

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Meeting held on Tuesday, 10th September, 2013.

Present:- Councillors O'Connor (Chair), Bal, Hussain, M S Mann, Nazir, Small and Smith (Vice-Chair)

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Strutton

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Malik and Minhas

PART I

17. Declaration of Interest

Cllr Bal declared a personal interest as his daughter worked for the Council.

18. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 8th July 2013

Resolved - That the minutes of the last meeting held on 8th July 2013 were approved as a correct record.

With reference to minute 13 [Childhood Obesity Review] it was noted it was proposed to report to a future meeting on the reasons for the high incidence of childhood obesity in Colnbrook with Poyle and further information about breakfast clubs in schools.

19. Member Questions

Cllr M S Mann had submitted a question requesting details of the Council's £350,000 credit card spend.

A response was tabled indicating that the actual expenditure on credit cards in 2012/13 was £290,322.93 comprising approximately 900 individual transactions spread between 45 credit cards (of which 9 were allocated to schools). A pie chart illustrated the spend by category. Further information was requested on the spending limits set and the allocation of cards.

20. Childhood Obesity (Meeting 2) - "What options are there to alter the physical environment?"

The Committee considered the second report in connection with the childhood obesity review, containing information directed towards the question "What options are there to alter the physical environment?" This part of the review looked at the options for potentially restricting child access to fast food outlets around schools and the possible impact of such a move, which had arisen from a motion approved by the Council.

There were currently 90 class A5 hot food takeaway premises in Slough. Any new measures concerning restrictions around schools would not apply to

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existing premises; consideration would need to be given to the likely number of new A5 premises which a policy could be applied to, and the level of impact it would have on childhood obesity. Other relevant factors to note were that all schools operated a stay on-site policy for pupils up to year 11, which meant that the impact of limiting takeaways near schools may have little effect unless they were required to close for a period at the end of the school day, say 3 – 4.30 pm. Data from the School Food Survey suggests that 16% of the sample secondary group currently visited a takeaway once a week. Also there were a range of other outlets selling unhealthy items to children e.g. mobile ice cream vans, newsagents, supermarkets and petrol stations.

There had been a number of studies into how regulatory interventions can support public health outcomes. Restrictions on A5 hot food takeaway premises had been implemented in a number of areas across the country and the report described by way of example how two London Boroughs had approached the issue:

- Tower Hamlets had undertaken a study with a view to establishing a robust development management framework for managing the number and location of hot food takeaways.
- Barking and Dagenham had introduced a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) seeking to reduce the prevalence and clustering of hot food takeaway shops, especially those in proximity to schools, parks and local youth amenities such as leisure centres, working with hot food takeaways to improve the nutritional value of the food they sell, and in relation to new developments improving opportunities to access healthy food and seeking developer contributions towards initiatives to tackle obesity.

A map circulated at the meeting showed that a significant part of the Borough (apart from the Town Centre, the centre of the Trading Estate and Poyle Trading Estate) was within 500 metres of a primary or secondary school. The Committee considered whether reducing the distance for a restrictions policy to 300 metres or applying the exclusion zones around secondary schools only (on the basis that primary school children are likely to be supervised going to and from school and not allowed out at lunchtimes) would be a more appropriate proposal. It was noted that there was no current planning policy restricting takeaways and there was no intention to review the Local Plan in the near future. This meant that such a policy would have to be produced as Supplementary Planning Guidance, which would carry less weight and would be subject to public consultation before it could be introduced. The Committee also received a map of the Borough showing the 90 takeaway premises and the 400m and 500m buffer zones around secondary schools.

The following points arose from questions and discussion:

- Were there any controls under the Council's licensing powers which could prevent ice cream vans from trading in the vicinity of schools at the end of the school day?
- What further data was available from the London Boroughs that had introduced policies to manage the number and location of hot food

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premises e.g. how many applications for class A5 hot food takeaways had been successfully refused under the planning policy; and had the policy shown any signs of affecting the number of obese children measured annually at Reception year and Year 6?

