

## **Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 14th July, 2014.**

**Present:-** Councillors Anderson (Chair), Carter, Hussain, Mann, Munawar, Parmar, Sharif and Swindlehurst

**Also present under Rule 30:-** Councillors Nazir

**Apologies for Absence:-** None.

### **PART 1**

#### **12. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations were made.

#### **13. Minutes of the Meeting held on 23rd June 2014**

**Resolved –** That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2014 be approved as a correct record.

#### **14. Medium Term Financial Planning: 2015-19**

The Assistant Director, Finance & Audit introduced a report which updated Commissioners on the financial planning assumptions and required level of savings for the Council between 2015-19.

The key financial challenges in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) were detailed, including continued pressures on the demand for Council services and further significant Government funding reductions. It was noted that the 'Delivery of Children's Social Care' was included as a challenge although the financial cost and implications for the savings requirement of any new arrangements was uncertain. Central Government funding in the form of the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) would fall by 30% in 2015-16 which contributed to a savings requirement of £14.5m. The total savings projected over the period of the MTFS was estimated to be £37m and this would require further service transformation in the coming years. Members attention was drawn to chart 1.5 of the report which showed the 2015-16 savings identified to date, and it was noted that specific proposals would be brought to the Cabinet in the autumn.

Commissioners recognised the scale of the financial challenges facing the Council over the MTFS period and acknowledged that the Government funding reductions from 2016-17 could be higher than the assumed 20%. It was noted that whilst the precise figures would vary, the direction of travel over the MTFS was clearly set. The greater volatility in income, for example from retained business rates, would also be an increasingly important feature of the Council's finances and Commissioners felt that it was therefore important to take further steps to promote economic growth in the Borough.

**Resolved** – That the financial planning assumptions and required level of savings for the period between 2015-19 be noted.

## **15. Leisure Strategy**

The Assistant Director, Community & Leisure introduced a report seeking approval for a high level Leisure Strategy and also set out the next steps for delivering improvements in leisure provision in the Borough.

Levels of physical activity in Slough were amongst the lowest in the country and the Member/Officer Task & Finish Group had conducted a review of the evidence in order to focus the strategy on achieving health and wellbeing outcomes. The vision was to get “more people, more active, more often” and the activities could take place in a variety of settings including parks and open spaces, schools and community facilities as well as the Council contracted leisure facilities. The Strategy proposed a ‘dispersed’ approach to maximise community access and use of facilities such as those in schools, neighbourhoods, e.g. the multi-use games areas and potentially a community sports hub at Arbour Park. The Strategy would link these facilities with revenue based programmes to promote physical activity. It was felt that this approach would achieve better outcomes than concentrating investment in new facilities on a single site.

The Assistant Director informed the Cabinet that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had considered the Strategy and made the following comments:

- The existing facilities and sporting clubs in Slough should be recognised and celebrated.
- The rationale for major investments should be clearly supported by evidence and fit with the agreed strategic objectives.
- Clear targets for the strategy should be set, monitored and reported.
- Facilities should cater for the whole community and should, for example, include activities in parks and open spaces.
- The Council should adhere to the timetable for implementation.

The Cabinet agreed with the comments from scrutiny; endorsed the Strategy and welcomed the new Sport England funded programmes in Slough which would begin over the summer and the initial results would be reported to Cabinet in further reports in the autumn.

Commissioners discussed the proposed implementation of this strategy, the first stage of which would be a £3.5m investment to refurbish the ice arena and extend it to give it a presence on the A4 Bath Road. Provision of ice facilities were considered to be particularly effective in engaging key priority groups such as women and young people as identified in the strategy. The main Montem leisure centre would be demolished and the remainder of the site would be available for redevelopment once alternative facilities were in place. Other measures were planned, as detailed in section 7 of the report, which included opening a rowing and canoeing facility on the Jubilee River in September 2014 and progress towards a new swimming pool to replace the

ageing facilities at the Montem site to be considered in a further report to Cabinet in October 2014. The preferred option was The Centre on Farnham Road, subject to feasibility testing. The specification for the leisure facilities operational contract would also begin early in 2015 and would be based on the principles of the Leisure Strategy.

