

Cabinet – Meeting held on Tuesday, 22nd September, 2009.

Present:- Councillors Anderson (Chair) (until 7.30 pm), S Chaudhry, S K Dhaliwal, Matloob, Pantelic, Parmar, Small and Swindlehurst.

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Long, Maclsaac, Munkley and Walsh.

PART I

21. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Small declared a personal interest in Agenda item 13. References from Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Fostering Service Statement of Purpose as she was a member of the Foster Panel. She indicated that she would remain in the meeting, speak and vote.

22. Minutes of the Meeting held on 6th July 2009

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6th July, 2009 were taken as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

23. Performance and Financial Reporting for 2009/10

The Cabinet considered a report highlighting the Council's overall performance from delivery of service to financial management. The report focused on performance management, debt recovery, treasury management, capital and the revenue monitoring position to July 2009.

The Director of Improvement and Development highlighted areas of significant improvement where performance had exceeded targets. These included a decrease in the serious acquisitive crime rate, an increase in the level of participation and the volume of waste collected for recycling which in turn had had a positive impact on landfill.

A number of areas had red RAG status and these were highlighted in the report. In answer to questions the Director advised that the data with regard to participation in sport was particularly difficult and was collected as part of a High Street survey. The free swimming that was being provided was having an impact although the take up was mainly youngsters and these did not count towards the performance indicator. It was hoped that initiatives targeting older people could be developed.

The Interim Director of Resources outlined the key areas of the budget monitor. Members were advised that the Council was in a challenging budget situation. Council tax collection levels were slightly reduced for the time of year and that, if this trend, continued, it would be difficult to achieve the same collection levels as in previous years. Work was ongoing to attempt to minimise the risk of this happening. With regard to treasury management and the council's deposit with Heritable bank, it was hoped that the forecast recovery of between 70 and 80p in the pound would be improved on. With

regard to the projected outturn position at 31st July, 2009 the Director advised that, if action plans were effective, the 2009/10 budget should balance however with the onset of winter and potential effects of swine flu the Council may be under some pressure to bring in a balanced budget.

Resolved -

- (a) That the following aspects of the report be noted:
 - i. Performance management
 - ii. Performance reward grant
 - iii. Debt recovery
 - iv. Treasury management
 - v. Financial performance - capital
 - vi. Financial performance – revenue.
- (b) That the banking contract with the Co-operative Bank plc is extended for a further period of two years with the option to terminate after the first year (Section 5.23).
- (c) That the capital allowance amounts as laid out in section 5.41 (of the report) be approved.
- (d) That the borrowing limits as laid out in section 5.45 (of the report) be approved.

24. Approval of the Slough Local Development Framework - Site Allocations Development Plan Document and Proposals Map

The Cabinet considered a report seeking Members endorsement of the publication and submission of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD). The Cabinet was invited to forward any comments to the meeting of the Council on 24th September, 2009. Members were advised that the Site Allocations Document was a key part of the Local Development Framework, it provided the opportunity to implement the Core Strategy for Slough by identifying specific sites for the development. The report summarised the sites to be taken forward in the site allocations SPD which would be published for public consultation and subsequently submitted to the Secretary of State. In answers to questions from Members attending under Rule 30, Officers advised that the market lane site was not part of the site allocations identified as this was a speculative scheme and use of sites for education purposes due to pressure on places would not be ruled out.

Recommended –

- (a) That the Site Allocations Development Plan Document be approved for publication and submission to the Secretary of State.
- (b) That the Strategic Director of the Green and Built Environment in consultation with the Commissioner for Neighbourhoods and Renewal be granted delegated authority to:

- Make any necessary minor alterations to the Site Allocations DPD following the Council meeting and prior to Publication of the DPD for public consultation.
 - Make any necessary minor alterations to the Site Allocations DPD following the public consultation on the Publication Version and prior to the Submission of the Site Allocations DPD to the Secretary of State ;
 - Withdraw the DPD prior to the determination by the Secretary of State should it be expedient to do so;
 - Make any necessary alterations to the Proposals Map prior to its adoption.
- (c) That the new Proposals Map for Slough, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved for consultation alongside the Publication and Submission Versions of the Site Allocations DPD.