- It was recognised that the introduction of a new planning policy to restrict takeaways opening would have limited impact given that it could not be applied to existing premises, could not be applied in town centres and could not condition the type of takeaway.
- The operation by the Council (in conjunction with neighbouring councils) of the Catering for Health Award was recognised as a very positive contribution in terms of work with businesses around the inclusion of healthy menu choices, adopting healthier catering practices helping them to reduce the fat, sugar and salt content in the food they offered. It was hoped that a pilot scheme working with food outlets in the town centre could be rolled out to other parts of the Borough.
- Was there scope for encouraging fast food outlets to sign up to a voluntary code setting certain minimum standards? Were there any measures that could be taken to discourage the sale of high calorific drinks through newsagents, supermarkets, garages etc.
- Although they were criticised for a negative impact on healthy eating, hot food takeaway premises contributed to the local economy, provided local employment and brought diversity to High Street and neighbourhood shopping centres.
- Such matters as the beneficial effect of breakfast clubs in schools (to discourage snacking by children) and the good work with schools of the Council's Nutritional Adviser would be examined in more detailed when the Committee considered the role of schools later in the obesity review.

Resolved – That the information provided in the Committee report and arising from the discussion at the meeting be drawn on to compile the final report for the obesity review, including any conclusions on the potential to prevent any new premises with A5 usage from opening within 300 – 500 metres of a school in the Borough.

21. Leisure Strategy

Consideration was given to a report on the Leisure Strategy, inviting comments from the Committee in advance of it being considered by the Cabinet on 16th September 2013.

An overarching leisure strategy had been developed addressing the community needs and priorities for the Council's role in increasing levels of physical activity in Slough. The report detailed the substantial facilities and opportunities for participation and physical activity in Slough, which were not resulting in broad community involvement. The Council leisure facilities, operated under contract by Slough Community Leisure Ltd, received over 1 million visits per year and there had been no significant change in the level of

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use over the past 3 years. The most visited facilities were the swimming pool, the ice arena and gym. A comprehensive condition survey carried out on the Montem Leisure Centre and the Slough Ice Arena had indicated that both sites were showing significant wear and as a result £1.169m had been allowed for essential repairs to be carried out over the next three years. If both sites were to be kept open for more than 7 years, the capital cost of repairs and maintenance was estimated to increase to £8m.

Development options for new facilities are subject to funding and approval of the business case. The report detailed proposed core and non-core facilities based on an assessment of what was available in the town and trends in use. Three options to provide a new main leisure facility were assessed:

- Montem – new build / refurbishment – cost £20m - £24m
- The Centre – refurbishment and extension – cost £23.5m - £30m
- The Centre – new build – cost £19m - £29m

The advantages and disadvantages of each were set out. It was proposed that further development of proposals for new leisure provision, to replace the Montem leisure centre and ice arena, would focus on the two options at the site of The Centre, Farnham Road, although at this stage the new build option appeared to offer the most cost effective solution.

Arising from questions and discussion, the following views and comments were expressed by the Committee:

- Development of the leisure strategy should set out the research undertaken into the reasons for falling or static rates of participation and effective ways of increasing the number of physically active people in Slough, particularly in the key priority groups identified.
- Continued efforts should be made to work with schools, clubs and other providers to maximise public access to local leisure facilities and wider access to facilities not currently open to the public. Council facilities not duplicate these.
- The importance of small, accessible and local play space for children in residential areas, suitable for ball games and informal play, should not be overlooked.
- The swimming offer provided in any new facility should be as attractive as possible to encourage a broad range of users, with consideration given to such measures as free swimming for children.
- With the increasing pressure on the council's budget, it was recognised that preparation of the business case for new leisure and community facilities represented a significant challenge, and specific concern was expressed as to whether the development would be affordable in terms of both capital and revenue costs.

Resolved - That the report on the Leisure Strategy be noted and comments as set out above be submitted to the Cabinet.

