

Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 16th November, 2020.

Present:- Councillors Swindlehurst (Chair), Akram (Vice-Chair), Anderson, Bains, Carter, Mann, Nazir and Pantelic.

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Ajaib, Gahir and Strutton.

Apologies for Absence:- None.

PART 1

60. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Carter declared that he provided IT services to Slough CVS and would not vote on any Covid related matters if it became apparent that any funding decisions related to SCVS.

61. Minutes of the Meeting held on 12th October 2020

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 12th October 2020 be approved as a correct record.

62. Revenue Budget Monitoring - Quarter 2 2020/21

The Interim Service Lead for Finance introduced a report that updated on the financial position of the Council's revenue account for the second quarter of the 2020/21 financial year to the end of September 2020.

It was noted that the forecast year end position for all Council run services was a balanced position for the current year. This took into account the Covid-19 grants from Government totalling £14.7m. There were substantial directorate pressures arising from Covid-19, particularly in Adult Social Care which was reporting £6.5m Covid related pressures during the current year, and Finance & Resources with £2.1m of indirect costs as savings targets had not been met. Where savings targets had been unachievable services had been asked to try to identify compensatory savings where possible.

The Cabinet recognised the significant financial impact on Covid-19 on the Council's budget position. It was noted that there had been various tranches of Covid grants from central government which helped offset some of the immediate increase in costs and lost income. However, there still remained significant uncertainty and risks in the medium term and these challenges would be considered as part of the budget setting process for 2021/22 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Lead Members discussed a range of issues including the directorate pressures, specifically those in adult social care, and the current position relating to Slough Children's Services Trust financial position.

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Speaking under Rule 30, Councillor Strutton for more detail about the increased adult social care costs and the Director of Adults & Communities responded. A response would be provided separately to Councillor Strutton on care home costs pre and post Covid-19.

The Cabinet considered the virement and write off requests as set out in sections 9 and 10 of the report. After querying the reasons for the apparent increase in write off requests in the 2nd Quarter, the report was approved.

Resolved –

- (a) That the reported underlying financial position of the Council for the year end 2020-21 be noted;
- (b) That the Council's provisional reserve balances for the year end 2020-21 be noted;
- (c) That budget transfer (virements) for 2020-21 as requested in Section 9 of the report be approved.
- (d) That write offs for the first quarter of 2020-21 as requested in Section 10 of the report be approved.

63. Capital Monitoring Report - Quarter 2 2020/21

The Interim Service Lead Finance introduced a report that provided a summary of the spend against capital budgets for the 2020/21 financial year to the end of the September 2020.

The capital budget for 2020/21 was £181m of which £39m had been spent to the end of the 2nd Quarter. Spend was usually lower in the first half of the year, but this figure was significantly lower than the previous year at which point £94m had been spent. The current Covid-19 restrictions had impacted on the programme, however, it was currently projected that £130m, or 71%, of the revised budget would be spent by the end of the year. The main areas of expenditure so far in the year included £4m drawdown by James Elliman Homes to purchase properties for use as temporary accommodation and £18m on the new hotel development on the Old Library site.

Despite the disruption due to Covid-19 restrictions, Lead Members welcomed the progress made on a number of schemes such as the newly built social housing on Wentworth Avenue that had recently been completed and the new Chalvey Community Centre that was nearing completion. Lead Members would work with Officers to try to maintain progress on the capital schemes in their portfolios to seek to deliver as much of the programme as possible.

Speaking under Rule 30, Councillor Strutton asked whether there was a cost to the Council of borrowing money for schemes which had not progressed as quickly as planned. The Director of Finance & Resources responded that the

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Council only borrowed when funding needed to be released so there were no increased interest costs for this reason.

At the conclusion of the discussion the report was noted.

Resolved – That the capital monitoring report to the end of September 2020 be noted.

64. Treasury Management Strategy Annual Report

The Interim Service Lead, Finance introduced a report that detailed treasury activity in 2019/20 and the first half of 2020/21. It was a requirement of the CIPFA Code and CLG Investment Guidance to report annually on treasury management activity.

