

Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 24th January, 2011.

Present:- Councillors Anderson (Chair), S Chaudhry, A S Dhaliwal, Matloob, Pantelic (from 6.55 pm), Parmar, Small and Swindlehurst (from 7.00 pm)

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillor Maclsaac

PART I

79. Declarations of Interest

None.

80. Minutes of the Meeting held on 13th December 2010

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13th December 2010 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record. Councillor Maclsaac sought clarification from the Chair as one of the issues he had raised at the meeting had not been minuted. Councillor Maclsaac confirmed that he had received an answer to the query that he had raised following the meeting and the Chair advised that the minutes were not a verbatim record and no action was therefore needed.

81. Annual Audit Letter 2009/10

The Chair invited Mr Sharman, the Council's District Auditor, to introduce the Audit Commission's Annual Audit Letter 2009/10. The report summarised the Auditor's findings from the 2009/10 Audit and comprised of two elements:

- the audit of the financial statements and
- an assessment of the Council's arrangements to achieve value for money in use of resources.

The Audit of the financial statements had been issued on the 30th September, 2010 and the report included an unqualified opinion on the financial statements for the year ending 31st March 2010. An unqualified value for money conclusion had also been issued stating that, in all significant aspects, Slough Borough Council had made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ending 31st March, 2010. The report also identified key areas of continued improvement and areas for development and further improvement. Mr Sharman confirmed that the Council had taken a positive and helpful approach to the Audit and thanked the Council's staff for their support and co-operation.

Members noted that the report would be considered by the Audit Committee the following evening.

Mr Sharman was asked whether the value for money key line of enquiry would continue in the future. Members were advised that the approach to assessing value for money in 2011/12 would focus on financial resilience. A Member present under Rule 30, whilst welcoming the unqualified opinion sought clarification with regard to a number of details in the report with regard to internal

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financial control, the pension fund and existing policies and procedures with regard to early retirement payments. The Chair thanked Mr Sharman for his attendance at the meeting.

Resolved - That subject, to any comments of the Audit Committee, the report and the recommendations contained therein be accepted and that the Council's Corporate Plan and the appropriate service plans be amended to address the recommendations.

82. Performance and Financial Reporting for 2010/11

The Cabinet considered a report highlighting the Council's overall performance from delivery of service to financial management covering the period up to and including November 2010 against the following key areas:-

- Performance Monitoring against the Corporate Balance Scorecard, and the LAA Balanced Scorecard
- Revenue and Capital Monitoring position to November 2010.

The Director of Resources advised that the Cabinet would receive the Revenue and Capital Monitoring position to December 2010 and indicative figures to the end of January at their next meeting.

Resolved - That the following aspects of the report be noted:

- i. Performance and Project management
- ii. Financial performance – revenue and capital.

83. Medium Term Financial Plan 2011/12 to 2014/15

The Cabinet considered a report setting out the latest projections of the Council's revenue budget for the period 2011/12 to 2014/15 following the previous Cabinet report of 13th December, 2010 and the Policy Performance and Review Group on 10th January 2011.

The report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 20th January, 2011 and the Committee had noted the report. The report set out progress to-date with reducing the future funding gap and members were asked to agree additional elements of savings opportunities for two further support areas (Property Services) incorporating Facilities Management and Procurement (and Finance). The proposals presented for consideration represented total savings from these areas circa £1.16m and exceeded the required minimum of 20% for these areas in line with Members direction wherever possible savings have been secured by voluntary expressions of interest, the deletion of vacant posts and removal of temporary staff.

In answer to a question the Director of Resources advised that the Employment and Appeals Committee would be receiving a report setting out an analysis of redundancies and success in redeployment.

The Director of Resources indicated that she was not in a position to suggest options for closing the budget gap at this stage. The Leader asked for clarification

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of when the final figures would be known. The Director of Resources advised that the budget had to be set on the 21st February. The impact that the lack of information had would be that the Council would need to make provision to fund a greater degree of flexibility and assumptions.