25. Libraries Strategic Review

The Cabinet considered a report summarising the findings and proposals of a strategic review of the library service from April – July 2009. The review had been commissioned through the Community, Leisure and Environment Scrutiny Panel.

The Assistant Director of Learning and Cultural Engagement outlined the background to the strategic review which had assessed the current performance of the library service and considered a wide range of options and opportunities to improve its performance and relevance to the people of Slough. The review had made a number of recommendations with regard to the vision for libraries and had review recommended “mini” libraries in community venues which would be co-located with other services in community buildings. The review also recommended an invest to save strategy which delivered net savings of £350,000 by 2013. Members were advised that a number of operational processes could also be streamlined to be more efficient and reduce costs and that there needed to be a single reorganisation to put management and staffing arrangements on a sound footing. The review also recommended that in order to make substantial changes that were embedded and generate continuous improvement, it was clear that more strategic partnerships and different relationships with suppliers and others needed to be developed. It was proposed that the officers proceed formally to market test the local authorities strategic partner model for the whole library service inviting local authorities to obtain expressions of interest. It was also proposed with regard to performance management that quarterly reports on implementation of the strategic review and overall performance improvement of the library service be provided for the Scrutiny Panel and Commissioners.

Members asked a number of questions during the debate including:

- A concern with regard to strategic partnerships and whether these were to be introduced simply to draw down funds and what reassurances had been given to staff as part of the reorganisation. Members were advised that the authority needed to be very clear about the outcomes it wished to achieve with regard to Strategic Partnerships and that there needed to be a very clear focus for reducing senior management. It was acknowledged that this could cause tension and pressure but staff had been fully involved in the review and there was a strong commitment to service delivery.

[Councillor Anderson left the meeting. Councillor Swindlehurst in the Chair.]

- A query over the opening hours of libraries – Officers advised that the current opening hours for Slough Libraries were not good and it was hoped that these could be improved upon at existing libraries. Satellite libraries would open for up to 30 hours a week and this would count against the performance indicator.

A Member present under Rule 30 asked for information with regard to income generation, donation of books and encouragement of teenage use of libraries. Officers advised that there would be income generation opportunities and local groups using facilities was entirely in the spirit of the review. There had been a backlog in selecting, buying and processing stock and there would be smarter use of technology in the future resulting in improvement in this area. With regard to the use of libraries by teenagers the authority needed to work with experts in that area to attract teenagers to the library service.

The Chair of the Community Leisure and Environment Scrutiny Panel advised that the Panel had given full consideration to this report and welcomed the proposed changes to the library service and thanked the Assistant Director and the team for his work on this.

Resolved –

- (a) That the report of the libraries strategic review be approved and its recommendations be implemented, in particular to:
 1. Endorse a new vision for public libraries as a force for change and improvement at the heart of communities.
 2. Extend provision through mini libraries in community venues.
 3. Adopt an invest to save strategy to improve service outcomes for customers and communities while reducing expenditure in other areas to deliver efficiencies.
 4. Test the potential for a local authority strategic partnership to add value and accelerate improvement of Slough's public libraries.

- (b) That quarterly performance reports be submitted to the Community, Leisure and Environment Scrutiny Panel to maintain scrutiny of the progress in implementing actions arising from the review.

With the agreement of the meeting, the Chair altered the order of business in the agenda to take the IT Resilience & Business Continuity item next.

26. IT Resilience and Business Continuity

The Cabinet considered a report on the current status of the proposal to relocate the Council Computer Room from the Town Hall to a new location as part of the Council's Accommodation Strategy. The Interim Strategic Director of Resources advised that this was a holding report as a comprehensive piece of work was being undertaken with regard to the Computer Room Disaster Recovery Plans and increasing reliance on IT. The Director advised that it was vital that the way forward in respect of these revised facilities dovetailed in with the agreed way forward for local government Shared Services. As shared services would be reported to the Cabinet in October it was proposed to complete the outstanding procurement and contractual arrangements for the Computer Room relocation alongside the report recommending the way forward for Shared Services.

