

Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 14th December, 2015.

Present:- Councillors Anderson (Chair), Carter, Hussain, Mann, Munawar, Parmar, Sharif and Swindlehurst (from 6.44pm)

Apologies for Absence:- None

PART 1

64. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

65. Minutes of the Meeting held on 16th November 2015

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 16th November 2015 be approved as a correct record.

66. Medium Term Financial Planning Update Including Savings Proposals for the 2016/17 Financial Year

The Assistant Director Finance & Audit updated the Cabinet on the latest financial planning assumptions following the Spending Review and Autumn Statement announced on 25th November, and proposed a number of further savings for 2016/17 to be included in the revenue budget to be recommended to Council in February 2016.

The Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) would not be published until later in December and finalised in January, however the medium term financial planning assumptions had been revised in light of the Spending Review. The forecast funding reductions had increased by a further £1m in 2016/17 and £2m in 2017/18. The Revenue Support Grant (RSG) would be reduced to £20m in 2016/17, which was £4m less than the current year and down from £40m in 2013/14. Council's would be able to raise Council Tax by a further 2% above the referendum threshold, providing it would directly support adult social care. This would yield an additional £0.9m if implemented in Slough and Commissioners commented that the net impact of the increased RSG cut and additional ability to raise Council Tax appeared in effect to transfer the burden to local taxpayers. There had been no announcement on the Council Tax Freeze Grant. Other key announcements from the Spending Review were summarised. Commissioners were informed that the system of full Business Rate retention would be implemented by 2020, however, Slough would not keep the entire £100m collected locally and there would be a redistributive system of tariffs.

The total savings required over the four years of the MTFS was approximately £38m, an increase of £5m since the Spending Review due to the front loading of funding reductions to non-protected areas including local government. The Cabinet considered the proposed savings for 2016/17 set out fully in

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Appendices A and B to the report. This second tranche of savings totalled £3.8m, a significant proportion of which were adult social care transformation and efficiencies. These savings were additional to the £4.8m presented to Cabinet in November and the remaining gap of £3m would need to be closed prior to recommending the revenue budget to Council in February 2016. Commissioners asked about the work being undertaken to close this gap in the coming weeks and it was noted that the MTFs would be revised following the LGFS which would confirm the level of savings required. The feedback from the online budget simulator would be analysed, further consideration would be given to the levels of Council Tax and further savings identified.

The Cabinet noted the latest financial planning assumptions and agreed to include the savings 2016/17 proposed in Appendices A and B to the report in the revenue budget to be recommended to Council in February.

Resolved –

- (a) That the savings set out in Appendix A to the report be included in the Revenue Budget 2016-17 to be approved by Council in February, subject to the final Local Government Finance Settlement, taxbase papers and any further adjustments.
- (b) That the latest financial planning assumptions and the impact of these on future service delivery be noted.

67. Council Taxbases for 2016/17

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 2016/17.

(Councillor Swindlehurst joined the meeting)

It was noted that the taxbase was calculated to rise by 4.0% between 2015/16 and 2016/17. The Council's tax base had steadily risen over recent years by 1% previously and by 2% in the current year, reflecting the growth in the number of properties in Slough. The collection rate and number of claimants under the Council Tax Support Scheme were the other key factors in the tax base. Commissioners discussed a number of matters including the collection rate for council tax of 98.4%, which was a rise of 0.2% and had been agreed with arvato. Future and in-year collection rates were considered and the policy of applying 0% discounts for empty properties to encourage development was confirmed.

There was a forecast surplus of circa £1.1m in the Collection Fund and this figure would be revised for the budget setting period. It was noted that the Council's transactional services provider, arvato, were carrying out work on Council Tax arrears and Commissioners were advised that there were likely to be some significant write off requests coming through to Cabinet in 2016.

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The Cabinet welcome the increased taxbase which would help to contribute to Outcome 7 of the Five Year Plan to grow the Council's income and agreed the recommendations as set out in the report.

Resolved –

- (a) That the level of council tax discount in respect of second homes remain at 0%.
- (b) That the level of discount in respect of long-term empty properties remain 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 2016/17 be set at 98.4%. This was an increase of 0.2% and had 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 2016/17 shall be:

i) Parish of Britwell	753.4
ii) Parish of Colnbrook with Poyle	1,840.2
iii) Parish of Wexham	1,315.8
iv) Slough Town	36,092.4
All areas	40,001.8
- (e) That the S151 officer be delegated with responsibility to adjust the taxbase following Cabinet due to any changes in Government 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.

68. Award of Smoking Cessation Contract 2015-19

The Assistant Director of Public Health introduced a report that sought approval to award the new smoking cessation contract to Solutions 4 Health, commencing on 1st January 2016.

A thorough and competitive tendering process had been undertaken by Bracknell Forest Council on behalf of the participating Berkshire local authorities and the best provider was considered to be Solutions 4 Health who

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were the existing provider. They had scored highest in all domains and had demonstrated the highest quitter rates in England. The capped contract was for £300k per annum for 3+1+1 years which represented a saving of £180k against the current contract price. Contributions from partners would be sought, however, it was noted that smoking cessation was a mandated service from the public health grant. Discussions were ongoing with Slough Clinical Commissioning Group and others about support for other services such as the Healthy Hearts Programme.

Commissioners sought clarity on a number of issues including the number of people in Slough supported, the monitoring of performance measures for sustained quit rates and the support for vulnerable groups. It was responded that 770 people would be helped to quit per year, that people who be monitored at the standard 4 and 12 week benchmarks and that there was specific support for vulnerable people such as those in pregnancy or with conditions such as diabetes. Smoking cessation helped tackle health inequalities and the work focused on high risk areas. Commissioners also asked about the relative risks of shisha smoking and it was noted that it carried a significantly higher risk and public health communications needed to get this message out.

The existing service had already contributed to a reduction in smoking prevalence from 22% to 19% and Commissioners asked how much further smoking could realistically be reduced. The Assistant Director commented that studies indicated that the genetic propensity to smoke was very low, therefore significant numbers of people could realistically be helped to stop smoking, which was the biggest single impact that could be made to improve their health and prevent early death.

After due consideration, it was agreed that the contract be awarded to the selected provider on the terms proposed.

Resolved –

- (a) That it be noted that the winning bid was made by the existing provider who had achieved the highest quit rates in England and a recent MJ Public Health award.
- (b) That the bid scored highest in all domains – a total score of 90.6 compared to 60.4 for the nearest contender and this included a section for innovative delivery.
- (c) That it be noted that the contract value was £300k per year for three years, with a 1 plus 1 optional extension dependent on performance being met and on the Public Health grant. A contribution would be sought through wider partners.
- (d) That the contract be awarded to the selected provider, Solutions 4 Health.

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69. References from Overview & Scrutiny

There were no references from Overview & Scrutiny.

70. Notification of Forthcoming Decisions

Resolved – That the published Notification of Decisions for the period between December 2015 to February 2016 be endorsed.

71. Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the item in Part II of the agenda as it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 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.

72. Proposed Disposal of Surplus Assets

Delegated authority was given to agree and execute the disposal of the rear land 22-24 Northborough Road for best consideration to enable to extension of the Farnham Road GP practice.

It was agreed to give further consideration to the options to promote the maintenance and potential future development of Maple House, 95-109 High Street.

73. Cross Keys Public House Car Park, Chalvey

It was agreed to delegate authority to dispose of the Cross Keys Public House Car Park, Chalvey, subject to planning, for best consideration to the successful purchaser of the Cross Keys PH site so that it can be promoted and developed as a comprehensive residential scheme.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.34 pm and closed at 7.29 pm)