The macro-economic context and outlook was summarised. As at 31st March 2020 the Council's short term borrowing was £278m and long term borrowing was £351m. Total borrowing was £630m of loans as part of the strategy for funding capital programmes. Short term interest rates had remained much lower than long term rates and it had therefore been more cost effective to borrow short term to fund capital expenditure. However, this position would not be sustainable in the medium term and the Council continued to review the options to minimise the cost of borrowing.

The borrowing had funded a range of important capital schemes across the town, including the hotels scheme on the Old Library Site that was nearing completion. An update on the scheme was provided and it was noted that progress was ahead of schedule and recruitment was underway with a view to opening in January 2021.

Speaking under Rule 30, Councillor Strutton asked about use of the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) and the projected impact of Covid-19 on investment returns from commercial assets given the financial difficulties reported for a small number of other councils. The Director of Finance & Resources explained the position regarding the use of PWLB and commented that in recent times it had been possible to borrow more cost effectively from other sources. The best options were constantly being reviewed following advice from the Council's advisors, Arlingclose. In relation to commercial investments, it was noted the hotels scheme was a long term investment and business plan was prudent and anticipated the hotels to build up to full occupancy by year 4, so the short term Covid-19 disruption was not expected to have a major impact. An update was provided on some of the short term impacts on the strategic acquisitions programme and it was noted that the Council had a balanced portfolio to spread risks.

At the conclusion of the discussion the report was noted.

Resolved – That the Treasury Management activities for 2019/20 and the beginning of 2020/21 as set out in the body of the report be noted.

65. SBC Covid-19 Recovery and Skills

The Service Lead Strategy & Performance gave a presentation that updated on the Council's plans for recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in relation to skills initiatives.

There had been a number of short term economic impacts of the pandemic in Slough, and whilst the response phase had sought to provide support to local businesses it was recognised the Council and its partners also had an important role to play in the recovery phase. The Inclusive Growth Strategy agreed by Cabinet in June 2020 was central to the plans. A series of initiatives were outlined aimed at ensuring local residents would benefit from the opportunities arising from economic recovery. These included:

- Future Skills Hub in partnership with Langleigh College and Royal Holloway University which would be located in Observatory House;
- Construction Academy which aimed to grow the number of jobs in the sector, including from major regeneration projects, and align careers and skills support to enable local residents access these opportunities; and
- Health & Care Academy across Berkshire to provide a pathway for local people into sustainable employment in the sector.

Members noted that the progress report on the Inclusive Growth Strategy was due to be presented to Cabinet in December 2020. The relevant Lead Members explained the work undertaken to develop the Construction and Health & Care Academy concepts and highlighted the importance of upskilling and matching residents into growth sectors. Future regeneration schemes such as the North West Quadrant and Montem would provide new opportunities as would private led development such as the Horlicks site and town centre redevelopment.

Speaking under Rule 30, Councillor Strutton welcomed the two new academies and asked a number of questions about the BAME workforce in health and social care; the number of local jobs created by the Horlicks site; and the use of CIF funding for homelessness initiatives. Responses were provided and specific figures would be sought from the developer of the Horlicks site in relation to local employment.

The Leader highlighted the huge contribution that many local voluntary and community sector organisations had played in the Covid-19 response in Slough. It was proposed that some of the Covid grant funding, or if necessary CIF underspends, be allocated to enable them to continue this work given the continued tightening of local and national restrictions. The proposals were agreed.

The Cabinet agreed to recommend the Covid-19 recovery update to Council.

Recommended – That the Council's plans be noted for medium term recovery and long term renewal as an organisation, for

Slough the place and our communities and in particular the initiatives around skills.

Resolved – That the following organisations receive funding from the Covid allocation to support their work on the local response:

- i. Slough Food Bank - £2,000
- ii. HomeStart Slough - £2,000
- iii. Slough Modest Sisters - £2,000
- iv. Haymill Support Group - £2,000
- v. Colnbrook Cares - £2,000
- vi. Slough Refugee Support - £2,000
- vii. Good Gym - £2,000
- viii. Pot to be available to other appropriate VCS organisations via OneSlough - £6,000.

66. Covid-19 Decisions Update

The Cabinet received a report that summarised the significant decisions taken by Officers since the previous meeting in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Leader thanked Officers for acting promptly to put in place a scheme during half time to tackle child hunger which had helped many families in Slough. The Government had since announced funding for the Christmas period and the Council would be considering how best to implement a scheme in Slough.

