

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Meeting held on Tuesday, 14th January, 2014.

Present:- Councillors O'Connor (Chair), Bal (arrived at 6.45pm), Davis, Malik, M S Mann, Minhas, Nazir and Smith (Vice-Chair)

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Parmar and Strutton

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Hussain

PART I

52. Declarations of Interest

None.

53. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 3rd December 2013

Resolved - That the minutes of the last meeting held on 3rd December 2013 be approved as a correct record.

54. Member Questions

There were no questions received from Members.

55. Childhood Obesity - Meeting 5: Sign off report

The Committee considered the draft final report of the Childhood Obesity Review, including nine draft recommendations for confirmation. The report had been compiled from the information provided for and considered by the Committee at four previous meetings, and put forward a number of conclusions based on the findings of the Committee.

The report was arranged under the following headings based on the steps taken by the Committee in carrying out the review:

- Does Slough have a problem with childhood obesity?
- What options are there to alter the physical environment?
- What is the role of schools and how can we support them?
- The need to encourage physical activity.
- What role can GPs and other primary care professionals play in tackling childhood obesity?

The Committee expressed its support for the report and the recommendations it contained. It showed that there was a great deal of good work already being carried out but at the same time identifying areas where through better communication and liaison between the parties further progress could be made. Given the prevalence of obesity at age 4-5 years and 10-11 years in

Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 14.01.14

Slough shown by the National Child Measurement Programme, clear benefits would flow from encouraging more families to practice healthy living through exercise and physical activity together with healthy eating and drinking. Building on the work in this area taking place in Children's Centres and schools would be very important.

There were two issues raised which Members considered could be usefully referred to in the recommendations. Firstly, there was felt to be insufficient choice or opportunity to purchase low cost healthy food or drink items in many local shops. Secondly there was a concern that there was a possible gender imbalance in the opportunities on offer to young people in the provision of sport and physical activity, a matter which could be investigated.

The Committee noted that the findings of the review, together with all the recommendations, would be referred to the Cabinet for consideration, following which those recommendations relevant to the Slough CCG would be forwarded.

Resolved – That the draft final report of the Childhood Obesity Review be approved and RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet, subject to:

- (1) amendment to draft recommendation (a) to include the words "improve the scope of healthy offers across a range of price levels by local retailers";
- (2) an additional recommendation to the effect that officers be commissioned to undertake a piece of work reviewing the balance of the leisure offer in the borough to ensure an appropriate mix for both boys and girls; and
- (3) an additional section in the report to acknowledge with thanks the input of all contributors to the Review.

56. Preparations for Individual Electoral Registration

The Committee considered a report containing an update on progress on Individual Electoral Registration (IER) and the actions Officers are taking to implement it.

IER was being implemented as a result of the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 and would require each elector to register individually rather than via a household form as at present. Although the transition to IER would not start until after the European Parliamentary and local elections in May 2014, a great deal of preparatory work had been undertaken. The annual canvass normally carried out each autumn had been deferred, was taking place at the moment with the new register due to be published in February 2014.

The transition would begin following the May elections with the confirmation of electors, a data matching exercise of the elector's name on the electoral register with information held by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). If this can be matched, that entry on the register will be confirmed,

Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 14.01.14

the elector will be notified and they will not need to take any further action. Evidence from a dry run of the data matching carried out in 2013 suggests that about 70% of electors could be confirmed in this way. The Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) will then invite people on the register who have not been confirmed, and any others thought to be eligible, to apply to register individually. People will be reminded more than once and if they still do not respond, they will be visited by a canvasser before a new electoral register is published in December 2014. Between this date and the General Election in 2015 further efforts will be made to encourage those people missing from the register to apply, people who have moved house to update their details, and those who have not yet applied individually to do so. A full household canvass will take place in the autumn of 2015, followed by publication of a new register in December 2015, with completion of the transition to IER by January 2016.

The preparations undertaken for implementation of IER had included a restructuring of the Electoral Services Team, with additional posts on fixed term contracts until 31st December 2015, to increase management resilience and capacity. A project team of key staff had been established to plan and carry out the necessary action, including a significant input from the Council's IT team and the Council's Election Management System (EMS) supplier as regards system upgrades, new hardware and testing connectivity with Government's Digital Service. Additional funding had been provided by central government in the form of a £7,000 grant in April 2013 for the cost of change management and the data matching dry run. The Council was also due to receive Transition Fund grant (allocated by formula) of £67,004 in 2014/15. However the significant additional costs, including printing, postage and additional canvasser visits, required for implementation and maintenance of IER were likely to exceed the grant received. It is not known whether the grant will be a one-off or recurrent payment and the budget implications and a claim for additional funding were being assessed.