Resolved - To note the progress made to date and that a further report would be submitted to the October Cabinet meeting.

27. Thames Valley Athletic Centre Contract

The Cabinet considered a report summarising the Council's options on the contract to run the Thames Valley Athletic Centre (TVAC) with the recommendation that the contract be executed conditional on action to ensure that Slough residents and the Borough Council got a better return on their investment in TVAC. Members noted that there was a Part II report containing information on this item and Members agreed to deal with the matter in Part I without divulging any of the exempt information. Members were advised of the benefits and other contract issues for Slough and it was recommended that the Cabinet approve that the contract be executed and that the SBC Officers should seek to include a break clause in the contract should termination be in the interest of Slough Borough Council.

Resolved –

- (a) That that the contract with Slough Community Leisure (SCL) to manage the Thames Valley Athletics Centre be executed.
- (b) That officers seek to include a break clause in the contract, should termination be in the interest of Slough Borough Council.
- (c) That officers be tasked with ensuring that the contract delivers improved benefits to Slough Borough Council and its residents.

28. Budget Issues for the New School on the Former Lea Site

The Cabinet considered a report on the refurbishment of the former Lea Junior School building. As part of the Council's 2008 Capital Building process £3m was approved to refurbish the building to create a new two form entry primary school. The budget estimate was based on the initial feasibility study and since then a more detailed study of the building together with the developed brief by the Council had put the full project cost at £4.5m. Work had been ongoing with the architects to remove non-essential items from the scheme to arrive at a project that was within the budget envelope available. A scheme of essential only work had emerged for £2.96m and a summary of the excluded items and cost summary was attached to the report.

The Commissioner for Education and Children's Services stressed that the £2.9m scheme was purely for essential work. She also advised that the DCSF had indicated that they would require competition for the establishment of a new school and this would delay the opening of any school on the site. The authority would be making representations to the Department over this. In addition to the scheme for £2.96m a second project that would also include necessary items had been costed at £3.575m.

The report set out current advice from the Government with regard to the likelihood of approval for the request to open a new School and that there were issues with land ownership and potential time delays associated with the proposals. As a result of this alternative models were also being explored which would see the refurbished building form part of the existing school leading to a school based on two sites. Members were advised that a further paper would be brought back to the Cabinet to decide the preferred route for creating the new school places. Whilst there was uncertainty regarding the final status and opening dates of the new school on this site, in order that the new places were available for September 2010, irrespective of the future status the procurement of the building, works needed to proceed without delay.

Members raised a number of issues during the debate including:

- What the Authority was doing about the pressure on school places. The Director was advised that due to the pressure on places in Reception years three bulge classes had had to be provided by the end of July. Following this 40 more parents had come forward with children in need of reception places and 40 more year one places. Work was ongoing to see whether further bulge classes could be planned for January 2010. The Director confirmed that the bulge in primary places was almost entirely down to Slough residents.
- A Member present under Rule 30 asked for information with regard to forms of entry and safety of pupils with regard to asbestos as no survey was to be undertaken. The Director advised that the final size of the school would depend on additional money from DCSF and that measures to protect pupils from any asbestos danger would need to be built into the plans for the building.

Members of the Cabinet agreed that authority should be delegated to the Director of Education and Children's Services and appropriate Commissioner to progress this. It was agreed that the reduced refurbishment scheme be approved (up to £3m) and that if additional external funding was identified/available up to a further £0.5m be allocated to the scheme but any expenditure beyond this be brought back to the Cabinet for decision.