The Cabinet ratified the executive decisions taken.

Resolved – That the report be noted and that the significant decisions taken by officers since the last report on this subject to Cabinet on 12 October 2020, as set out in the Appendix to the report, be ratified.

67. Future Public Health Arrangements for Slough, RBWM and Bracknell Forest

The Lead Member for Health & Wellbeing introduced a report that requested approval to proceed with developing a shared Director of Public Health role for East Berkshire, covering Slough, RBWM and Bracknell Forest.

The current position was that there was a shared Director of Public Health for the six Berkshire authorities and a shared team hosted by Bracknell Forest Council. The Berkshire Chief Executives had started a review of the arrangements in 2019 in light of various factors including changes to the health system since the current arrangements were set up in 2013. The single director role across Berkshire was stretched and a different model provided the opportunity of more local resource and focus. The outcome of the review was a hub and bespoke model each in east and west Berkshire.

Slough would retain its local public health team and a new Director of Public Health for East Berkshire would be recruited. The Chief Executive commented that the proposal had come forward before the Covid-19 pandemic and the past year had demonstrated the importance of strong and integrated public health teams in local authorities.

Speaking under Rule 30, Councillor Strutton commented on the changes in leadership of Frimley Health NHS Trust. Councillor Strutton was invited to raise any issues with these separate issues directly with the Lead Member.

At the conclusion of the discussion the recommendations were agreed.

It was noted that the current Director of Public Health, Tessa Lindfield, had already been planning to move on in the new year. The Cabinet agreed a vote of thanks to Ms Lindfield for the work she had carried out in Slough over several years, but particularly in the past year during the pandemic.

Resolved –

- (a) That support be given to enable the current set up to be dissolved and the new system put in place, including the appointment of a Joint Director of Public Health for East Berkshire and Frimley ICS; and
- (b) That delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Lead Member for Health & Wellbeing, to finalise and approve the partnership arrangements.
- (c) That the outgoing Director of Public Health, Tessa Lindfield, be thanked for her work in Slough, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic.

68. Stoke Gardens Regeneration Area Compulsory Purchase Order

A report was considered that sought approval for the Council to use Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) powers to acquire and simultaneously dispose of land and properties to Berkeley Homes on regeneration grounds.

Stoke Gardens was identified as an opportunity site within the Centre of Slough Regeneration Framework. The site was at the entrance to the Horlicks scheme, a 1,300 dwelling residential development of Berkeley Homes. The Council had been asked by Berkeley Homes whether it would consider using CPO powers to assemble the Stoke Gardens Regeneration Area site to facilitate redevelopment. The full cost of the CPO would be underwritten by Berkeley Homes.

The Cabinet was informed that the redevelopment of the site through these means would enhance the local area and address some of the anti-social behaviour issues in the vicinity. Overall, there was a compelling case in the public interest to successfully enable the regeneration plans for the area and all the benefits that would bring. Lead Members discussed the reasons for

requiring the use of CPO powers rather than acquiring through agreement and asked about overage. It was confirmed that the Council would seek to secure an overage so that the people of Slough could benefit from any profit achieved over and above that defined in the SBC Developer's Guide.

Speaking under Rule 30, Councillor Strutton asked if the scheme could potentially improve transport links through to Farnham Road in the wider area. It was responded that it would not become an alternative route for existing traffic but cycling and sustainable transport links would be maximised.

At the conclusion of the discussion the recommendations were agreed, with the addition that delegations to officers should be following consultation with the relevant Lead Member.

