

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Meeting held on Tuesday, 12th November, 2013.

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

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Malik and Nazir

PART I

35. Declaration of Interest

None.

36. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 7th October 2013

Resolved - That the minutes of the last meeting held on 7th October 2013 be approved as a correct record.

37. Member Questions

There were no questions received from Members.

38. Childhood Obesity - Meeting 3: "What is the role of schools and how can we support them? How can we encourage greater physical activity amongst children and young people?"

The Committee considered the third report in connection with the childhood obesity review, containing information relating to the work going on in schools and through the Council on improving nutritional understanding and increasing physical activity amongst children and their families.

Schools had a delegated budget to cover school catering for which individual governing bodies had responsibility. In the Borough there was currently a mix of catering services including packed lunch only schools, dining centres where food was transported from one site to another, and those who have full production kitchens. A major provision was through the central contract (running until 2015) between Cambridge Education and ISS Education, providing the meals for 16 primary schools (1 packed lunch only). The report gave details of the typical meal make-up under the central contract requirement, which cost £1.75 to £2.00. In addition to school lunch provision, there were 18 breakfast clubs and 10 after school clubs in Slough Primary Schools. Census data and figures from the annual school food survey showed that 2389 (20%) of pupils were entitled to free school meals but only 75% took up the offer. There were a number of projects linked to the school food survey aimed at improving school food and now the School Food Plan, supported by the Government, had been published setting out action points for headteachers on how to transform what children eat at school and how they learn about food.

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Arising from discussion and answers to questions given by Joanne Ricketts, the Council's Nutritional Adviser, the following points were made:

- The Council was rolling out to schools (all but one had signed up) a software package which enabled parents to enter basic identification data and check the eligibility of their children for free school meals, usually with a same day result. The reasons why some families did not take up the offer of free school meals offered were not really known
- There was lots of advice and information available for caterers, parents and schools on healthy packed lunches. Packed Lunch workshops were organised, leaflets were available and lunchtime controllers were also engaged in getting the message across. The concern about packed lunches was generally about balance and ensuring a content of protein, a starchy item and fruit or vegetable.
- The government plans to introduce universal school meals for all Key Stage 1 children would be difficult to manage, as while many of Slough's primary schools have increased classroom capacity, there has been no corresponding increase in kitchen or dining area facilities. It was hoped that by clever timetabling and enlisting the assistance of the central contractor, workable arrangements could be achieved.
- The central contract had been very successful in terms of providing good quality, nourishing meals at a stable price for the schools involved. It was hoped that more schools would join when the contract came due for renewal in 2015 but the approach of the Academies and Free Schools was unknown at this stage.

The report went on to outline the role of the Slough School Sport Network (SSSN) to increase the number of PE and Sport opportunities for young people in Slough, to help schools to provide an ethos of physical education and healthy lifestyles, and engage all young people in physical activity. The SSSN provides the School Games programme (Government agenda) offering opportunities for all students to take part in competitive school sport, at a variety of levels. Last year, the School Games for primary, secondary and special schools in Slough provided 35 competitive events and offered 20 different sports across Years 1 to 13. Slough won 39% of the Level 3 county competitions.

The Committee heard from Mary Sparrow, Head of Wexham School Specialist Sports College and Chair of the SSSN, and Laura Brookstein, Network Manager, on detailed aspects of the programmes provided and answered questions from members. While the School Games were important, there were many other benefits provided by the SSSN, including:

- high quality, market leading, continual professional development for teachers
- National Governing Bodies of Sport specialist coaching programmes
- Healthy Lifestyles and advice on Change4Life national initiatives
- the facility for schools to share good practice and network

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- assistance to schools on external funding bids eg. Olympic Legacy funding, Sportivate etc.

The Committee noted that SSSN played an important role in broadening the range of sports schools could offer, with particular help for smaller schools on making the best use of the space and funding available to them. Girls were getting more involved with sports now there was a wider range on offer, dance being particularly popular. Schools generally maintained the two hours of PE per week recommended for the curriculum, supplemented by pre-school, lunchtime and after school activities. Most schools with pitches or court facilities made these available for community use when not required by the school.

The Committee turned to consider Council programmes to improve the uptake of physical activity, what was on offer outside of school and how the different, relevant services within the Council linked together. There were a number of barriers affecting children and young people's choice and opportunity to engage in sport and physical activity, including gender and cultural issues, social and family influences, cost and dislike of team sports. However, the wide range of programmes and opportunities available was aimed at catering for all interests. Alison Hibbert, the Council's Head of Culture and Sport, expanded on matters in the report and answered questions from members. It was noted that:

- While there were over 90 active sports clubs in the area catering for children and junior members, the clubs (mostly run by volunteers) needed to be supported to continue, particularly in the light of more onerous measures that now had to be in place when working with children and young people.
- Some programmes offered were very popular, for instance, the Swim Skool programme was oversubscribed. The free swimming programme was now only available to over 60s.
- An area where there was felt to be scope for a lot more work was around encouraging many more children to walk or cycle to school to increase physical activity. This included work with parents to allow this to happen, the children themselves, and physical measures to ensure safe walking and cycling was possible. Having the right emphasis in School Transport Plans could assist in this and it was noted that the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel had considered the issue in early 2013, and a working group had been set up to consider programmes of work which could increase the use of sustainable transport during the school run.
- The Slough Physical Activity and Sport Strategy 2013-15 was about to be published, which placed emphasis on the collaborative approach required between organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors to meet the needs of Slough for physical activity and sport in order to make Slough a healthier and more active place to live. Members requested they be sent copies of the Strategy when it had been finalised.

