responsibilities as Corporate Parents under the Children Act 1989, and succeeding legislation and guidance.

4.3 Workforce

The workforce implications of the projects outlined would be to recruit up to 8.5fte staff with specialist skills on short term contracts to carry out the work outlined in Appendix 2. All other work would be carried out through existing staff.

5. Supporting Information

- 5.1 It is clear that the rise in costs of children looked after is a matter that must be addressed to prevent the impact of the diversion of funds, capacity and focus on wider services to children. It is therefore proposed to allocate a further £826k to fund a range of invest to save projects focussing on the two primary areas described below. Summary costs and benefits are illustrated in table 2 below and further insight into the projects themselves is available at appendix 2. The service will be required to secure a minimum return on the investment to offset the value of the one off compensatory savings currently being used to support the ongoing revenue budget by the 31st March 2013 (£232k)

Table 2

	Investment 2011-13 £'000	Estimated Full future years annual return on investment £'000
Capacity to deliver projects	261	0
Projects	565	586
Total	826	586

£232k minimum ROI by 31/03/2013

5.2 Action to secure appropriate long term alternative to care solutions in the best interest of the children currently looked after

- 5.2.1 Section 2 of Appendix 2 gives details of the projects to secure long term alternatives to care. These include:
- Increasing the recruitment of adopters
 - Setting up a special recruitment project for children over 5
 - Funding to purchase adoptive placements for children from the voluntary sector and other local authorities
 - Converting fostering placements to residence, Special Guardianship or Adoption Orders

- 5.2.2 Adoption is one example where capacity would assist in effective financial planning. We currently have 26 children in our care awaiting adoptive families. Adoption is a solution identified for children who are not able to live with their birth families, and the primary benefit of adoption is the well-being of the child in a particular setting. The cost of sourcing and delivering a suitable adoption solution from the voluntary sector is £27k per placement. Currently, the revenue budget assumes and makes provision for the cost of 1 such adoption placement in the financial year 2011/2012. This allocation has already been used in August 2011. This leaves 26 children in our care where adoption has been identified as the most appropriate long term solution and no current adoptive families are available.
- 5.2.3 The core funded Family Placement Service is currently up to capacity doing assessments of 13 prospective adoptive families. It is unusual for every assessment undertaken to result in an adoptive placement so it is unlikely that as many as 13 children would be placed for adoption as a result of this activity. 10 placements might be a practical but not guaranteed number to use as a basis from which to plan.
- 5.2.4 If we have plans to address the needs of 10 children from the cohort of 26, then further activity needs to be additionally funded in order to identify the capacity to secure 16 more adoptive placements. It is likely that the total sum required falls in the region of £0.4m for the adoption deficit to be realistically addressed.
- 5.2.5 The average weekly cost of placement for a child in independent foster care is £736 pw (£38,272 per year per child). The average comparative ongoing cost for successful adoption is £94.99 per week (£4,940 per year) although these figures may vary as adoption allowances are means tested and based on the needs of the child.

NB. Increasing the number of children who are subject of residence orders, special guardianship or adoptions with a person connected to them is cost neutral.

5.3 Strategy to stabilise costs

- 5.3.1 Re-basing the revenue budget to provide for stable funding for the current number of looked after children will (subject to stability in numbers entering the care system) secure a sustainable position for future years. However, the legacy of the past has resulted in a backlog of need within the system that needs additional investment if we are to secure the outcomes for the children. The funding requested within this report provide sufficient investment to address both issue.
- 5.3.2 These include:
- Amalgamate the commissioning and sourcing of all external placements by appointing 2 staff to work with the Commissioning Manager and the Family Placement Service to source best value, best match placements
 - Build on the successful negotiations with external agencies which have brought down the average cost of an Independent Fostering Agency

(IFA) down from £751 a week in September 2010 to £736 per week in September 2011 and pursue the South-East local authorities tendering commissioning framework for IFA providers (Improvement and Efficiency South East Project).