Resolved -

- (a) That the current council projected revenue budget for 2011/12 to 2014/15 be noted.
- (b) That the savings plan for 2011/2012 as set out in Appendix A be confirmed and progress to date be noted.
- (c) That areas of savings allocation for elements of support services as summarised in para 5.7 of the report be agreed, and that officers be requested to implement them with immediate effect where possible.
- (d) That the adverse impact of the CSR settlement on some previously agreed ECS savings be noted.

84. Housing Capital Programme - Future Strategy and Direction

The Cabinet considered a report on priorities within the Housing Capital Investment Programme in light of the closure of the Council's ALMO and the loss of the final tranche of the Decent Homes Capital Funding. Members were also asked to consider any strategic changes in the procurement or delivery of future work programmes.

In addition to background information and the impact of the investment strategy the report set out a number of options for future investment strategies. Members favoured option 6 which delivered the Decent Homes standard on an elemental basis by end of 2012 but also included £500k in the 2011/12 programme to commence the delivery of the Council's 'Estate Improvement Programme' as it allowed the Council to continue to meet the Decent Homes standards and also invested in neighbourhoods.

In answer to questions, the Director of Property confirmed that the Decent Homes Programme was a continuous programme with a view to properties being compliant by 2012. It was agreed that an item would be placed in the Housing Newsletter stressing the continuous nature of the programme.

Resolved –

- (a) That the results of the Housing Capital Programme Option Appraisal process be noted.
- (b) That the future housing capital programme be planned, procured and funded based upon option six.
- (c) That the additional funding requirement of £2.85M to fund the 2011-12 HRA capital programme be met from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) revenue balances.

85. Accommodation Strategy Update

The Cabinet considered a report detailing the progress made to date with the planned changes to staff accommodation and seeking agreement to commission

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the final phase of the refurbishment of the remaining wing of St Martin's Place (SMP) via the existing contractor. Members were advised that the report was being submitted as a matter of urgency due to the tight timescales to allow the works to SMP to commence without delay in order to facilitate the decanting of staff from the Town Hall annexe allowing it to be decommissioned prior to demolition. Fast tracking the works to SMP and subsequent decant process would secure greater contribution of savings to the 2011/12 budget process (any delay on the budget would have an adverse impact of £150,000).

Members welcomed the proposals as they aligned political priorities with savings and fully supported the fast tracking of the works. Members noted that the demolition of the 1970s part of the Town Hall would assist the Council in achieving its carbon management target.

In answer to a question from a Rule 30 Member, members were advised that there would be a requirement for community use of the accommodation within the primary school that would be located in the old Town Hall building.

Resolved, on the grounds of urgency -

- (a) That Officers be granted permission to engage the existing contractors Paragon to
 - a. complete the refurbishment of St Martins Place,
 - b. secure a fast tracking of the demolition of the annexe
 - c. to provide continuity of design and consistency of finish of comprehensive warranties across all aspects of the works ensure the same standard of staff and customer facilities is adapted across the board.
- (b) That the Town Hall Annex be decommissioned, and demolished to a fast tracked time-table as soon as possible to maximise value for money and secure the savings identified within the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- (c) That the required space be made available to meet the needs of the additional primary school places which will be located in the old town hall building.

86. Heart of Slough - Compulsory Purchase of Land and Interests in Land - Proposed New Learning and Cultural Centre at Day Centre and Prudential Yard, William Street, Slough

The Cabinet considered a report seeking approval to:

- Appropriate land owned by the Council to planning purposes.
- Make a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) under Section 226 (1) (a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (the 1990 Act) and Section 13 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 for the

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acquisition of the land and interests in land at the proposed new Learning and Cultural Centre which form part of the Heart of Slough project.

