

Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 15th December, 2014.

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

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Coad, Nazir and Smith

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Sharif

PART 1

54. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

55. Minutes of the Meeting held on 17th November 2014

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 17th November 2014 be approved as a correct record.

56. Medium Term Financial Planning 2015-19

The Assistant Director Finance & Audit introduced a report which updated the Cabinet on the financial planning assumptions for future years and required savings levels between 2015-19.

A key area of volatility in setting for the budget for 2015-16 was in respect of Business Rates. Commissioners were informed that whilst the expected Business Rates forecast remained above expectations earlier in the year, it had fallen by circa £1m since the previous Cabinet report in November. The Assistant Director reported on the key aspects of the Autumn Statement delivered by the Chancellor on 3rd December 2014 and it was noted that there were no major alterations to the financial planning assumptions arising from the various announcements. The Local Government Finance Settlement was awaited later in the week and would set out in detail what the Council could expect in 2015-16 in terms of the Revenue Support Grant, other non-ringfenced grants, Education Services Grant and NHS monies to support social care.

Taking into account the £7.62m savings approved by Cabinet in November, the underlying budget gap was currently £3.29m and Commissioners considered proposals for a further £0.7m savings in relation to increasing the Managed Vacancy Factor by 1% and savings following a bus / transport review. This would leave a further £2.6m which would be allocated across directorates as set out in paragraph 5.7 of the report. Proposals to close this savings gap would come back to Cabinet for approval before being referred to full Cabinet on 19th February 2015. After due consideration, the Cabinet approved the draft savings proposals for inclusion in the proposed budget.

Resolved –

- (a) That the update on the Medium Term Financial Strategy be noted.
- (b) That the draft savings proposals in respect of 2015-16, as detailed in Appendix A of the report, be approved for inclusion in the proposed budget to full Council in February 2015.
- (c) That the level of restructuring implied within the report, being that this could be in excess of 20 members of staff / posts, be approved.

57. Council Taxbases for 2015/16

The Assistant Director Finance & Audit introduced a report setting out the properties in Slough and their categories of occupation to determine the council taxbase for the borough for 2015-16.

It was noted that the taxbase would rise by 2.9% between 2014-15 and 2015-16 which would partially mitigate against the £14.5m savings requirement due to reductions in government funding. Commissioners discussed a number of matters including the collection rate for council tax of 98.2%, which was a rise of 0.2% and had been agreed with arvato. The Cabinet agreed the recommendations as set out in the report.

Resolved –

- (a) That the level of council tax discount in respect of second homes remains at 0%.
- (b) That the level of discount in respect of long-term empty properties remains at 0%. With the charge of a 50% Empty Home Premium for on properties that have been empty longer than 2 years.
- (c) That the collection rate for the council tax for 2015/16 be set at 98.2% (this is an increase of 0.2% and has been agreed with the Council's transactional services partner, arvato).
- (d) In accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012 the amount calculated by Slough Borough Council as its council taxbase for 2015/16 shall be:

(i)	Parish of Britwell	597.0
(ii)	Parish of Colnbrook with Poyle	1,781.1
(iii)	Parish of Wexham	1,270.3
(iv)	Slough Town	34,814.2
	All areas	38,462.6

- (e) That the S151 officer be delegated with responsibility to adjust the taxbase following Cabinet due to any changes in Government

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guidance around this subject and the Collection Fund figures for distribution.

- (f) That the S151 officer be delegated with responsibility to adjust the taxbase following Cabinet should any new property information become available and the Collection Fund figures for distribution require amendment.
- (g) That the S151 officer be delegated with responsibility to set the Business Rates baseline following consultation with the Commissioner responsible.
- (h) That it be assumed that the current Council Tax Support Scheme remain unchanged for 2015/16 apart from the uprating for all customers as detailed in section 4.6 of the report and the accompanying Council Tax Support scheme report (minute 59 refers). This included the approval for the Chief Executive and S151 Officer to make any textual amendments.

58. Business Rates Policies and Reliefs

The Assistant Director Finance & Audit introduced a report which sought approval for the following Business Rates reliefs and policies which had been brought together into a single document:

- Discretionary Business Rate Relief to Charities and other Not-for-Profit Organisations.
- Rate Relief for Properties that are Partially Unoccupied for a Temporary Period.
- Hardship Relief.
- General Rate Relief.
- Reoccupation Relief.
- Retail Relief.
- Inward Investment Policy.
- An extension of the existing Business Rate relief policy for flooded properties.

The Cabinet noted that the Chancellor had announced an increase in the level of Retail Relief in his Autumn Statement from £1,000 to £1,500 and that the Council would be able to recoup this from central government. This was agreed. Many of the policies had been approved in the previous year and the Assistant Director outlined the key changes as detailed in paragraph 5.2 of the report. The Discretionary Business Rates Relief policy had been tightened up to align any relief available to organisations which supported the delivery of the Council's priority outcomes. After due consideration, the policies were approved.