- Increasing the number of in house foster placements, through increasing the capacity of the team
- Improve pathway planning and support for young people at 15+ so that they can move to more independent accommodation in supported lodgings
- Improve the supply and quality monitoring of supported lodgings and semi-independent options

5.4 A range of other measures to stabilise costs and reduce demand in the longer term include:

- Increasing the effectiveness of multi-agency interventions in early intervention and prevention services and for children with child protection plans
- Reviewing the Looked After Children Panel to scrutinise planning and alternative solutions for children on the edge of care
- Reviewing the Purchased Placements Panel to oversee practice, quality and value for money in all placements
- Improving long-term planning for the population of Looked After Children, and updating the Sufficiency Strategy
- Decreasing the number and average duration of stay at each stage of care planning through reviewing the use of S20 to use it only in genuine cases of temporary and voluntary need
- Increasing the number of children returning home to parents

5.5 Details of the proposed costs and delivery times for these projects are captured in Appendix 2.

5.6 The project will be included in the Slough Borough Council 'Gold Projects' with monthly monitoring of progress reported to Corporate Management Team and Members.

6. Comments of Other Committees

None

7. Conclusion

The proposals in this paper are to resolve the residual effects of the rise in looked after children over recent years through a strategic approach to improving medium and long term outcomes for children and young people who are looked after. The projects which are outlined would be put in place to be completed by March 2013.

8. **Appendices Attached**

'1' Financial impacts of the rise in Looked After Children and
Compensatory Measures

'2' Project Activities

8. **Background Papers**

None

APPENDIX 1

Financial impacts of the rise in Looked After Children and Compensatory Measures

Year	Placement budget 000	Placement budget outturn 000	Highest number of LAC	Overspends and compensatory measures
2006-7	4,630	4,540	144	Underspend of 89k on placement budgets
2007-8	3,918	4,094	135	Budget reduced by 712k from 2006-7 Overspend of 104k on placement budgets Compensatory measures from within Children and Families <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary reduction in front line social work services
2008-9	4,206	4,584	136	Overspend of 378k on placement budgets Compensatory measures: Reductions in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising Achievement • Inclusion
2009-10	4,202	5,080	173	Overspend of 878k Compensatory measures: Reductions in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising Achievement • Inclusion • Youth Services
2010-11	4,475	5,525	178	Overspend of 1.2m Compensatory measures: Reductions in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising Achievement • Inclusion • Youth Services • Sure Start
2011-12	3,987	5,926	178	Projected overspend based on LAC as at end of August 2011 £1,939m Compensatory measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate contingency • Early Intervention Grant • One-off grants • Staffing contingency • Other opportunities

Project Activities

1. Project Overview

This paper outlines the detail of projects described in the paper being presented to Cabinet and concentrates on offering a range of options for permanent solutions for children who will never be able to return to their own families; and increasing the supply and choice of placements for children in short and long term care, together with safe exit routes from care for teenagers. Children and young people tell us how important it is for them to have the emotional security of knowing that they have a long term future in a 'forever' family where they fully belong and can develop into independent adults. This is backed up by evidence showing that children who have experienced poor parental care resulting in them becoming looked after, and instability in care placements, have poorer prospects in education, employment and of being successful parents, and also form a disproportionate section of the prison population.

The number of looked after children in Slough has risen significantly since late 2008, in line with national trends. Slough's number of looked after children is still below the England average, and in line with statistical neighbours. As Members will know, the Council is the corporate parent for all looked after children and therefore we have a responsibility for their welfare and must ensure they have the same opportunities as other children in Slough.

Analysis of the trends in the rise in the numbers of looked after children shows the steepest rise in children aged 0 to 5 years of age coming into care from households where the levels of substance abuse or domestic abuse have resulted in significant concern for the children's short and long term safety. This resulted in legal advice being sought which determined admission into care was necessary.

Slough's population of children in care consists of children already in long term placements, children who need long term placements, and children who are waiting for legal decisions about their future and may return home, go to live with family or friends, or need future long term placements.

The proposals outlined below are designed to secure the long-term future of children who remain living away from their birth families, and at the same time reduce the overall costs of the current population of children who are looked after. The costs detailed in the paper are from October 2011 to March 2013.

