

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Meeting held on Thursday, 30th January, 2020.

Present:- Councillors Dhaliwal (Chair), Sarfraz (Vice-Chair) (until 8.36 pm), Gahir, Hulme, Matloob (from 6.41 pm), D Parmar, S Parmar and R Sandhu

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Smith and Strutton

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Basra

PART I

47. Declarations of Interest

None were declared.

48. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 9th January 2020

Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 9th January 2020 be approved as a correct record.

49. Member Questions

None had been received.

50. Capital Strategy 2020 to 2024

The Service Lead, Finance provided a presentation to the Committee that set out the Council's budget proposals 2020/21, including the highlights of the Capital Strategy, the Treasury Management Strategy and the Revenue Budget.

The presentation highlighted the following:

- The Council's budget for 2020/21 was balanced. The major uncertainty for 2021/22 was due to the Government's Business Rates review.
- Investment was being increased in demand led growth for front line services in order to protect the most vulnerable people in Slough.
- Commercial income and efficiencies were being used to offset Government funding reductions and protect front line services.
- It was proposed to increase Council Tax by 1.84%, with an additional 2.0% increase on the Adult Social Care Precept – a total 3.84% increase, which equated to a 90p per week increase on a Band C property.

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- Growth proposals to address major areas of demand (temporary accommodation, home to school transport, Children's Services, and Adult Social Care) and deliver service improvements were planned.
- Savings proposals included: efficiency savings resulting from the Arvato services being delivered in-house; income generated from the leisure centre contacts and streamlined service savings; staffing savings to be generated by the 'Slough Academy', which involved the Council 'growing its own staff' and reducing reliance on agency staffing.

(Councillor Matloob joined the meeting)

The Chair then invited comments and questions from Members.

Members had a wide-ranging discussion, during which the following points were raised:

- The increasing demand for housing in Slough was highlighted. A Member queried the Council's purchase of a cinema in Basingstoke and asked if investment in local housing stock would have benefited residents more. It was explained that the cinema was a strategic purchase and the rental income received was used to fund front line Council services. By purchasing a wide range of assets the Council could ensure its investment portfolio was robust. It was explained that for the acquisition of land or property to be considered 'strategic' it had to make a significant contribution towards the Council's regeneration objectives and/or provide a commercial return on investment to improve the financial resilience of the Council.
- A Member stressed the importance of housing residents within Slough, rather than relocating them to accommodation outside of the Borough. In response, it was highlighted that the Council was continuing to make significant investment in James Elliman Homes Limited to provide housing to residents.
- Clarification was sought regarding the funding of the Nova House Capital Loan scheme, listed in Appendix A of the report. It was explained that in 2017 the building had failed a cladding safety test. Consequently, the Cabinet had taken the decision to decant residents due to the fire risk and undertake a £10 million refurbishment programme.
- Clarification was sought regarding the Extra Care Housing scheme, listed in Appendix A of the report, which indicated that no investment funding had been made during 2019/20. It was explained that future capital funding would be invested and a two year programme was currently underway.
- In relation to Section 106 receipts, a Member asked why the Council currently held £10.2 million in receipts and why the money was used to fund a variety of schemes, rather than being ring-fenced and attached to the project associated with the funding. It was explained that there were restrictions in place to control what the money could be used for, and the Council complied with its obligations. It was highlighted that

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officers spent Section 106 funding within the required timeframes to ensure it was not returned to the developer.

- Referring to the Special School Expansion, listed in Appendix A of the report, a Member asked which schools would be undergoing expansion. The Service Lead, Finance undertook to seek this information from the relevant department and to circulate a response to the Committee.
- A Member asked how many rooms would be provided by the Chalvey Extra Care Housing scheme. It was reported that the scheme would provide 60 rooms.
- A Member asked for additional information regarding the cemetery expansion scheme. It was explained that the Council was undertaking an expansion of the cemetery to ensure the site was large enough to meet future demand. The crematorium facilities were being upgraded, and this included the installation of webcasting technology.
- Clarification was sought regarding the 'Hub Development' and 'Youth Hub' schemes. It was explained that these schemes formed part of the Council's 'locality offer'.

The Chair then invited Councillor Strutton to address the Committee under Rule 30.