Resolved – That the Business Rates reliefs and policies included in Appendix A of the report be approved, subject to an increase in

retail rate relief from £1,000 to £1,500 in line with the Chancellor's Autumn Statement.

59. Council Tax Support Scheme 2015-16

The Assistant Director Finance & Audit introduced a report regarding the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2015-16 which presented the options following the review of the scheme as agreed by Cabinet in September 2014.

A review of the modelling had demonstrated that there could be financial benefits from changing the scheme, with a total maximum yield of circa £220k. However, the reduced support would generally impact on those who had already experienced reduction within the scheme and there were practical considerations such as the collection rate, legal and administrative costs associated with changing the scheme. On balance, it was therefore recommended to base the 2015-16 on the existing scheme, with the appropriate up-ratings, and to carry out a wider review for 2016-17 along with the likely introduction of Universal Credit. Commissioners agreed that it would be sensible for a more fundamental review to be conducted in this way and it was therefore agreed to continue the 2014-15 scheme for a further year, subject to the appropriate up-rating.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Council Tax Support Scheme adopted by Slough Borough Council for the 2014-15 financial year be continued and the relevant premiums, applicable amounts, non dependant deductions etc be up-rated in line with the statement from the Minister of Pensions.
- (b) That the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer update the scheme to reflect such up-ratings of premiums, allowances and non dependent deductions as may be determined by the Department of Work and Pensions, and for other minor technical changes which may be required.

60. Approach to Heathrow Consultation

The Assistant Director Assets, Infrastructure and Regeneration and the Housing & Environment Policy Officer introduced a report seeking approval to respond to the Airports Commission consultation on the options for expanding runway capacity, which included two proposals at Heathrow and one at Gatwick.

The consultation was open until 3rd February 2015 and it was proposed that a draft response from the Council be prepared for review by the Cabinet at the meeting on 19th January 2015. A correction was noted to the table on page 113 of the agenda, with the projected increase in jobs being a maximum of 92,000 for the extended northern runway proposal and 112,000 for the North West runway. Commissioners discussed the potential impacts of any expansion at Heathrow and proposed a number of potential mitigations on

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issues such as noise, air quality and transport. The Cabinet recognised both the importance and complexity of this issue to the borough, particularly to Colnbrook, and agreed to submit a response setting out the priority mitigations. A number of specific comments were made for inclusion including on noise insulation and housing.

Councillor Smith, as ward Member for Colnbrook with Poyle and Parish Councillor Peter Hood, Chairman of Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council, addressed the Cabinet and explained in detail their views on the negative impacts they felt that any further expansion would have at Heathrow, including the anticipated additional noise and air pollution and pressures on housing and other public services. The Cabinet noted these concerns and asked officers to take the specific points raised into consideration in drafting a response to come back to the January meeting. Commissioners also recognised that many of the problems outlined were pre-existing and the consultation provided an opportunity for the Council to advance a package of benefits and improvements to the borough.

Resolved –

- (a) That all members be invited to comment on the list of potential mitigation and indicate their prioritisation, and that any further suggestions for mitigation are taken into consideration.
- (b) That the high level assessment of impacts, and the summary list of mitigations likely to be required be approved in principle.
- (c) That officers continue to engage with scheme promoters to encourage the inclusion of the required mitigations in scheme proposals.
- (d) That a draft response to the Airports Commission consultation be compiled by officers in time to be reviewed by Cabinet at its next meeting 19th January 2015, and submitted by the close of the consultation on 3rd February 2015.

61. Environmental Services Contract Savings

The Cabinet received a report proposing savings and efficiencies to the Environmental Services Contract with Amey. The proposals could be achieved in the short to medium term without major transformation to the services.

The savings detailed in the report included changes to the timing of bin collections, street cleaning and slight reductions in grass cutting and hedge trimming. The total savings for 2015/16 arising from the package would be £516,147.18. Commissioners were assured that the changes were unlikely to have a significant material impact on the quality of services and the changes would be introduced in parallel with more scouting and monitoring to carry out activity when required rather than to pre-arranged schedules. The Cabinet

approved all of the proposals, however, they further agreed that some contingency be available to enable additional hedge trimming to be carried out in the summer months if growing conditions meant this was required.

Resolved – That the proposed changes to the Amey contract, identified in section 5 of the report, be approved subject to the provision of some contingency funding to be available, if required, for hedge trimming to respond during any exceptional periods of growth.