Resolved –

- (a) Delegate authority to the Director of Place, following consultation with the Lead Member for Regeneration & Strategy, to enter into a Compulsory Purchase Order Indemnity Agreement (CPOIA) and if necessary, a development agreement with Berkeley Homes (and any other relevant third party) prior to undertaking any preparatory works in respect of the CPO,
- (b) Agree that the Director of Place, following consultation with the Lead Member for Regeneration & Strategy, be authorised to take all necessary steps to secure the making, submission, confirmation and implementation of a CPO to acquire and third party proprietary interests within the Stoke Gardens Regeneration Area (see Appendix 1 to the report),
- (c) Agree that the Director of Place be authorised to issue all relevant notices and certificates in connection with the making, confirmation and implementation of any CPO,
- (d) Agree that the Director of Place, following consultation with the Lead Member for Regeneration & Strategy, be authorised to acquire third party proprietary interests by private treaty negotiation,
- (e) Agree that the Director of Place, following consultation with the Lead Member for Regeneration & Strategy, be authorised to dispose of any third party proprietary interests acquired pursuant to the CPO to Berkeley Homes in accordance with terms to be agreed,
- (f) Agree that the Director of Place be authorised to make General Vesting Declarations (GVDs) under the Compulsory Purchase (Vesting Declarations) Act 1981 and/or to serve notices to treat and notices of entry (if required) following confirmation of a CPO by the Secretary of State,

- (g) Agree that the Director of Place be authorised to issue and serve any warrants to obtain possession of property acquired by the Council following the execution of a GVD or service of a notice of entry if it was considered appropriate to do so; and
- (h) Delegate authority to the Director of Place, following consultation with the Lead Member for Regeneration & Strategy, to work with Berkeley Homes to facilitate the regeneration of this strategic town centre site.

69. A4 Cycle Highway

The Service Lead Major Infrastructure Projects introduced a report that informed the Cabinet of initial plans for a proposed east-west cycle route along the A4 between the Huntercombe roundabout to the town centre.

The concept was that the cycle route would use existing wide verges, service roads and the existing shared path to establish a segregated/part segregated route. The proposals had been drawn up as part of the wider ambitions of the Council to promote sustainable travel and reduce carbon emissions. The estimated financial cost of the scheme was £2m to £2.5m and a variety of funding sources may be available to help fund the scheme. It was proposed that a business case be developed before seeking capital approval.

The Cabinet welcomed the concept in principle. A significant amount of feedback to the A4 bus and cycle lane had been received that would be relevant to this scheme and that suggested cyclists valued segregated lanes to improve safety. Lead Members asked that wide consultation be carried out in developing the scheme, including with those who did not currently cycle. It would also be important to work with schools and parents to try to design a scheme that would encourage them to shift from car use. The potential timetable was discussed and it was noted that the design phase and development of the business case could possibly be completed by March 2021, although there were a number of pinchpoints and potential conflicts on the route which may take longer to resolve.

Speaking under Rule 30, Councillor Strutton welcomed the scheme in principle and commented that the principle of segregated provision should be considered for other cycle lanes in Slough as well as the A4.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Cabinet agreed the recommendations to carry out further design of the scheme.

Resolved –

- (a) That the background to the scheme proposal be noted.
- (b) That the recommendation to introduce a segregated/part segregated east-west cycle highway along the A4 be noted.
- (c) That the estimated financial commitment for the project be noted.

- (d) That a further paper be brought back to Cabinet for decision when the project has been detailed.

70. Administration of Business Rates

Item Withdrawn.

71. References from Overview & Scrutiny

The Cabinet considered two references from scrutiny:

- A series of recommendations from the joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Neighbourhoods & Community Services Scrutiny Panel held on 29th October regarding the A4 bus lane.
- A recommendation from the Neighbourhoods & Community Services Scrutiny Panel from its meeting held on 4th November regarding community safety.

In relation to the A4 bus lane, the joint scrutiny meeting had been convened following the debate at Council on 24th September on a petition requesting that the bus lane be abolished. The joint scrutiny meeting reviewed the scheme in detail and made a number of recommendations as set out in paragraph 6.1 of the report. The Cabinet reviewed each of the recommendations in turn:

- (a) *“The continuing review of the existing A4 bus and cycle lane scheme.*
- (b) *The monitoring of data available since the implementation of the scheme.*
- (c) *That the following be introduced:*
- *Hackney carriages;*
 - *E-Scooters;*
 - *Motorbikes;*
 - *Private Hire Vehicles, any other authorised vehicles; and*
 - *Monday to Friday, peak time bus lane between) 7:00hrs – 10:00hrs and 15:00hrs -19:00hrs as part of the experimental scheme.*
- (d) *The proposed amendment to the Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (ETRO) to reflect the changes above and reset the six months objection period, as set out by the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and the Local Authorities Traffic Order (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996.*
- (e) *The continued monitoring of the scheme following amendments to the Experimental Traffic Regulation orders.*
- (f) *The Council takes into account existing objections as part of the consultation process.*