Councillor Strutton asked for details regarding the refurbishment costs and projected valuation of Nova House. He queried whether the purchase had been a 'good' or 'bad' investment for the Council. In response, it was explained that the Council expected to recoup the investment cost; however, the purchase was never intended as a profit making exercise, rather it had been purchased to safeguard residents.

Councillor Strutton highlighted the cost to the Council of placing people in temporary accommodation and asked if the money would be better invested in building Council owned housing. In response, it was explained that the Council had established a subsidiary housing company, James Elliman Homes Limited to provide housing to Slough residents.

The Chair thanked the Service Lead, Finance, and the Director of Finance and Resources for the presentation.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Service Lead, Finance be requested to circulate information detailing the schools that would be undergoing expansion to the Committee.
- (b) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the Capital Strategy 2020/ 2024 and that Cabinet on 3rd February 2020 would be requested to resolve:

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- I. That the Capital Strategy of £259 million and the associated Minimum Revenue Provision was approved and recommended to Full Council on 20th February 2020.
- II. To note that the notional costs of borrowing for the Capital Programme to the Revenue Budget would be increased by up to £5.916 million per annum - commencing during the period of the Capital Strategy to fund borrowing.
- III. To recommend that the principles underpinning the Capital Programme, as set out in section 5.1.2 of the report and the Minimum Revenue Provision principles, as set out in section 7 of the report, be approved and recommended to Full Council on 20th February 2020.
- IV. To recommend that Appendices A and B of the report, detailing the Capital Programmes for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account be approved and recommended to Full Council on 20th February 2020.

51. Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21

The Service Lead, Finance explained that the highlights of the Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21 had been presented under the previous agenda item.

The Chair invited Members to comment and ask questions.

During the course of the discussion, the following points were raised:

- Concern was raised regarding the risks associated with purchasing commercial properties. A Member asked what safeguarding the Council put in place to minimise risk. It was explained that any purchase made had to meet the criteria set out in the Council's Investment Strategy.
- A Member asked how the Council ensured its debt and borrowing were prudently managed. It was explained that the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's prudential code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities recommended that an authority's total debt should be lower than its highest forecast Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) over the next three years. The Council's highest forecast of CFR during the next three years was £833 million. The total debts for 2020/21 were expected to be £732 million; therefore the Council would comply with the recommendation.
- Concerns were raised regarding the volatility of the property market. It was queried what measures the Council took to mitigate for a downturn in property prices. It was explained that as part of an investment the Council put in place long-term rental contracts to ensure a guaranteed income stream. The Council's Asset Investment Board scrutinised the

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performance of Council owned assets, and property was bought and sold accordingly.

- A Member asked what financial arrangements were in place with the Council's leisure providers at Farnham Road and Salt Hill Activity Centre. It was explained that the operators 'Everyone Active' met the overhead running costs and paid a profit return to the Council.
- A Member asked if the Department for Education (DfE) would be providing any funding to address the £1.2 million forecast overspend generated by Slough Children's Trust. It was noted that positive discussions had been held with the DfE and nationally local authorities' were struggling to meet the growing demand for children's services, and home to transport provision.

Resolved – That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted:

- (a) The Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21.
- (b) That the Treasury Management Strategy would be considered by Cabinet on 3rd February 2020 prior to it being recommended to Council on 20th February 2020.

52. Revenue Budget 2020/21

The Service Lead, Finance explained that an overview of the Revenue Budget had been provided in the presentation considered at the beginning of the meeting.

The Chair then invited Members to comment and ask questions.

During the course of the discussion, the following points were raised:

- A Member asked if the Council Tax increase of 1.84% was in-line with other neighbouring authorities. It was confirmed that the increase was comparable.
- In relation to the Adult Social Care information presented, a Member requested that in future reports, the statistical information presented be accompanied by a narrative explanation to provide context. It was noted that the report presented to Council on 20th February 2020 would include full details; and it was agreed that these details would be provided in future reports to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- A Member asked what controls were in place to ensure the Council met its Council Tax collection targets. It was explained that the collection of Business Rates and Council Tax had recently been brought back in-house, having previously been contracted externally to Arvato. Now that the collection of Council Tax was being managed internally, officers were able to exert greater influence and controls to minimise risk.