The report set out the matters Members must take into consideration when considering the use of Compulsory Purchase powers. A number of statutory tests needed to be considered and Members also needed to be satisfied –

- That the proposed development of the Learning and Cultural Centre would not be blocked by any planning problems – Members were advised that outline planning permission for the Heart of Slough Project as a whole had been granted, an environmental impact assessment undertaken and full planning permission for the Learning and Cultural Centre had been issued on 5th August 2010.
- That the proposed Learning and Cultural Centre was potentially viable and achievable – Members were advised that the Council was committed to fund and manage the Centre.
- That consideration had been given on how the use of a CPO would impact on those whose human rights might be infringed if compulsory acquisition occurred – Members were advised that a CPO would interfere with the landowners human rights (which were set out in the report) but these rights were qualified and not absolute and provided Members considered that the public benefits of the proposal outweighed these individual rights then a CPO could be served.

Members discussed the possibility of Blight Notices being submitted and were advised that none of the properties within the land the Council wished to acquire fell into the categories that would enable a Blight Notice to be submitted and the risk was very low. Members noted that the land in question sat in both Upton and Central Wards. In agreeing the resolution Members confirmed that the statutory tests had been met.

Resolved –

- (a) That the progress on the Heart of Slough Project generally and the current position on how far negotiations have progressed on the acquisition of the land, interests in the land and new rights in the land which are the subject of this report be noted.
- (b) That the Council owned land hatched black on Plan 2 be appropriated to planning purposes pursuant to Section 122(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 in order to advance the development of the proposed new Learning and Cultural Centre.
- (c) That the Council make a Compulsory Purchase Order pursuant to Section 226 (1) (a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Section 13 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 for the acquisition of the land and interests in the land shown coloured pink on Plan 3 and in respect of the acquisition of new rights over the land shown coloured blue on the said Plan 3, which are required for implementation of the proposed Learning and Cultural Centre.

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- (d) That the Strategic Director of Resources be authorised to:-
 - (i) take all necessary steps to secure the making, confirmation and implementation of the Compulsory Purchase Order including the publication and service of all notices and the presentation of the Council's case at any Public Inquiry.
 - (ii) to acquire the land, the interests in the land and new rights within the Compulsory Purchase Order either by agreement or compulsorily.
 - (iii) where appropriate agreement has been reached to reduce or delete the plots of land which are the subject of the Compulsory Purchase Order as shown on Plan 3.
 - (iv) to approve agreements with land owners and other interested parties setting out the terms for the withdrawal of objections to the Compulsory Purchase Order.
- (e) That the Acting Borough Secretary and Solicitor be authorised to prepare, approve and execute all the necessary documentation required throughout the CPO process including the transfer of the land and interests in the land to the Council and the settlement and litigation of any compensation claims.
- (f) That in the event of a reorganisation of Council functions and the re-designation of posts the authorisations approved in paragraphs 2.2-2.5 (inclusive) will be transferred to those postholders who are responsible for the functions of Regeneration and Legal Services respectively.

87. Longcroft, 305 Langley Road, Langley (Former Elderly Persons Home)

The Cabinet considered a report seeking approval to the disposal of Longcroft, 305 Langley Road. Members were asked to take an urgent decision to ensure the sale proceeded as quickly as possible as several parties were involved and to avoid the holding costs and associated issues of the property being empty. The Chair advised Members that there was a Part 2 report on this matter and it was agreed that Members would discuss the matter in Part 1 without making any reference to Part 2 material. Members noted that the property was in the Langley St Mary's ward not Kedermister.

Members were advised that the prospective purchaser had confirmed that all the required approvals were in place and that they were keen to complete the purchase as soon as possible. The offer made by the prospective purchaser was considered to represent best value. The service users attending the Phoenix Day Centre had been provided with alternative provision.

Resolved, on the grounds of urgency - That the Interim Borough Secretary and Solicitor, in consultation with the Strategic Director of Resources be authorised to dispose of the subject property on the terms detailed in the Part II report.

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88. Proposed Appropriation of Land at Moray Drive, Slough, Berkshire

The Cabinet considered a report seeking approval to publicise the Council's intention to appropriate open space land at Moray Drive, Slough from open space to planning purposes.