- (g) The financial commitment for the scheme.*
- (h) That the frequency of the new free electric bus service be increased to operate every half an hour, the free bus trial offer be extended beyond the initial two-three month period and the electric bus service be extended into the Langley areas.*
- (i) That officers be asked to consider means of encouraging more people onto public transport, including: bus subsidy funding, extending the times bus passes can be used, improved bus route provision.*
- (j) That officers be asked to consider bus provision for young people and how they can be supported to use sustainable transport options, taking into account the cost of public transport, provision of youth bus passes.*
- (k) To improve traffic flow, the bus lanes where possible be moved from the A4 into service roads.*
- (l) Allow Low Emission Vehicles to use the bus lanes in Slough.*
- (m) Officers be asked to consider allowing Private Hire Vehicles to use the old bus lanes, on the basis that private hire drivers undertake a crucial role and had essentially become 'key workers' during the Covid-19 pandemic.*
- (n) Officers be asked to review current 'pinch points' along the A4 bus route, in particular along the three turns to High Street Railway Bridge and the Sainsbury's roundabout. In addition, consideration be given to removing the bus lane from this section of highway (along both sides) to allow better traffic flow.*
- (o) That the design proposals for the cycle lanes take into consideration the space that could be used off the highway to improve cycle provision."*

The Cabinet noted the rationale for introducing the measures following the Government's guidance during Covid-19 to improve provision for cycling and pedestrians and also agreed the importance of improving sustainable transport provision in the future as had been discussed earlier as part of the A4 cycle superhighway concept. The nature of the experimental order provided an opportunity to make changes to the scheme to test and monitor the impacts before deciding on any permanent changes.

(Councillor Pantelic left the meeting)

After considering each of the recommendations in turn the Cabinet agreed to approve (a) to (g). In relation to recommendations (h) to (k) the advice of Officers was that these would best be taken forward by the Quality Bus Partnership between the Council and operators. This was agreed and the

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Cabinet asked for an update on the outcomes by April 2021. Officers were already taking action with regards to a number of the other recommendations and these were noted. The Cabinet also agreed that the electric bus trial on the A4 was an important part of the overall package of measures and asked Officers to seek to continue this trial for the duration of the experimental order and that the potential of restoring off peak access to residents of MRT services be explored.

The Cabinet then considered the following recommendation from the Neighbourhoods & Community Services Scrutiny Panel:

“That Slough Borough Council should work with Thames Valley Police and others in the Safer Slough Partnership to develop a communications plan to improve residents perceptions of the safety of Slough – with particular focus on the town centre – and to share examples of the positive partnership work that had already been undertaken.”

The Cabinet agreed that the perception of crime in Slough was generally higher than then evidence showed and therefore the recommendation was agreed.

Resolved –

References from the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Committee and NCS Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 29th October regarding the A4 bus lane

- i. That recommendations (a) to (g) be approved.
- ii. That recommendations (h) to (k) be taken forward via the Quality Bus Partnership and that a progress report be provided to Cabinet by April 2021.
- iii. That the actions Officers were undertaking in relation to recommendations (l) to (o), as set out in paragraph 6.3 of the report be noted and agreed.
- iv. That Officers seek to enable the continuation of the A4 electric bus trial throughout the experimental period to 4 June 2021.
- v. That Officers work with operators to seek to re-introduce the public off peak access to the MRT services.

Reference from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 4th November regarding community safety

Resolved – That the recommendation be endorsed that the Council work with Thames Valley Police and others in the Safer Slough Partnership to develop a communications plan to improve residents’ perceptions of the safety of Slough – with particular focus on the town centre – and to share examples of the positive partnership work that has already been undertaken.

72. Notification of Key Decisions

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The Cabinet considered and endorsed the Notification of Key Decisions published on 16th October 2020 which set out the key decisions expected to be taken by Cabinet over the next three months.

Resolved – That the published Notification of Key Decisions for the period between November 2020 and January 2021 be endorsed.

73. Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the items in Part II of the agenda as they 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.

74. Temporary Accommodation Procurement

The renewal of a temporary accommodation nomination agreement was approved.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.47 pm)