22. Quarter 1 Performance and Finance Report

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The Committee considered a report setting out the latest forecast financial information, the Council's performance against the balanced scorecard indicators to date during 2013-14, and the performance on 'Gold' projects.

The Council was forecasting an overspend of £1.1m as at month 3. Details of the main variations from budget were set out in an Appendix, the most notable being in the service areas of Enforcement and Regulation (income pressures on the services), Wellbeing central management, Children and Families (increased placement costs and staffing costs in the Children's service) and Estates and Regeneration (mainly relating to the Asset Management function). Also, there was an additional £2.7m gap within the budget for the cost of phase 1 of the transactional service contract. There was no impact on the budget report as additional one-off funding from the latest Local Government finance settlement had been used for 2013/14, but the Council would need to adjust for this gap in the 2014/15 budget.

The Committee noted that 30 performance indicators had been RAG rated for the report, of which the majority (60%) were green, with 27% amber. The remaining four measures (13%) rated red (more than 5% adrift of their defined target value) were reviewed and these related to:

- % of initial assessments completed and authorised within 10 working days
- % of core assessments completed and authorised within 35 working days
- Number of households in temporary accommodation
- % of municipal waste sent to landfill

Members noted the reasons for under performance and the steps taken to address this.

The report went on to provide an update on the eight Council Gold Projects as at 30th June 2013. Three had been assessed with the overall status of green with five at amber.

Having examined the report and asked a number of questions, the Committee requested further information to be provided to a future meeting on the following:

- A progress report on the LD Change programme.
- A report on the implications of the Dilnot report.
- An explanation of how the funding gap for Phase 1 of the Transactional Services contract was to be met, together with assurances about the funding for Phase 2 of the contract.
- A further report on progress to address the projected underspend in the 2013/14 capital budget.
- An explanation of the increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation and the measures taken to deal with this.

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The Committee was pleased to note that Arvato would be attending the next meeting to present an update on progress of the Thames Valley Transactional Service Centre.

Resolved - That, subject to the requests for further information as set out above, the report be noted.

23. The Impact of the Government Spending Review on Slough Borough Council

Consideration was given to a report setting out the latest financial planning assumptions for the Council in the light of the Government's Spending Review announced in June 2013. This clarified the choices the Government has made as regards its spending priorities for the remaining period of this Parliament to 2015/16 and the report highlighted the main areas where the Spending Review would impact on the Council.

Consultations were taking place regarding funding for Local Government and the outcome would be announced in the Local Government Finance Settlement during the Autumn of 2013. The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) was currently based on assumptions of funding levels. Given these assumptions of Government funding and the level of income the Council can expect, the report illustrated the significant savings requirement each year until 2017/18, the period of the current MTFS. The Committee noted that all savings proposals and growth items were currently under review, and adjustments were being made for known budget pressures such as the impact of pay changes or inflationary pressures.

The Committee recognised that the financial outlook was extremely challenging for the Council. Of particular concern was the level of Revenue Support Grant, which was forecast to decrease progressively from the current year amount of a little under £40m to just £16.8m by 2017/18. While there was an expectation of some modest growth in business rates, the level of savings likely to be required over the next four financial years was of the order of £30m. If the Leisure Strategy referred to in minute 21 above was implemented, this could involve capital expenditure of between £20m and £30m, which would have implications for the revenue budget for the cost of borrowing that may be required.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

24. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the current work programme for the Committee for the 2013/14 year. Amendments were put forward to the effect that consideration of the Economic Development Strategic Plan be deferred until the November 2013 meeting and the preparations for individual electoral registration be deferred until the January 2014 meeting.

Resolved - That the work programme, as amended, be noted.

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25. Attendance Record

Resolved - That the Members' attendance record be noted.

26. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 7th October 2013.

Arising from a suggestion from the Chair that the Committee should meet at different venues within the Borough, it was requested that if possible arrangements be made to hold the October meeting at an alternative location.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.35 pm)