Resolved - That notice be given of the Council's intention to appropriate the land shown edged red on the Plan annexed to this report at Appendix A, which forms part of the Moray Drive playground ("the Land"), from open space to planning purposes under the provisions of Section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) (the "1972 Act") and to consider any objections to the proposed appropriation at its meeting in March 2011.

89. Play Area Development

The Cabinet considered a report setting out progress on the development and improvement of Slough's play areas and play development programme and seeking approval to develop a play strategy for the next 3-5 years.

Members noted that much work had been undertaken to improve the town's play provision using both external and Council funding. Over the last two years and up to May 2011 over 30 play areas (41%) across all wards would have received investment to improve the quality of play provision. It was acknowledged that Slough was well served for play provision as compared to neighbouring authorities and that Slough had a high customer satisfaction rate as a direct result of the play improvement programme.

A new strategy was required in order to build upon this work and ensure that recent improvements and those agreed in the future were sustainable particularly in the face of fiscal challenges facing the public sector and provide play provision of quality to children and young people within a maximum 10 minutes walk of their home. Members were advised that it was proposed that a new play strategy for the town would be presented to the Cabinet in July 2011 following consultation. It would be a corporate strategy and would ensure that play provision was delivered in a way which integrated with other related functions of the council notably Town Planning, Housing, Parks and Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation provision and Sports and Arts development. Members welcomed the proposed strategy and the work that had been undertaken on the Town's play provision as it was a direct election manifesto pledge to provide quality play within a 10 minute walk of children's home.

Members noted a couple of minor changes to the appendix - Granville Avenue not Road and Manorpark Field being completed in April 2011 not March 2011.

Resolved –

- (a) That the achievements over the two years in the provision of play and in the improvements made to the Council's play areas across the borough be noted.

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- (b) That officers develop a new play strategy which will detail the strategic approach to be adopted for play area maintenance and development over the next three to five years.

90. Air Quality Update

The Cabinet considered a report detailing two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) to be declared in the Town Centre caused by a likely breach of health based standards for nitrogen dioxide. The areas in question were –

- A4 Bath Road from the junction with Ledgers Road/Stoke Poges Lane in an easterly direction along Wellington Street up to the Sussex Place junction.
- A355 Tuns Lane from Junction 6 of the M4 Motorway in a northerly direction to just passed its junction with the A4 Bath Road and A355 Farnham Road known as the Three Tuns. Members were advised that the breaches of the health based standards were caused by road traffic and that any action planned to address the breaches would therefore be part of the next revision of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) for Slough.

Members noted that introducing measures to control traffic would reduce air pollution, traffic related congestion and potentially noise. Members noted that intelligent traffic management system that the Council had introduced was one of the measures that could be helpful in this and that further investment would be needed to introduce measures to keep traffic moving.

Resolved -

- (a) That the declaration of the two AQMAs be noted.
- (b) That continued air quality monitoring in the town centre area be endorsed, so that information is available to determine progress in mitigation of the AQMAs.
- (c) That officers be instructed to lobby for air quality to continue to be a key consideration when long term infrastructure projects are discussed or consulted upon.

91. Primary Authority Business Support Scheme

The Cabinet considered a report seeking approval to withdraw from the Local Authorities Home Authority Business Advice Service with effect from 1 April 2011 and to replace it with a self funding Primary Authority business support scheme. Members were advised that establishing Primary Authority partnerships with eligible businesses would demonstrate the Council's commitment to supporting locally based businesses and key employers in the town. The scheme provided for simpler, more successful local regulation based on a new relationship between businesses and local authorities.

The proposed scheme would be fully self funding through direct charging for business advice.

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Resolved – That the Council withdraw from the Local Authorities Home Authority Business Advice Service in relation to trading standards, food & safety and licensing matters with effect from 1 April 2011 and that it be replaced with a self funding Primary Authority business support scheme.

92. References from Overview and Scrutiny

None.

93. Executive Forward Plan

Resolved - That the Forward Plan be Approved.

94. Members' Attendance

Noted.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.15 pm)