

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Meeting held on Tuesday, 3rd March, 2015.

Present:- Councillors Nazir (Chair), Smith (Vice-Chair), Coad, N Holledge, Malik, Rana and Usmani

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Hussain, Plenty and Sharif

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Bal and Pantelic

PART I

47. Declaration of Interest

None were received.

48. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 5th February, 2015

Resolved – That the minutes of the last meeting held on 5th February, 2015 be approved as a correct record.

49. Member Questions

None were received.

50. Childhood Obesity Review

The Committee received an update from Dr Reddy, Public Health Programme Manager, on the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's following the Childhood Obesity review carried out in July – December 2013. During the review, the stigma attached to childhood obesity and parental obesity, which was a factor contributing to individuals not seeking help, was highlighted.

Specific areas were examined in order that the maximum impact on the levels of childhood obesity could be addressed and included:

- Family eating practices and the nutritive quality of the food being consumed (cooked meals v takeaways)
- Physical activity levels
- Parental obesity (obese parents are 40% more likely to have obese children)
- The involvement of all key partners in making every single contact count.

Dr Reddy reported that although the rise in the levels of obesity could not be stopped, significant progress had been made in terms of improving the offer on physical activity, healthy eating and nutritious school meals. It was noted

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that although challenges remained in the delivery of some of the recommendations, progress had been made in a number of areas, including:

- a) The monitoring and governance arrangements had been streamlined under the Children and Young People's Partnership Board (CYPPB), which was chaired by the Public Health Consultant.
- b) The physical activity outcomes had been incorporated onto the Physical Activity and Leisure Strategy and delivered through the key partners in the Physical Activity Steering Board through a mutually agreed action plan.
- c) The Health Visitor workforce had been increased prior to the service being commissioned by public health from October 2015. This universal service promoted breastfeeding, healthy weaning and healthy eating for children aged 0-5 years which should contribute in tackling childhood obesity in early year's settings. The Healthy Snack Awards for Children's Centres had also been extended to other early year settings via training for childminders.
- d) Chances4Change Programme – Big Lottery funded group of work streams led by public health, aimed at improving physical health, healthy eating and mental health of residents. The Public Health Team had organised a number of Walk and Talk Initiatives with mothers and toddlers in the Children's centres and libraries, engaging them in healthy eating and dance sessions.

Although a detailed update was outstanding from the Clinical Commissioning Group regarding the need for closer liaison between various organisations and the introduction of a system of regular health checks for children up to the age of 16 across all surgeries; since the scrutiny recommendations there had been a better understanding of the role of partnership working, better ways of communicating the issue, recognising the sensitivity surrounding the issue of childhood obesity and also identifying it as a local key priority through the CYPPB.

In the ensuing discussion a number of points were raised regarding the impact, if any, universal free school meals for reception, year 1 and year 2 pupils had had and strategies that had been engaged to encourage healthy eating. It was noted that there had been an increase from 32% to 49% of pupils accessing free school meals. The Committee were informed that the impact of this was difficult to assess as information was gathered at the end of year 6, with the possibility of pupils reverting back to unhealthy eating habits from year 3 to year 6. A Member suggested that a review be carried out at the end of year 2 and whilst it was acknowledged that this would provide a more accurate assessment of the impact of free school meals there would be significant cost implications of doing so.

Members were informed that two core healthy eating programmes were offered in local schools and that all schools engaged in the Slough Schools Sports Network (SSSN). The SSSN had identified schools that wished to establish a school based family physical activity programme. It was noted that the number of children participating in physical activity had risen. A Member

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queried whether schools that were academies were participating in any of these programmes and was informed that the Local Authority was not responsible for Academies.

A number of other local initiatives were outlined to increase health eating and physical activity by residents, including New Early Years Initiative, FAST – Families and Schools Together. This programme focused on improving educational achievement using a collaborative and family approach. FAST was developed to equip parents with the confidence and skills needed to support their child's education and offered weekly sessions delivered through local schools.

A Member commented on the increase in the number of obesity cases in Slough and requested that the matter be investigated further, exploring the factors contributing to the increase in numbers and what work was being implemented by partner agencies to address the issue. Dr Reddy informed Members that although no work was planned in relation to this area of work, the matter would be raised with the appropriate agencies.

Resolved – That details of the report be noted and a progress report be submitted to the Committee in six months time.

51. **Thames Valley Transactional Services Update: September 2014 to February 2015**

The Committee received the Thames Valley Transactional Services performance report for the period September 2014 to February 2015. Core activities undertaken by arvato during this reporting period included:

- arvato's business continued to grow with the inclusion of the private business sector with over 400 staff employed on site. A commitment to supporting young people continued through offering apprenticeships and training them to NVQ Level 2. Working with the community remained a priority, with Kevin Hales, arvato site director appointed onto the Slough Aspire Board and staff contributing to school careers events and running local children's workshops. arvato were also sponsoring a category in the Slough Business Awards.
- Customer services had improved, with reduced waiting and call times for local residents.
- Strong Key Performance Indicators across all services ensuring the delivery of the contractual obligations. A Self Service system was being developed to allow residents to view their council tax accounts on line and remained on target for implementation from March 2015.
- The Council had commissioned arvato to carry out two additional projects – maximising business rates and reviewing Aged Debt. Both these projects were underway and would result in an increase in revenue for the Council.