The Chair then invited Councillor Strutton to address the Committee under Rule 30.

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Councillor Strutton sought clarification regarding the use of the Adult Social Care precept, and asked if the money was ring-fenced solely for Adult Social Care or if it was subsumed into the Council's general budget.

The Director of Finance and Resources confirmed that the precept was used exclusively to fund Adult Social Care, and as the responsible officer, he signed and submitted an annual statement to Government declaring how the resources had been used.

Councillor Strutton queried the proposed savings generated by the in-house delivery of services previously contracted to Arvato. In addition, he asked if there were still plans to let the fourth floor of Observatory House, as originally planned, to ensure the purchase of the building was cost neutral.

The Director of Finance and Resources explained that the Council had made a significant saving, as it was no longer paying for the use of Phoenix House, the premises Arvato had previously occupied.

The Chair thanked the Service Lead, Finance and the Director of Finance and Resources for the report and presentation.

Resolved –

- (a) That in future Revenue Budget reports presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, statistical information be accompanied by a narrative explanation.
- (b) That the Revenue Budget 2020/21 be noted.
- (c) That it was noted that the Revenue Budget 2020/21 would be considered by Cabinet on 3rd February 2020, prior to it being recommended to Council on 20th February 2020.

53. Equality and Inclusivity Events in Slough

The Policy Insight Analyst introduced a report that summarised the range and type of events available for members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender (LGBT) community in Slough.

At the meeting held on 26th September 2019, Full Council had resolved to request that ‘..the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, working with local partners, charities and our staff network, ensure the range of equality and inclusivity events run or supported by the Council are as wide and diverse as possible’. In particular, the Council had expressed an interest in the range and type of events run in Slough for members of the LGBT community.

Members were informed that the Council did not employ an officer who solely dealt with issues surrounding equality and inclusivity in the community.

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Instead, furthering equality was 'mainstreamed' – meaning it formed part of the responsibilities of various officers working across the Council.

A summary of some of the events and groups aimed at members of the LGBT community was provided to the Committee. In addition, Members were advised that there were ongoing plans to organise a Slough Pride event in 2020. The Regional Co-Secretary for LGBT+ at Unison was currently exploring funding options to support the event.

The Chair thanked the Policy Insight Analyst for the report and invited Members to comment and ask questions.

A Member highlighted the importance of promoting the inclusion of disabled people and asked if there were events and forums in Slough, aimed at engaging with people with physical and mental disabilities. In addition, the role of the Council as an employer, in promoting inclusion was highlighted. It was agreed that the offer to disabled people in Slough was a matter that could be considered in the future.

In response to a query, the Policy Insight Analyst explained that the Government's new regulations made it compulsory for all primary aged pupils to be taught about relationships and all secondary aged pupils to be taught relationships and sex education.

Councillor Smith was then invited by the Chair to address the Committee under Rule 30.

Councillor Smith asked why the arrangements for a Slough Pride event were being undertaken by a Unison representative rather than residents. He raised concern that residents had not been involved in the arrangements for the event and he said a number of residents had reported difficulties contacting the Unison representative. In addition, he sought clarification regarding the funding for the Pride event.

In response, the Policy Insight Analyst explained that the Unison representative was also a local resident, who was passionate about establishing a Pride event in Slough. The event would be resident and not Council led. In relation to funding, it was explained that the event would not be funded by the Council; and several funding applications were currently being pursued.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

54. Adult Social Care Transformation Programme and Adult Social Care Improvement Programme

The Service Lead, Commissioning and Transformation introduced the report and provided a presentation regarding the Adult Social Care Transformation Programme 2015-20 and the Adult Social Care Improvement Programme 2020-21.

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The Adult Social Care Programme had been initiated in 2015 with the purpose of delivering a personalised, preventative and asset-based approach towards providing Adult Social Care. It was envisaged that implementing a planned programme of transformation would improve the wellbeing of individuals requiring care and support, and deliver significant financial savings.

To date savings in excess of £8 million had been delivered, primarily through the implementation of the following initiatives: asset-based approach to social work, direct payments, Multi-Disciplinary Review Team, continuing health care, and Integrated Care Decision Making (this comprised of four projects: Home First, Anticipatory Care Planning, Community Multi-Disciplinary Teams, and Local Access Points).