Resolved –

- (a) That the reduced refurbishment scheme be approved (up to £3m).
- (b) That if external funding becomes available up to a further £0.5m be allocated to the scheme.
- (c) That any additional expenditure over and above £3.5m be brought back to Cabinet

29. Scambusters Report

The Cabinet considered a report seeking Member approval for the continued authorisation of the government funded "Scambusters" team to undertake special investigations on behalf of the Council and to extend that authorisation to include externally funded special Proceeds of Crime investigators.

Resolved - That the continued authorisation of the Scambusters Team and specialist Proceeds of Crime investigators to exercise statutory powers, (including where appropriate, the right to enter land and premises and to sign and issue notices) for and on behalf of the Borough Council be approved

30. Housing Needs Activity Report and Homelessness Strategy

The Cabinet considered a report detailing the level of supply and demand for housing and the strategy, services and practices in place to tackle housing need and homelessness. Members were asked to approve the annual lettings plan and minor policy changes affecting the supply of housing.

The Housing Needs Manager outlined the key elements of the report. Members were advised that the Housing Needs section was successfully managing increased housing demand whilst keeping homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation stable and relatively low. This had been achieved as a result of an effective homelessness strategy which sought to spread the issues of homelessness across the corporate agenda. In discussing the proposals Members asked for a report on the discount available to tenants under the Right to Buy and whether or not this could be decreased. Members placed on record their congratulations to the team for their achievements and in successfully managing the increased housing demand.

Resolved -

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the Homelessness Strategy for Slough be approved.
- (c) That the lettings plan for 2009 /10 be approved.
- (d) That the proposed changes to the tenants' incentive scheme be approved.
- (e) That the policy amendment to include the process for re housing secure tenancies on sites subject to re development be approved.
- (f) That a report on reducing discount on right to buy be produced for consideration at a future meeting.

31. Application to Register Garage Compound and Play Area in Upper Lees Road as Village Green

The Cabinet considered a report seeking approval for the Council, as former landowner, to lodge an objection to an application to register the play area at Upper Lees Road Britwell as a village green under the Commons Act 2005.

Members were advised that planning permission had been granted to A2 for the demolition of existing garages and the erection of seven three bedroom houses with parking. On the 18th August 2009 the Council, as registration authority, had received an application for the registration of the land as a town of Village Green. The Council acting as the registration authority published notice of the application and six weeks had been allowed for receipt of objections or other representations ending on 23rd October, 2009. Members were advised of the factors required to be satisfied for an area to be registered as a village green. One of these factors was that the land must have been used for sports and past times as of right for at least twenty years immediately preceding the application. The Council was the landowner until 6th August 2009, and it was considered that the authority should object to the application on the basis that the use was not "as of right" and any other factors which might arise as a result of officers enquiries into the history of the Land.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Council, as a former landowner, object to the application for village green status at the Land.
- (b) That the objection to the application and the details thereof be delegated to the Deputy Borough Solicitor in consultation with the Assistant Director of Property Services.

32. Green and Built Environment & Community Wellbeing Contracts in Excess of £250,000

The Cabinet considered a report detailing contracts of a value of over £250,000 that were proposed to be let in 2009/10 financial year that had not been included in the report to Cabinet on 20th April 2009. Members were

advised that an additional contract in excess of £250,000 (contract for design and build for play areas in Slough) needed to be added to the list.

Resolved - That the list of contracts attached at Appendix A (to the report) and circulated on 18th September be endorsed.

33. References from Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Cabinet considered a reference report from the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel. The Panel had made a number of recommendations to the Cabinet with regard to Slough's Fostering Service Statement of Purpose 2009/10 and Slough's Adoption Service Statement of Purpose 2009/10.

Resolved -

- (a) That the comments of the Education and Children's Service's Scrutiny Panel in respect of the Fostering Service Statement of Purpose (attached as Appendix A) and the Adoption Service Statement of Purpose (attached as Appendix B) be noted.
- (b) That the Slough Fostering Service Statement of Purpose 2009/10 be approved.
- (c) That the Slough Adoption Service Statement of Purpose 2009/10 be approved.

34. Executive Forward Plan

Resolved - That the plan be agreed.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.45 pm)