A Member commented on how the budget gap of £2.7 million for phase 1 transactional services would be addressed and was informed that this was

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met from one-off funding due to a Government grant above the anticipated level when the 2013/14 budget was set. For future years this funding gap would be addressed through a growth bid and reflected in the revenue and Medium Term Financial Strategies.

During the ensuing discussion Members requested information relating to recovery of monies when a company entered administration and what support and advice was given to companies experiencing financial difficulties. Kevin Hales explained that Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs had priority in terms of monies being recovered and would confirm where on the priority list Local Authorities were ranked.

Responding to what impact, if any, the introduction of Neighbourhood Benefit and Money Advice Officers had had, Members were informed that Officers had been working in some of the most deprived neighbourhoods of Slough to generate additional income within the community and improve financial inclusion. Initial feedback had demonstrated that work carried out by the Officers had had a positive impact.

The Committee was requested to give consideration to reschedule future performance reports to allow full performance figures to be presented at the end of each contractual year. It was agreed that arvato would continue to report to the Committee at least twice in each municipal year.

Resolved – That details of the performance report be noted and future reports be presented to the Committee in January and June of each year.

52. Town Centre Car Parking Task and Finish Group

Members were reminded that the Town Centre Car Parking Task and Finish Group was commissioned following concerns regarding parking and pressures on facilities in the town centre. In outlining the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group, Councillor Plenty who chaired the Group, explained that the current zero parking policy adopted for the town centre was unsustainable. With future developments such as Crossrail and Heathrow expansion it was necessary to ensure that Slough had a system which could anticipate and accommodate future trends.

Following a Member query regarding the parking facilities available at Tesco, Councillor Plenty explained that Tesco should be removed from the limit and the centre limit reduced accordingly as Tesco no longer provided a realistic option for free parking for the town centre or any parking over four hours. This meant that it was no longer a significant provided of parking spaces for anyone other than its own customers and its inclusion in the limit on town centre parking spaces distorted the picture.

Councillor Hussain, attending the meeting under Procedure Rule 30, stated that the zero parking policy was being applied to the area immediately surrounding the town centre. A number of residents had complained that

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visitors often had no where to park and the Council needed to adopt a parking system which was suited to the needs of residents.

A Member suggested that underground parking be investigated as a possibility of providing parking spaces in the areas neighbouring the town centre. It was noted that whilst this was a feasible option, given the current zero parking policy adopted for the town centre, developers were not under any obligation to provide provisions for parking.

Members congratulated the Task and Finish Group for its thorough examination of the issues relating to town centre parking and agreed with the recommendations that were proposed within the report.

Resolved -

- 1) That the current policy of zero parking be reviewed, with a future ratio to be specified subject to further research by Slough Borough Council (SBC) and justification;
- 2) That the potential hire of, or use of parking permits with time restrictions in neighbouring parking facilities (e.g. Tesco car park) be researched;
- 3) That the time restrictions on areas with single yellow lines be reduced to 6pm in suitable areas (subject to research by SBC);
- 4) That land adoption be used to increase SBC's control of parking (e.g. Kittiwake House, the area in Mill Street outside Foundry Court);
- 5) That the current limit of 5,000 parking spaces be reviewed, using the justification for it at the time of its creation and variations in the situation since this time (e.g. parking at Tesco's, Crossrail) to reappraise the figure;
- 6) That the parking at Slough railway station be removed from SBC's allocation of parking spaces;
- 7) That the potential expansion of car parking facilities at Slough railway station be investigated;
- 8) That the size of loading and unloading bays be reviewed to facilitate their use by larger vehicles; and
- 9) That further research be conducted into the continuation of free parking after 3pm, or cheaper parking through the use of a 'Slough Card', with a view to a potential increase in high street trade.

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53. Abandoned Vehicles Policy and Procedure

Following discussion at its meeting in February 2015, Members had requested that a written information report be presented to the March meeting, outlining the Council's policy and procedure to deal with abandoned and untaxed vehicles.

Members noted that although the number of vehicles being abandoned in Slough had fluctuated over recent years, there had been an overall decline over the last decade. This was mainly due to cars being scrapped by owners in return for cash rather than being abandoned. The Council did not have the authority to remove vehicles that were not abandoned and most vehicles reported to the Council were untaxed rather than abandoned.

A number of points were raised in the ensuing discussion including what the Local Authority's powers were to remove vehicles abandoned in front gardens and the criteria applied in assessing whether a vehicle had been abandoned. It was agreed that further detailed information was required and that an officer be requested to attend a future meeting.

Resolved – That the report be noted and the matter be discussed at a future committee meeting with officers in attendance.

54. Forward Work Programme

Resolved – That details of the work programme be noted.

55. Attendance Record

Resolved – That details of the Members Attendance Record be noted.

56. Date of Next Meeting - Thursday 9 April, 2015

The date of the next meeting was noted as Thursday 9 April, 2015.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.20 pm)