While children remain looked after, Slough Borough Council provides services which include social work time, independent reviewing officer time, statutory visits and reviews, health assessments, personal education plans,

and contact arrangements. When they are adopted or subject of a Special Guardianship Order, most of these responsibilities cease.

2. Reducing the number of children who are looked after per head of child population.

Slough's aim, based on best practice, is to place all children under 10 who cannot remain with their birth families for adoption or with Special Guardians where this is appropriate for the child's needs. This would mean increasing the number of children who leave care through being made the subject of a Residence Order, Special Guardianship Order or through Adoption Orders.

Active family finding for Slough's looked after children commences from the child's second statutory review when parallel planning for permanent alternative families is required alongside the assessments of the suitability of the child's family to have them back home. This is to reduce delay for the child and the accompanying anxiety about their future.

Project activities include:

a. Increasing the active recruitment of adopters

This includes using all the traditional routes to recruit, assess and approve potential adopters recruited by Slough Borough Council and will be carried out through the Family Placement Service within existing resources. This tends to attract potential adopters for younger children and work is already under way to assess a group of new potential adopters. The Family Placement recruitment work has increased in 2011-12, as new workers joined the team to fill vacant posts. This project would be at no additional cost.

b. Special Recruitment Project for children 5 years of age and above

Recruitment of adopters for children over 5 is more complex because of their history, and potential adopter's expectations. This project is designed to recruit, prepare and assess both prospective adopters and prospective special guardians for children 5 years and over and sibling groups, where the adults want to parent the children permanently.

The proposed campaign will target couples and single people:

1. Parents who already have children who have reached or are nearing independence and they enjoy being parents.
2. People who have focussed on other aspects of their life like their career and lifestyle and have perhaps missed out on having children along the way but now feel that they would like to parent older children.

By having such a targeted campaign this could attract an untapped resource of potential adopters and Special Guardians who may otherwise be deterred from applying because of their understanding of the traditional stereotypes of an adoptive family.

c. Project funding to purchase adoptive placements from both the voluntary sector and other Local Authorities

Local Authority cuts across the country over recent years have resulted in the reduction of Local Authority Adoption and Fostering services. This has contributed to an overall fall in the supply of approved prospective adopters and families available for long term fostering. The purchase of already approved adopters would speed up the placement of children once the decision has been made that they should be in a permanent family.

d. Converting existing Fostering placements to Residence, Special Guardianship or Adoption Orders

Where children are already living with a foster family, family members, or friends, who can meet the children's needs until they are 18, these carers may choose to make a permanent commitment to be the parents of the children through a residence order, Special Guardianship Order or adoption. This work can be carried out within existing SBC resources. This project would be at no additional cost.

Target group for projects 2a-d above: estimate 33 children and young people

3. Ensure sufficiency of placement supply and reduction of the individual and collective placement costs for Looked After Children

Project activity related to this strand is aimed at reducing the cost per head of placements by improving effective commissioning arrangements. This would reduce external unit costs (care packages); provide better placement choice and best value by commissioning more widely to provide sufficient placements based on the assessed needs of Slough's children and young people. It will bring down cost, for example through recruiting more in house foster carers and reducing the use of Independent Fostering Agencies.

a. Placement Commissioning Project

Two workers, appointed until the end of March 2013 will carry out commissioning and search activities for all external placements. They will work with the Contracts Manager and Family Placement Service to source best value and best match external placements and negotiate contracts which reduce unit costs. They will fulfill the Council's obligations to carry out a sufficiency statement and use the identified needs of the current Children Looked After population in Slough and ongoing oversight of the care planning for children to drive the systematic commissioning of high quality good value placements for children.

b. The Southern Authorities Independent Fostering Agencies Commissioning Framework will help with supply and help control costs of external foster placements

This tendering project is already underway in partnership with the Southern Authorities. The Placement Commissioning Manager is already the Slough link for this project. It will increase the range of Independent Fostering Agencies available for use by Slough Borough Council and will

keep costs down by using competition between fostering agencies for the tender and resultant business.