The Adult Social Care Transformation Programme had introduced a more personalised approach, focused on individual wellbeing, resulting in a broader 'person centred' and asset based range of services being offered to meet the needs of people.

The main impacts of implementing the Adult Social Care Transformation Programme had been:

- Supporting people to stay at home for longer
- People being more in control of their care needs
- Minimising unnecessary delays to hospital discharge when people were medically fit to leave
- Preventing unnecessary hospital admissions
- Managing the Council's expenditure effectively

Members were advised that Adult Social Care was facing a number of challenges, stemming from the following factors:

- Increasing levels and complexity of need, especially for people already known to social care.
- Provider inflationary uplifts and price rate increases
- National Minimum Living Wage obligations
- Labour market competition and uncertainty relating to the impact of Brexit

The Adult Social Care Improvement Programme would continue to deliver the necessary reduction in spending during 2020/21 by continuing with the current initiatives.

Progress on the following suite of projects would continue to improve practice and assist to address the funding shortfall:

- Digital and Assistive Technology
- Creation of a Peripatetic Team
- Disabled Facilities Grant

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- Improve Access Contact and Adult Social Care Pathway
- Remodelling provider services
- Improving brokerage function
- Consolidation of teams

Following the conclusion of the presentation, the Chair invited comments and questions from Members.

During the course of a wide-ranging discussion, the following points were raised:

- A Member asked how many people in Slough had a disability. In response, it was explained that the number of people with a disability would be larger than the number of people receiving Adult Social Care. This was because the support a person received was based on an assessment of need.
- A Member requested the following information:
 - The number of people currently in receipt of direct payments.
 - The number of people working in the Review Team.
 - In relation to Anticipatory Care Planning – the number of additional people identified as a result of the new process.
 - The size of caseload for individual staff members working in the Community Multi-Disciplinary Teams.
 - It was noted that 'Make Every Contact Count' training had been delivered in 2018/29 to over 200 staff – it was asked if there were plans to roll this out further, and if so, which staff members would be invited to attend.
 - In relation to commissioning of Adult Social Care services – it was asked what types of services, above the standard range, had been commissioned.

The Director of Adults and Communities agreed to circulate a written response to the Committee, addressing the points detailed above.

- It was asked if means testing Adult Social Care provision discouraged people from saving money to pay for their own care. It was explained that the boundary between health and social care was difficult for some people to differentiate. Unlike NHS health care, social care was not a free service and often people were surprised when asked to fund their own care. It was anticipated that the new Government would be reviewing the sustainability of Adult Social Care in the near future. A consultation would be undertaken and Members were encouraged to submit their views.
- In relation to Direct Payments, it was asked what measures were in place to ensure that payments were spent appropriately. It was explained that the Council was able to scrutinise the use of payments and there were limitations to the types of purchases for which the payments could be used. In the majority of cases, people took the responsibility of using public money very seriously and had

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occasionally returned surplus funding back to the Council. Only in a minority of cases did people misuse their payments. Members were assured that mechanisms were in place to detect misuse and take action to stop payments if this occurred.

- A Member asked if the Information Technology systems used by various partner agencies were integrated with each other. It was explained that it was not possible to share information across the NHS and social care systems. However, the implementation of 'connected care' enabled social workers and other partner agencies to access a summary of key information relating to a client in receipt of a range of support.
- It was queried how the Council monitored digital support provided in people's homes. It was explained that as part of a commissioning exercise the Council would be identifying suitable products to support people to remain independent. To maximise economies of scale the Council would be looking to work with East Berkshire Clinical Commissioners Groups. The current Care Line system was reaching its end of life span and work would be undertaken to identify a better offer.
- A Member asked what measures were in place to ensure the suitability of care procured through a direct payment. It was explained that the Council provided advice to people regarding employment legislation, including how to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service check.

(Councillor Sarfraz left the meeting)

- It was queried how the Council managed direct payments to individuals who lacked the mental capacity to make their own care arrangements. It was explained that there were a range of options available in these circumstances. A family member could manage the payments or the Council could take over the direct payment and manage a person's bank account. In addition, it was explained that if there were any concerns that family members were using payments inappropriately this would be a safeguarding matter and the Council would take necessary action.
- A Member asked how the Council ensured that every contact counted and that vulnerable people 'remained on the radar'. It was explained that the 'Make Every Contact Count' (MECC) approach was embedded across the Council. It was suggested that a MECC training session could be arranged for Members to attend.