**Resolved –**

- (a) That the strategy for leisure contained in section 6 and Appendix A to the report be approved.
- (b) That the Assistant Director for Community and Skills be authorised to implement the next steps as set out in section 7 of the report, following consultation with the Commissioner for Community and Leisure, including:
  - i. specify, plan and implement refurbishment and extension of the Ice Arena to maximise its community use potential, reporting on progress to Cabinet;
  - ii. specify requirements for a new pool, identify a site and initiate feasibility, to report to Cabinet in October 2014. The preferred option is the Centre site in Farnham Road, subject to feasibility testing.

**16. Options Appraisal - Subsidiary Housing Company**

The Assistant Director, Housing & Environment updated Commissioners on the progress made regarding the options appraisal for the establishment of a Subsidiary Housing Company.

The Cabinet was reminded that the purpose of establishing a special purpose vehicle would be to bring forward housing development on a number of smaller, difficult sites which were less attractive to private sector developers and to maximise the value of land assets to the Council. Since the last Cabinet report in April 2014, Officers had further investigated the legal and financial viability of a subsidiary housing company, utilising professional advice where appropriate. Members were advised that this preliminary work had clearly demonstrated that there were no legal impediments to prevent the Council from establishing a subsidiary company for these purposes and that it would be financially viable and make best use of the Council's assets. It was proposed to continue the feasibility work and bring a further report to the Cabinet by October 2014 which would include a final business case.

Commissioners recognised the potential benefits of a subsidiary housing company in terms of regenerating smaller sites for much needed residential accommodation and the opportunity to realise a better financial return, either by sale or from ability to manage the stock, for example by making properties available for market rent. A number of issues were discussed including the financial viability of the sites likely to be brought forward under this

mechanism and the potential to engage local construction companies in delivery. The Cabinet believed that the company could be a useful tool to address some of the housing supply requirements in Slough and agreed to proceed with the further feasibility work prior to receiving a further report in the autumn.

**Resolved –**

- (a) That it be noted that following detailed preliminary investigations, the creation of a subsidiary housing company remains a viable and worthwhile option to improve the quality of housing available to residents of Slough and to generate a financial rate of return to the council which maximises the value of its land assets; and
- (b) That the development of a detailed business plan and outline governance rules from within existing and previously approved financial resources be approved and to bring a final report for consideration to Cabinet by October 2014.

**17. Children's Service Improvement**

The item was withdrawn due to the fact that the Department for Education had not yet published their report on the future arrangements for children's services in Slough.

**Resolved –** That the update be noted.

**18. Salt Hill Park Path Improvements**

The Team Leader (Integrated Transport and Road Safety) and the Parks & Open Spaces Manager introduced a report proposing improvements to the footpath in Salt Hill Park.

The scheme aimed to improve the connectivity between Salt Hill Way and Stoke Poges Lane; enhance the attractiveness and security of the route and improve the entrance to the park from Salt Hill Way. The budget of £175,000 for the scheme would be funded from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund and it formed part of the East West Walking and Cycling Route running between Slough and Burnham train stations. The new path would be 3 metre wide, shared use, bound gravel track with improved lighting and landscaping to increase natural surveillance. Members noted the consultation that had been carried out with the Local Access Forum and park users which showed broad support.

The Cabinet considered a number of issues including links to the new Leisure Strategy in making the Slough's parks more attractive and the importance of publicising the improvements when completed. The improved lighting and potential to open up other routes from the subway were particularly welcomed. Members made further suggestions to consider rain shelters in

future plans for the management of the park and steps to reduce littering by redesigning the area around the railway tunnel.

The approval of the Council in its capacity as a charitable trust was needed for the implementation of the path in the park and the Cabinet therefore agreed to recommend the proposal to Council at its meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2014.

**Recommended –**

- (a) That the principles of the proposals to update the existing path through Salt Hill Park to a 3 metre wide path with lighting, provide a new section of 3 metre wide path along a previously unpaved route, and improve access through Salt Hill Way be approved;
- (b) That council officers proceed with the detailed design of the scheme within the general principles presented in the report, subject to planning permission on the preliminary design being granted; and
- (c) That, following detailed design, construction of the scheme be implemented within the current financial year 2014/15.

**19. Transport/Network Management Proposal to Join South East Permit Scheme**

The Acting Head of Transport and Network Management Engineer introduced a report proposing that the Council join the South East Permit Scheme (SEPS) for management of the highway network.