c. The In-house Fostering Recruitment Project will provide additional capacity to recruit, assess and support new local foster carers

The supply of Slough in house foster carers is insufficient to meet the increased level of demand in Slough, resulting in increased reliance on independent foster carers as the number of looked after children has increased. Even before the national rise in the number of looked after children, all local authorities were dependent on Independent Fostering Agencies to increase the supply of placements. In the last three years there has been an increase in the use of IFA's, as Local Authority recruitment and assessment activity has been unable to keep up with the increased demand ; and because many prospective foster carers (and some existing ones) choose to work for IFA's instead of the local authority.

Between 2007 and 2010, recruitment had resulted in new carers coming forward for assessment, but the total number of foster carers remained largely the same as recruitment of new carers was balanced by those who left due to family circumstances. There was a successful spend to save initiative on this in 2010 resulting in 13 new foster carers by July 2011. This was mitigated by the loss of 5 carers for various reasons, resulting in a net gain of 8 carers. This demonstrates how crucial it is to keep on investing in placement supply in order to prevent escalating placement costs.

As well as costing less to fund, in house carers attend training courses and are very well supported by the Family Placement Service, resulting in greater monitoring and quality control and an ability to match the needs of a child more accurately with carers. Increasing in house foster carers is one of the actions required in the Ofsted inspection.

d. The Supported Lodgings Recruitment Project will provide the capacity to recruit, assess and support new supported lodgings placements.

Supported lodgings is a broad term which can be used to describe a range of hostel type accommodation with support, but is mainly used to describe when a family who has a spare room to allow a 16-21 year old looked after young person or care leaver to live in their home while they support them in learning to be independent.

Slough has no in house supported lodgings carers. Increasing in house supported lodgings carers is one of the actions required in the Ofsted inspection. It is viewed as a good alternative to foster care for some young people who are not ready to live independently but would like to be treated as a young adult while they attend 6th form, college or further education.

From a financial point of view supported lodgings carers are lower cost than foster carers and semi independent hostels with support but they

provide the young person with a good level of support, helping them achieve in their education, work and transition to independence.

e. Additional funding required for the Family Placements Team to deliver the projects

The additional capacity for marketing and recruitment activity to attract, assess and approve new carers, and deliver the projects (staff and recruitment activity).

Target group for projects 3a-e above: estimate 24 children and young people during project timetable with continuing impact on placement costs and supply beyond March 2013.

Total cost of projects in 2 and 3 £826k to March 2013

4. Conclusion

The projects described above are based on fulfilling the council's responsibilities to Slough's population of looked after children through finding permanent placements for children who will never be able to return to their own families, and increasing the supply and choice of placements for children in short and long term care, and, at the same time reducing the overall costs of the current population of children who are looked after. The proposals outlined are based on a total project cost of £826,000

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Cabinet

DATE: 17th October, 2011

CONTACT OFFICER: Teresa Clark, Senior Democratic Services Officer
(For all enquiries) (01753) 875018

WARD(S): All

PORTFOLIO: Health & Wellbeing – Councillor Walsh

PART I
NON-KEY DECISION

REFERENCES FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

1. **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to advise Cabinet of the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11th October, 2011 and the Health Scrutiny Panel held on 13th October, 2011.

'A' OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE- HOUSING BENEFIT REFORMS AND THE IMPACT ON SLOUGH

2. **Recommendation**

The Cabinet is requested to resolve to endorse the following recommendation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

“That Cabinet be recommended to examine the current position regarding the placement by other Local Authorities of individuals into emergency private rented accommodation within Slough, and the resulting impact on services”.

3. **Community Strategy Priorities**

None directly arising from this administrative reference report.

4. **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

None directly arising from this administrative reference report.

(b) **Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications**

None directly arising from this administrative reference report.

(c) **Workforce**

None directly arising from this administrative reference report.

