

## **Cabinet – Meeting held on Tuesday, 29th May, 2018.**

**Present:-** Councillors Swindlehurst (Chair), Hussain (Vice-Chair), Anderson, Carter, Mann, Nazir, Pantelic and Sadiq

**Also present under Rule 30:-** Councillors Dar, Sharif, Strutton and Wright

### **PART 1**

#### **1. Declarations of Interest**

None were declared.

#### **2. Cabinet Portfolios and Responsibilities 2018/19**

The Cabinet formally noted the portfolios and responsible Lead Members appointed by the Leader of the Council, as detailed in Appendix A to the report. It was also noted that the Leader had appointed Councillor Sabia Hussain as Deputy Leader of the Council in accordance with Part 2 Article 7 (10) of the Constitution.

#### **Resolved –**

- (a) That the Cabinet portfolios and responsible Lead Members, as appointed by the Leader of the Council, be noted.
- (b) That the appointment of Councillor Sabia Hussain as Deputy Leader of the Council be noted.

#### **3. Ruling Group Manifesto 2018/19**

The Cabinet received the Slough Labour Party Manifesto for the Borough elections held on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2018.

Lead Members formally agreed to adopt the Manifesto commitments as Council policy for delivery in the next year. It was noted that an update on progress be received by the Cabinet before the end of the year with a further update by March 2019.

#### **Resolved –**

- (a) That the Slough Labour Party 2018 manifesto be adopted as Council policy for the period until the next Borough elections in May 2019.
- (b) That an update report on the progress of implementing the manifesto be presented to the Cabinet before Christmas and a further update towards the end of the 2018/19 financial year.

**4. Proposed Acquisition of Town Centre Site, Slough**

The Leader of the Council introduced a report that sought approval from Cabinet to purchase a currently available office premises, close to the High Street, which would become the Council's new headquarters to promote the regeneration of the town centre and enhance customer services to residents. If approved, it was proposed that St Martin's Place would be converted into a mix of social and affordable residential accommodation which would make a significant impact on tackling homelessness and reduce the need for expensive temporary accommodation.

It was noted that the Part II report included exempt and commercially sensitive information on the location of the premises and the financial implications for the Council.

The reasons for the proposed acquisition were outlined and included the opportunity to provide an immediate boost to town centre footfall whilst the longer term major regeneration plans of Catalyst Capital and others were developed. The new building was significantly more energy efficient and the proximity to public transport would encourage a modal shift of staff which would improve air quality. The new premises provided an opportunity to ensure the accommodation contributed to the wider digital transformation of the Council. As well as being the new home for the Council, the purchase was a significant investment opportunity with the prospect of renting space and benefit from the rising market ahead of the arrival of Crossrail/Elizabeth Line services from 2019. It was noted that the objective of relocating the Council headquarters back into the town centre had been a Labour party manifesto commitment.

The Cabinet supported the principle of the move as part of a wider transformation programme and accommodation strategy. Lead Members asked a range of questions about the evaluation of other options and alternatives; the valuation of the premises; the revenue implications; and the communication with staff. Assurance was provided that a range of options had been considered and that the proposed purchase price, as detailed in the Part II report, represented best value. It was anticipated that the move could be made by early in 2019 if the purchase was agreed and the Cabinet would receive a report in October 2018 on a range of more detailed issues including energy efficiency, the conversion of SMP and the possible disposal of some other assets to offset some of the capital cost of the purchase. It was noted that the purchase was expected to be revenue neutral in three years by renting out unused space.

Speaking under Rule 30, Councillor Strutton supported the principle of moving to the town centre but he highlighted that St Martin's Place had recently been refurbished and asked whether the new building would be the Council's long term headquarters. The Leader responded that St Martin's Place itself was an interim move and whilst the Council's headquarters would be a matter for those leading the Council in the future, the purchase represented a good long term investment. Councillor Sharif addressed the Cabinet under Rule 30 and

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made a range of comments including whether the Council required such a large building as it was seeking to encourage more home working; what other options had been considered; and he queried whether the purchase price was good value. The Leader responded to the questions raised and highlighted that the figures in the Part II report confirmed that the purchase was a sound investment and was affordable.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Cabinet agreed that the proposal was an opportunity to realise the ambition to move the Council back into the town centre; that it was sound financial investment; and provided an opportunity to convert St Martin's Place to much needed social and affordable housing. It was recognised to be a significant financial commitment, however, the Cabinet was assured that the risks could be managed. It was proposed and agreed to add some further wording to recommendation (c) to clarify that a recommendation would be made to Council to adjust the borrowing ceiling and capital programme to enable the purchase. The Cabinet agreed the Part I recommendations and moved into Part II to discuss the exempt and commercially sensitive information.

### **Resolved –**

- (a) That the acquisition by the Council of the freehold interest the proposed office as set out in recommendations 2.1, 2.4 and 2.5 of the Part II report be approved.
- (b) That delegated authority be given to the Interim Chief Executive, following consultation with the s151 Officer and Leader of the Council to approve the final terms of the acquisition.
- (c) That the total purchase price and associated costs (including IT infrastructure, fit-out and moving costs) be funded through the capital programme and that a Recommendation to Council be made to adjust the borrowing ceiling and the capital programme to enable the purchase and further income generating measures.
- (d) That SMP be redeveloped to provide a mix of social and affordable housing that makes a material contribution to the Housing Strategy and note that an options appraisal for future use will be presented to Cabinet by October 2018.
- (e) That a report would be presented to Cabinet by October 2018 to update Cabinet on the feedback from Energy Conservation surveys, including measures to improve energy optimisation and efficiency and the costs associated with these measures.
- (f) With reference to section 5.12 of the report, to note that Asset Management would undertake a performance review of assets and make recommendations to Cabinet by October 2018 regarding the potential to dispose of assets to reduce the Council's borrowing costs.

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- (g) That a report be presented to Cabinet by October 2018 that provides an update on proposals for fit-out, IT solutions and potential relocation of the Cashiers and Customer Service Centre into Cornwall House.
- (h) That a report be presented to Cabinet by October 2018 that provides recommendations for the adoption of Fleet Challenge Measures, timescale and costs associated with these measures, and their benefits.

### **5. 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 matters considered during Part II of the agenda.

### **6. Proposed Acquisition of Town Centre Site, Slough - Appendix**

Further to the resolutions made in Part I (Minute 129 refers), the location of the proposed acquisition of a town centre site and the financial implications were considered and all recommendations were agreed.

### **7. Disposal of 32 Chalvey Road East, Chalvey, Slough**

An approach was agreed about the terms of the disposal of 32 Chalvey Road East and delegated authority was given to take further actions if the sale was not agreed.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.34 pm and closed at 8.35 pm)