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Resolved –

- (a) That thanks be extended to all who had contributed and participated in the debate, noting the excellent work taking place in schools in the Borough and through Council programmes to improve nutritional understanding and increase physical activity levels.
- (b) 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.

39. Finance and Performance Report: Quarter 2 2013-14

The Committee considered a report setting out the Council's overall performance from delivery of service to financial management covering the period up to and including September 2013.

The Council was forecasting an overspend of £0.7m as at month 6, a reduction from the £1.1m reported after month 3, and action was continuing to ensure this position is mitigated in full or in part by the end of the financial year. The main area showing an overspend is the children and families service area, forecast to exceed budget by £1.7m, but offset by savings in other areas as detailed in an appendix to the report. Of the £9.4m savings for 2013-14, the majority (66%) were showing as green with just £1.5m (16%) rated red at this point in the year. The capital programme was currently showing a 16% spend to date but this was forecast to rise to 70% by the year end, a considerable improvement on previous years.

On Council performance, 32 performance indicators had been RAG rated, with the majority (21 or 66%) at green and (6 or 19%) at amber. The Committee reviewed the 5 (16%) measures that were rated red, in particular the percentage of initial assessments completed and authorised within 10 working days. While this remained of concern, an audit of cases had shown a slow but gradual improvement taking place, with emphasis being placed on the quality of the assessment made rather than speed with which it was carried out.

A request was made that the performance report due for Quarter 3 should detail the progress of works/spending on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme in 2013-14. In relation to the Council's Gold Projects, members questioned the officers on a number of detailed matters. The revised end date for the Learning Disabilities Change Programme of March 2016 was noted, as was the expected commencement of an Ofsted inspection of the Safeguarding Improvement Board. The Committee recognised the School Places in Slough Expansion Programme April 2013 – March 2014 was a significant challenge for the Council, given the finite supply of land for development in the Borough. A new Gold Project was to be launched for the expansion of School Places in the longer term (over the next eight years). The Committee was referred to a report to the Education and Children's Services Panel for detailed figures but noted that while

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approximately 24% of places in Slough Secondary Schools were taken by pupils from outside the town, a similar number from Slough attended schools in neighbouring areas. Further information was requested regarding the future of the shops affected by the Britwell Regeneration, the total number of children looked after (and specifically those in residential placements), and progress with the Housing Department re-organisation.

Resolved –

- (a) That the proposed sale of Parlant Road, approved by the Cabinet in November 2012, be noted along with the utilisation of the anticipated capital receipt to support the Housing Revenue Account.
- (b) That the latest forecast financial information for the 2013-14 financial year; the Council's performance against the balanced scorecard indicators; and the Council's performance on 'Gold' projects during 2013-14 be noted.

40. Economic Development Strategic Plan for Growth 2013-18

Consideration was given to a report presenting the Economic Development Strategic Plan for Growth 2013-18. This Strategic Plan was due to be published by the Council and comments were invited on the activities illustrated in the Plan and the proposals for the Council, its partners and key stakeholders to build resilience and grow the local economy. The priorities for achieving growth were:

- a competitive workforce
- Business generation, retention and inward investment
- Physical and transport infrastructure

Arising from answers to questions, it was noted that the Council would be continuing to work with Aspire, the employer led public-private partnership to engage business with schools and the wider community, concentrating particularly on the element of the scheme supporting local residents into employment and skills development. On apprenticeships, the East Berkshire College worked with employers in the town to increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities and promote them to young people as a viable alternative to more academic routes to further education. The Council (with Arvato) had its own apprenticeship programme leading to a level 2 or 3 NVQ in business administration.

From the data in Appendix 1 to the Strategy, the high proportion of economically inactive females was noted and a piece of work was to be undertaken on this. Generally, services and programmes were aimed at being available for and reaching all sections of the community, for example the provision of job clubs in community centres across the Borough. A strand of the Aspire programme focused on business support and ran start-up sessions for small businesses. Use of the small business units provided on the Plymouth Road estate was continuing at a high level with virtually all units currently let.

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The Committee supported the Strategic Plan as set out and looked forward to reports on progress in the future.

Resolved –

- (a) That the direction the Economic Development Strategic Plan for Growth is taking on supporting the local economy to grow and prosper be endorsed.
- (b) That the Slough Wellbeing Board and the Cabinet be recommended to approve the Plan.

41. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the current work programme for the Committee for 2013/14. It was noted that an item “Bus Station: Lessons Learned” had been added to the agenda for the January 2014 meeting.

Resolved - That the work programme be noted.

42. Attendance Record

Resolved - That the Members’ attendance record be noted.

43. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 3rd December 2013, and in accordance with wishes to use alternative venues, would be held at Langley Pavilion Community Centre, Langley Road, Slough.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.05 pm)