5. **Supporting Information**

- 5.1 At the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11th October, 2011, Members considered a report on the Government's current and proposed changes to the Housing Benefit system, and how the impact of changes were being addressed. It was noted that housing demand in Slough had increased by 30% in the past 18 months. The Government's welfare reforms would likely to lead to more unmet need and greater demand for services. The Committee was advised that this unmet need would be exacerbated by people in housing need moving into Slough where rents were predicted to remain more affordable. There was already evidence that local authorities in London were seeking to secure housing from Slough landlords.
- 5.2 It was noted that Homelessness approaches were increasing at a very fast rate, with numbers approaching levels of 10 years ago. In the last 3 years numbers had risen by 62%. This had increased demand on temporary accommodation and on the private rented sector in Slough.
- 5.3 Members were advised that letters had been sent to all other local authorities who had placed people into emergency private rented accommodation within Slough for temporary periods, reminding them of their duty to inform Slough BC and to take the necessary steps to return the applicant to their own borough. The Committee was advised that a number of Authorities repeatedly sent clients to Slough on the grounds that they were unable to provide emergency accommodation themselves. The Committee was particularly concerned to learn that on occasion, these authorities did not appear to be adhering to the regulations surrounding the placement of individuals into emergency housing. Further there were concerns that some placements were not suitable for the individual and the Committee requested that these issues be considered by Cabinet.

6. **Conclusion**

Cabinet is requested to consider the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

7. **Background Documents**

Agenda and report from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 11th October, 2011.

'B' **HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL- EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

8. **Recommendation**

The Cabinet is requested to note the following recommendations of the Health Scrutiny Panel held on 13th October, 2011:

- a) The Panel recognise the contribution that Speedwell Enterprises has made to both the town and its service users, and further recognises that Speedwell is more than a typical factory based employment service.
- b) The Panel is unanimous in its view that disabled people in Slough, and particularly those eligible for Adult Social Care services, should benefit from support into employment, work experience, skills development or volunteering.

- c) The Panel, whilst noting the contribution made by Speedwell, recognises that the current and future needs in Slough call for a revised service, one which is better able to meet and respond to both the volume of need and the specificity of individual cases. As such the Panel recommends a policy shift which sees disabled people being supported into mainstream employment rather than the current model.
- d) The Panel believe that this policy shift will help a greater number of vulnerable people in Slough by ensuring greater access to those that are eligible for Adult Social Care.
- e) The Panel however also recognise the impact that the closure of Speedwell will have, particularly on long-term users of the service, and seeks reassurance from Cabinet over how these users will be guaranteed support into alternative employment or provisions.
- f) The Panel also recognises the social importance and value that users place on Speedwell and also urge the Cabinet to look into ensuring social provisions are maintained and expanded.

9. **Community Strategy Priorities**

None directly arising from this administrative reference report.

10. **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

None directly arising from this administrative reference report.

(b) **Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications**

None directly arising from this administrative reference report.

(c) **Workforce**

None directly arising from this administrative reference report.

11. **Supporting Information**

11.1 At its meeting on 20th September, 2011, the Health Scrutiny Panel considered a report which detailed the review of employment support for disabled people, including services currently provided by the Council at Speedwell Enterprises. The report summarised the options considered for future provision of the service and made recommendations on the proposed future model for service delivery which would be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 17th October, 2011.

11.2 A number of Speedwell Operatives addressed the Panel in support of the continuation of the current service provided at Speedwell Enterprises and explained how they and many others would be adversely affected if the Council put in place plans to end the service in its current form.

11.3 Members were requested to consider a number of recommendations that would be considered by Cabinet. Following debate it was agreed that the Panel would not make

any recommendations to Cabinet until all Panel members had an opportunity to visit the Speedwell Enterprise site.

11.4 A further Special Panel meeting was convened on 13th October so that the Panel could consider any recommendations it wished to make to Cabinet. A number of recommendations (as set out under Para 8) were proposed and agreed by the Panel (by a majority of votes).

12. **Conclusion**

Cabinet is requested to consider the recommendations from the Health Scrutiny Panel.

13. **Background Documents**

Agenda, report and Minutes from the Health Scrutiny Panel held on 20th September 2011 and Agenda and report from Health Scrutiny Panel meeting held 13th October, 2011.