The Chair then invited Councillor Smith to address the Committee under Rule 30.

Councillor Smith raised concern that the form used to claim direct payments, stated there was a £7 weekly cap on expenditure for non-specialist support, such as cleaning and gardening. He said this rate was not in-line with the National Minimum Wage and was insufficient to cover the cost of one hour cleaning. In addition, he asked what arrangements were in place to care for the pets of people who were moved into temporary accommodation.

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The Director of Adults and Communities explained that there was no cap on direct payments and the funding a person received was based on their level of need. Resources were determined by a national formula that equated the level of an individual's need into a funding amount. Councillor Smith agreed to provide a copy of the form to the Director of Adults and Communities. It was explained that as part of a person's care package, suitable provision would be made for a person's pet. Councillor Smith was invited to provide further details regarding any particular cases to the Director of Adults and Communities.

The Chair then invited Councillor Strutton to address the Committee under Rule 30.

Councillor Strutton congratulated the Service Lead, Commissioning and Transformation on the innovative solutions that had been implemented. He asked how the new initiatives would be monitored to ensure that better outcomes were achieved for residents. With regard to Anticipatory Care Planning, he asked what the timeframe was for a GP referral to Occupational Therapy resulting in a home visit being carried out. In addition, he asked, on average how long it took for home adaptation works to be undertaken. In relation to digital and assistive technology, he highlighted that investment in technological solutions had the potential to deliver huge financial savings for the Council. In concluding, he raised concern regarding the Council's management of its disability adapted housing stock. He said that often the Council refurbished a property and removed the adaptations previously installed. He said it was not effective management and further work needed to be undertaken to improve the turnover of Council housing stock.

In response to the points raised, the Director of Adults and Communities advised that as part of the Council's 'Our Future Programme' opportunities would be sought to improve the digital offer. However, it was important to 'scope out' the digital requirements and ensure that the right investments were made. With regard to hospital discharges, it was explained that a weekly meeting was held with managers to review cases involving patients who had not been discharged from hospital on time. Responding to concern regarding the time taken to install adaptations into people's homes, it was advised that under a certain financial limit adaptations could be undertaken immediately. It was accepted that in some circumstances there had been delays and this needed to be improved. In relation to Occupational Therapy referrals, it was explained that the timeframe for an assessment, depended on the level of urgency.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked the Service Lead, Commissioning and Transformation and the Director of Adults and Communities for the report and presentation.

Resolved –

- (a) That the update report and presentation be noted.

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- (b) That the Director of Adults and Communities be requested to circulate a response to the queries raised, by no later than 13th February 2020.
- (c) That a 'Make Every Contact Count' training session be arranged for all Members.

55. Forward Work Programme 2019-20

The Policy Insight Manager presented the Forward Work Programme and updated Members on items as follow:

12th March 2020

In relation to the Five Year Plan Outcome 3 and 5 reports, the Policy Insight Manager requested that Members forward to him any areas of enquiry they were particularly interested in, to ensure the reports met the Committee's expectations.

The Policy Insight Manager agreed to circulate the details of the Five Year Plan Outcomes 3 and 5 to the Committee.

16th April 2020

It was noted that 'Heathrow Economic Development Vision and Action Plan' had been scheduled for the 16th April meeting.

Resolved –

- (a) That subject to the updates set out above, the Forward Work Programme 2019/20 be approved, as detailed in Appendix A of the report.
- (b) The Policy Insight Manager to circulate the details of the Five Year Plan Outcomes 3 and 5 to the Committee.

56. Members' Attendance Record 2019-20

Resolved - That the details of the Members' Attendance Record be noted.

57. Date of Next Meeting - 12th March 2020

Resolved – That the date of the next meeting was confirmed as 12th March 2020.

58. Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved - That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during 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 hold that information) as

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defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 the Schedule 12A the Local Government Act 1972.

59. Part II Minutes - 9th January 2020

Resolved – That the Part II minutes of the meeting held on 9th January 2020 be approved as a correct record.

Chair

(Note: The meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.56 pm)