62. A332 Windsor Road Route Enhancement and A355 Tuns Lane/Farnham Road Route Enhancement

The Cabinet considered a report seeking agreement to progress the implementation of the A332 and A355 route enhancement schemes in order to reduce congestion and improve journey time reliability.

The schemes were designed to enhance connectivity between key areas of the borough, particularly the town centre, Trading Estate and the motorways. Members noted the funding requirements for both schemes and welcomed the significant contribution from Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). A major public consultation had been undertaken which generally supported the proposals. Officers reported some of the concerns that had been raised such as the lowering of the speed limit between the M4 junction 6 and the Copthorne roundabout in relation to the A355 scheme and the residential access to side streets and concerns of the Slough Baptist Church for the Windsor Road scheme.

Commissioners discussed a number of issues including the funding from the LEP and Eton College (for the A355 scheme) and the anticipated benefits of the two schemes both the local residents and the town more generally and asked officers to continue to fully consider and take account of the feedback from the public consultation as the detailed designs were finalised. At the conclusion of the discussion, the Cabinet noted the progress made and agreed the recommendations as set out in the report.

Resolved –

- (a) That the process of securing funding from Thames Valley Berkshire LEP be progressed and supported.
- (b) That the terms of the offer, including the potential need for the remainder of the scheme cost to be met by local funding contributions, be noted.
- (c) That the local funding contributions required from Council capital resources be agreed in principle subject to further consideration of scheme costs.
- (d) That the design of the scheme be agreed in principle subject to a positive outcome of the public consultation.

- (e) That the tendering process be progressed in due course in line with the Council's procurement policy.

63. Children's Social Care Workforce Strategy 2014-17

The Commissioner for Education & Children introduced a report seeking endorsement of the Children's Social Care Workforce Strategy which was part of the Children's Social Care Improvement Programme.

The Strategy set out the Council's plans to address the workforce related issues raised by Ofsted in its inspection of December 2013 and detailed progress made in the past year. The Council had made a substantial investment in staffing for 2014-15 with £3.3m being added to the budget to reduce caseloads and improve practice and performance. The Strategy was designed to reduce reliance on agency staff and secure a more stable and permanent workforce and the report highlighted that good progress was being made.

Commissioners discussed a number of issues including the impact of the recruitment campaign; the progress in reducing social workers caseloads; and the potential workforce implications arising from the externalisation of some children's services functions into a new organisation. The Assistant Director Children & Families responded that the transition arrangements were ongoing but that it was vital to address the workforce issues as an immediate priority to improve the outcomes for children in the borough. The Cabinet welcomed the progress that had been made to date and endorsed the Strategy.

Resolved – That the Children's Social Care Workforce Strategy be endorsed as part of the Children's Social Care Improvement Programme.

64. Looked After Children Pupil Premium Policy

The Commissioner for Education & Children introduced a report seeking approval for a policy which would determine how the Council would allocate and manage the pupil premium for looked after children grant.

The grant funding was used to improve the educational outcomes of looked after children and the policy took account of a number of changes to the way the funding would operate in future with more resources per child, more children attracting the premium and management by the new Virtual School Head (VSH) appointed by the authority. Members welcomed the fact that the new national guidance and local policy would give the authority, through the VSH, more control over how the premium was used for each child to ensure the additional funding was improving their educational outcomes. The Cabinet agreed the policy as set out in Appendix A to the report.

Resolved – That the draft Looked After Children Pupil Premium Policy be adopted by the Council.

65. Contracts In Excess of £250,000

The Cabinet considered a report detailing a list of additional contracts with an estimated value of over £250,000 that were proposed to be let in the 2014/15 financial year. All contracts were included in approved budgets and Commissioners agreed the list as set out in Appendix A to the report.

Resolved – That the list of contracts in Appendix A be approved.

66. References from Overview & Scrutiny

There were no references from Overview & Scrutiny.

67. Notification of Forthcoming Decisions

The Cabinet considered the published Notification of Key Decisions for the forthcoming three month period to the end of February 2015. A number of updates to the plan were noted, including the possible addition of an item of the Slough Regeneration Partnership in January and the timing of the update on the Trelawney Avenue Redevelopment Plan which may move to February.

Resolved – That the published Notification of Key Decisions for the period between December 2014 and February 2015 be endorsed.

68. Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the items in Part II of the agenda as they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information relating to individuals and to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) as defined in paragraph 3 of Part I the Schedule 12A the Local Government Act 1972.

Below is a summary of the decisions of the Cabinet taken during Part II of the agenda.

69. Cambridge Education Contract Variation

A way forward was agreed regarding a possible variation to the contract between the Council and Mott MacDonald (Cambridge Education) relating to the provision of education services in Slough. The Cabinet also agreed that this could be implemented urgently.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.38 pm and closed at 8.50 pm)