Permit schemes were introduced by the Department for Transport (DfT) in the Traffic Management Act 2004 and aimed to provide greater control of all works and activities on the road network to minimise disruption and reduce congestion. The proposed SEPS scheme was a common scheme adopted by a number of neighbouring authorities and was fully compliant with the legislative requirements. Work promoters, for example a utility company or an internal Council department, would need to obtain a permit prior to any work commencing rather than simply providing notification as was the case at present. The permit scheme would also allow the Council to recover reasonable costs and the proposed Permit Fees were set out in Appendix B to the report. The Cabinet emphasised the importance of ensuring that the fees set fully recovered eligible costs and the Officers responded that detailed consultation and financial modelling had been carried out under the maximum fees structure set down by the DfT.

Commissioners welcomed the scheme in principle and recognised the benefits arising from the ability to better manage road works in the Borough. It was noted that action to tackle poor works by private utilities which eroded pavement quality had been a 2014 manifesto commitment of the ruling group and adoption of SEPS would be a step forward in this respect. A number of issues were discussed including the tools available under the SEPS to ensure

the repairs to the highways were satisfactorily completed after the works and the liaison with neighbouring highways authorities to try to co-ordinate cross-border activity. The Cabinet agreed the proposal to apply to join the Permit Scheme with a view to implementing the scheme from April 2015.

**Resolved –**

- (a) That the Transport Team submit the Permit Scheme application to the Department for Transport (DfT) for assessment and ratification;
- (b) Once approved, that the Council implement the Permit Scheme before the start of the 2015/16 financial year; and
- (c) That the Council implement the schedule of charges for the scheme as shown in appendix B to the report, and review the schedule on a regular basis in line with DfT guidelines.

**20. Proposed Adoption of the Slough Trading Estate Simplified Planning Zone 2014-24**

The Planning Policy Lead Officer introduced a report seeking approval to adopt the Simplified Planning Zone (SPZ) scheme for the Slough Trading Estate for 10 years from November 2014, subject to the signing of a Section 106 legal agreement.

The Trading Estate had had an SPZ in place since 1994 and the current scheme would expire in November 2014. The SPZ effectively granted planning permission in advance for specified types of development in defined areas and offered the Estate's owners, SEGRO, the flexibility, certainty and marketability to attract further investment. Members were informed that Council had been working with SEGRO for some time on the new SPZ and whilst the proposed scheme retained many of the key elements of previous scheme, the renewed SPZ would allow taller buildings to meet the requirements of data centres, R&D facilities and high bay warehouses. Extensive consultation had been undertaken on the draft SPZ, particularly with statutory consultees, and a number of comments and suggestions had been incorporated.

An updated SPZ Plan illustrating the zones was tabled, which replaced Plan 2 on page 117 of the agenda pack. This map had been revised following a request from the Planning Committee and extended the width of the Northern Height Controlled zone from 15 to 30 metres which should reduce the visual impact of new development upon neighbouring residential properties. An amendment to the date of the expiration of the agreement was noted in paragraph 1.5 of the proposed scheme.

The Cabinet considered a number of issues including the Section 106 agreement, the content of which had been agreed with SEGRO, subject to the final drafting of the legal agreement. This provided for continued financial support for the Hoppa Bus service (or its equivalent), Aspire, improved access

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to the Burnham station ahead of Crossrail and a number of other measures are detailed in the report. Members were informed that negotiating a S106 as a package across the SPZ scheme offered advantages compared to negotiating agreements for each individual scheme. After due consideration, the Cabinet recognised the importance of supporting a thriving Trading Estate for the town's economy and agreed to delegate adoption of the scheme from 12 November 2014 for 10 years subject to signing the Section 106 legal agreement.

**Resolved –** That the adoption of the Simplified Planning Zone Scheme 2014-2024 for the Slough Trading Estate be delegated to the Planning Policy Lead Officer subject to the signing of a Section 106 Legal Agreement.

### **21. References from Overview & Scrutiny**

There were no further references from Overview & Scrutiny, noting the comments received in relation to the Leisure Strategy.

### **22. Notification of Forthcoming Decisions**

**Resolved –** That the published Notification of Decisions be endorsed.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.38 pm and closed at 8.07 pm)