

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Meeting held on Tuesday, 15th November, 2011.

Present:- Councillors Basharat (Vice-Chair in the Chair), Davis, Munawar, O'Connor, Plenty and Smith (arrived at 6.35pm)

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Parmar

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Haines, M S Mann and Minhas

PART I

43. Declarations of Interest

None were received.

44. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 11th October, 2011

The minutes of the last meeting held on 11th October, 2011 were approved as a correct record.

45. Member Questions

None were received.

46. Project Performance and Financial Reporting for 2010/11

Emma Foy, Acting Head of Finance, Resources and Regeneration, outlined a report detailing the Council's overall performance from delivery of service to financial management, covering the period and up to and including September 2011.

Gold Project Update

The Committee noted the progress against the Council's eleven Gold Projects and the new standardised format. It was highlighted that the Safeguarding Improvement Plan was in draft format, and had therefore not been included in the report. The Chalvey Community Hub Regeneration and the Planning for the Future projects had been completed at the end of September 2011 and would be removed from the Gold Project List.

The Officer highlighted that two new projects had been added; the Slough Local Asset Backed Vehicle ('LABV') and the Public Health Transition Programme.

It was noted that of the eight active gold projects, six had been assessed as having an overall Green status (although three of these had an Amber level for 'Issues and Risks'); two projects had an overall Amber status; and none had a Red status.

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The Officer responded to a number of Member questions regarding School Places, and Safeguarding and it was agreed that a more detailed response would be obtained from the relevant Director and forwarded to the Committee.

A Member asked whether there would be Member representation on Health and Wellbeing Boards and was advised that at least one Member must be appointed. The Committee requested that a report detailing the purpose and constitution of the Board be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

Financial Reporting

The Committee noted that the net revenue budget for 2011/12 was £105.4m and the Housing Services agreed net operating budget for 2011/12 was a surplus of £87K. There was currently a forecast under spend for the General Fund of £189K at the end of period six. This was a reduction in net expenditure of £172K since the previous month and forecast surplus of £153k. For the Housing Revenue Account there was currently a forecast surplus of £153k.

The Committee noted the detail of month on month Movement in Variances for all Directorates and the position for the HRA. It was highlighted that the 2011-12 PPRG process was underway and therefore savings would be identified for delivery in the current financial year and were not reflected in the report.

The Officer discussed the detail of emerging opportunities relating to each Directorate and referred to the Treasury Report as at 30th September 2011.

In the ensuing debate, Members asked a number of questions of detail including the reason for the £153K HRA surplus. The concern was expressed that savings should not result in a deterioration in services provided. It was agreed that a detailed response to questions would be circulated to the Committee where required.

Resolved- That the report be noted and that the subject of Health and Wellbeing Boards be considered at a future meeting of the Committee.

47. Heart of Slough

Emma Foy, Acting Head of Finance, Resources and Regeneration, outlined a report to update the Committee on the Heart of Slough Gold project.

The Committee noted the detail of income and expenditure in the current financial year to the 31st October and the progress made to date on each area of the project. It was noted that the bus station was now fully operational and the central traffic crossroads junction was opened on the 25 October. Initial works around the Curve Library project had been progressed, works on

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the Slough Station Forecourt had commenced and work on the TVU Site would continue.

Officers would currently review their forecast of expenditure in the financial year and a revised forecast would be produced for the next Programme Board in December.

In the ensuing debate the Officer responded to a number of questions regarding the budget under spend, the TVU site, and the bus station. It was agreed that where required, a detailed response would be circulated to the Committee.

Resolved- That the report be noted.

48. Localism Bill

Tracy Luck, Head of Policy and Communications, outlined a report to provide Members with an update on the progress of the Localism Bill, summarising its key aspects and implications for Slough Borough Council.

The Committee was advised that the practical detail on how the Government's proposals were intended to work were not yet available and required urgently so that the Council could fully assess the impact of the Bill and plan ahead.

The Committee noted that the background to the Bill, that it gave new powers and duties to local authorities and new freedoms and rights to local people to run their lives and neighbourhoods in their own way. It was anticipated that the Bill would be enacted shortly, with a probable implementation date of April 2012. Some parts of the Bill would require secondary legislation and therefore not become law for at least two years.

The Officer discussed the four areas covered by the Bill's reforms and the actions which underpinned the key elements of decentralisation. The Committee noted the key provisions relating to Councils which included the abolition of the Standards Board regime, giving residents the power to instigate local referendums on any local issue and the power to veto excessive council tax increases.

Members asked a number of questions in the ensuing debate including the provision for 'capping' of Senior Officer salaries. The Officer advised that she would confirm the detail of this once the final act was available.

The Committee requested a future update report when the Bill was finalised.

Resolved- That the information report be noted and that an update be submitted to the Committee once the Bill was finalised.

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49. Consideration of reports marked to be noted/for information

The Committee received two information reports relating to the Equalities Act, 2010, and the Slough Learning Disability Change Programme, 'Nothing About Me Without Me'.

A Member questioned how many staff who had a learning disability were employed by Slough Borough Council. Tracy Luck, Head of Policy and Communications, advised in response that to her knowledge this would be recorded as 'disability' only and it was up to the staff member whether it was disclosed. It was agreed that a response would be forwarded to the Committee.

In relation to the Slough Learning Disability Change Programme, a Member asked for further information on how the Council was performing in this area and suggested that a report be considered at a future meeting. It was agreed that the Learning Disability Change Programme would be placed on work programme (un-programmed section) for consideration as a future item by the Chair.

Resolved- That the reports be noted.

50. Forward Work Programme

The forward work programme was noted and updated as follows:

- Health and Wellbeing Boards-information report including details of membership; un-programmed (JW)
- Localism Bill-update Spring 2012 (TL)
- Slough Learning Disability Change Programme '*Nothing About Me Without Me*'(un-programmed) (GT)

51. Attendance Record

Resolved- That the report be noted.

52. Attendance at Overview and Scrutiny

The Committee was concerned that there were a significant number of Member questions that could not be responded to by the Officers present at the meeting, particularly relating to the Performance and Financial Reporting item. The Chair requested that Senior Officers attend future meetings so that the importance of the Committee be recognised and that full questioning and debate could take place.

53. Date of Next Meeting- 6th December 2011

Resolved- That the date of the next meeting be noted.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.32 pm)