The Committee noted that in order to mitigate the risk of large numbers of eligible voters being deterred from registering, plans were in hand for a robust information strategy which was capable of achieving high levels of engagement with local communities to maintain and improve registration rates. Nevertheless, it was anticipated there would be in the region of 20,000 people registered whose details will not be matched with the DWP data, who would need to be invited individually to register by supplying their name, address, date of birth and National Insurance (NI) number. In answer to a question about how residents originally born overseas who had never been issued with a NI number could successfully register, it was explained there was an exception process which would allow other documents to be produced in place of an NI number. Attention was also drawn to a change introduced under IER whereby it would no longer be a legal requirement to register. However, there was a provision for Council's to issue a fixed penalty notice on persons refusing to register, a position the Committee found anomalous.

The Committee also noted it was proposed to invite the IER Regional Delivery Manager to brief members following the elections in May.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 14.01.14

Reference was made to a recent Electoral Commission review of electoral fraud recommending that voters should be required to show ID at polling stations to tighten up security. These proposals would be developed for consultation but primary legislation would be required in order to implement them. The report also recommended action to tackle the risk electoral fraud particularly in higher risk areas, of which it was suggested Slough was one having had a history of cases of alleged fraud. The Committee noted the security precautions in place to deter fraudulent applications, the scrutiny given to new applications to register or vote by post, and the monitoring of the delivery of application forms so that the source could be traced.

Resolved -

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That comments be fed back to Government that for Individual Electoral Registration to include provision for a fixed penalty notice to be issued for persons refusing to register whilst containing no legal requirement to register is anomalous and unworkable.

57. Bus Station - Access and Management Issues

The Committee considered a report containing information about access to facilities at and management of the Bus Station project, arising from a request from Cllr Strutton.

The bus station was one of the first elements of the Heart of Slough (HoS) to be completed and much of the information put into the public domain and consulted on with specific groups was carried out through the HoS project consultation. Details of the reports made to the Cabinet and Committees were set out and full details of the consultation exercises were presented to the Neighbourhood and Community Services Scrutiny Panel in January 2013. Although it was not clear that targeted consultation was carried out with disability and access groups, it was quite evident that the extensive consultation would have ensured that any group with an interest in the proposals would have had the opportunity to comment.

The design of the bus station included a toilet for the disabled and a waiting room. These facilities were included in the lease of the café, and it is a condition of the lease that the café operator is responsible for keeping them open as well as for their maintenance/cleaning. The lease is currently under review although the maintenance responsibilities will remain unchanged. Additionally there is a wheelchair accessible public toilet that is easily accessed from the bus station, available at all times, which was maintained at no cost to the Council, although owing to delays this had been operational only since autumn 2013. The Committee noted that some basic operational/design problems at the bus station were still to be addressed, such as the overflow passenger drop-off area not being big enough for wheelchairs. Such a problem may have been picked up before the construction stage through effective consultation with disabilities groups.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 14.01.14

Following completion of the bus station and the infrastructure works in the HoS, a 'lessons learned' workshop was held in early 2013. This focussed on the process of how the Council clients major projects rather than the details of the specific actions undertaken before and during the major construction. The Committee was informed that the Council's communications and consultation processes had improved significantly since the bus station project had commenced. For instance, during the design and construction of the Britwell Hub there had been extensive consultation with local groups as well as individuals feeding back written comments via forms for the purpose. As a result the responses had been used to inform and influence the design. In the design work going into The Curve project, extensive consultation had taken place with the Council's own Disabilities Forum comprising members of staff, and very useful comments in relation to induction loops, carpets, toilets, parking facilities and other such details had been received. It was recognised that there was no one umbrella organisation representing all disability groups in Slough with whom the Council could consult as a matter of course on such projects.

Following answers to questions, it was established that with the exception of the Planning Committee, consideration of the planning application (which of course did not deal with detailed matters of design) there had been little direct member involvement in projects such as the bus station or The Curve. The recent presentation about The Curve, to which all members had been invited, had been poorly attended. As a result there had been limited opportunity for members to comment on detailed aspects of these projects as design evolved and construction began. It was suggested that this could be rectified if a core group of members was set up for each major project undertaken with whom consultations could take place. It was noted that project management for The Curve was being undertaken by Morgan Sindall, the Council's partner in the Slough Regeneration Project.

Resolved –

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) To RECOMMEND that for all major projects undertaken by the Council, a core group of Members (cross party) be formed to engage with the officers and project designers at each stage of design and construction.
- (c) That the Assistant Director Adult Social Care be asked to look into the formation of an umbrella group that could represent the views of all disability groups across the Borough with whom the Council could consult.

58. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered the current work programme for the Committee for the remainder of the 2013/14 year.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 14.01.14

- Resolved** - That the work programme be noted, subject to:
- (1) the addition of a report at the February meeting on Montem Leisure Facilities – Options for the Future;
 - (2) a composite report to the April meeting to cover the review of job clubs, apprenticeships, work experience and Aspire; and
 - (3) an information report to the April meeting about the Loanshark Service.

59. Attendance Record

Resolved - That the Members' attendance record be noted.

60. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 6th February 2014.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.05 pm)