

## **Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 14th December, 2020.**

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

**Also present under Rule 30:-** Councillor Gahir

### **PART 1**

#### **75. Declarations of Interest**

None were declared.

#### **76. Minutes of the Meeting held on 16th November 2020**

**Resolved –** That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2020 be approved as a correct record.

#### **77. Performance & Projects Report, Quarter 2 2020/21**

The Service Lead Strategy & Performance introduced a report that set out the latest performance information for the second quarter of the 2020/21 financial year to the end of September 2020 including the corporate balanced scorecard indicators, update on 26 key projects and progress on the current Manifesto commitments.

The report included four new performance indicators and new 2020/21 year end targets across the balanced scorecard. The new measures were young people's happiness, percentage of overweight and obese children in reception and year 6 and the number of service requests that took 90 or more days to close. Progress on performance indicators had been variable in Quarter 2, primarily due to significant impacts of the Covid-19. Of the balanced scorecard indicators for the second quarter, nine were 'green', eight were 'amber' and four were 'red'.

The impacts of Covid-19 were highlighted and the Council and partners were continuing to analyse the position as part of its recovery planning. Some of the short term effects were increased unemployment, pressures on services, lower Council Tax and Business Rates collection, shorter journey time and reduce crime rates. The Section 151 Officer explained the action was being taken to collect Council Tax and Business Rates during the pandemic. Reminder letters and other proactive work had brought in circa £1m of owed income in the past month. Collection figures would be reviewed and be part of the report on Council taxbases which would come to Cabinet in January.

The progress of key projects was summarised and it was noted that 46% were 'green', 35% were 'amber' and 19% were 'red'. In relation to reporting on manifesto commitments, it was noted that due to the postponement of the local elections in May 2020 the report continued to update against the pledges for 2019/20. Lead Members asked about the future of the Adelphi site and

## **Cabinet - 14.12.20**

the Executive Director of Place confirmed that the building was an important part of the cultural strategy and it was envisaged the building would be a mixed use performance space with strong community links. A question was asked about the progress of the Violence Task Force and it was noted that the work done in Slough had been recognised nationally as good practice, particularly the engagement with community groups and young people.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the performance report was noted.

**Resolved** – That the Council's current performance as measured by the performance indicators within the balanced scorecard, the progress status of the gold projects, and progress against the Manifesto commitments be noted.

### **78. Low Emissions Strategy 2018-2025**

Members of the Environmental Quality Team gave a presentation on the two-year review of the Low Emission Strategy (LES) 2018-2015 which updated on the progress of projects, funding and refreshed the forward programme.

The main aim of the LES was to improve air quality and health outcomes across Slough through the 19 objectives and 52 projects in the strategy. Roads were the main cause of poor quality in Slough. Air quality was improving at a slow rate and both Covid-19 and weather patterns had had an impact on emissions in 2020. None of five Air Quality Management Areas could be revoked at the present time. The LES programme was a £15m package of which nearly £10.5m had already been secured from the Council's capital programme, grants and Section 106 contributions. The Cabinet noted progress on specific projects such as the Fleet Challenge programme, electric vehicle plan for taxis and private hire vehicles and a series of trials schemes such as the zero emission electric bus service and e-scooter trial. A new Air Quality Action Plan was due in Summer 2021 followed by a Clean Air Plan.

The Lead Member for Sustainable Transport and Environmental Services highlighted that pollution levels had fallen significantly during the year largely due to the reductions in traffic. Many of the projects to reduce vehicle emissions would help to retain the benefits of cleaner air and improved health. The Cabinet discussed the support that would be put in place for taxi drivers to move to electric vehicles. Officers explained the approach that was being taken to move to an all electric fleet by 2025 and noted that a grant application had been submitted to the Government would help provide support to the trade to make the shift. The Government had announced that it brought forward the date to phase out all sales of new petrol and diesel vehicles to 2030 which would have a significant impact on the market. The number of electric vehicle charging points was a priority and Slough already had a higher number compared to most other towns.

A progress report had been made the Neighbourhoods & Community Services Scrutiny Panel in November October 2020 and a recommendation had been made about workforce issues. The Panel had noted that some

## **Cabinet - 14.12.20**

projects in the LES had not progressed as quickly as had been planned, partly due to recruitment issues, and it was recommended that Cabinet: “Ensure that the relevant posts be filled so these important schemes could be progressed.” The Cabinet agreed the schemes were important and that the posts in the team would be part of Our Futures Phase 2 restructure.

At the conclusion of the discussion the recommendations were agreed.

### **Resolved –**

- (a) That the review of the Low Emission Strategy 2018-2025 be approved;
- (b) That the reference from the Neighbourhoods & Community Services Scrutiny Panel in relation to staffing issues be noted and taken forward as part of the Our Futures Phase 2 restructure.

## **79. Slough Inclusive Growth Strategy Update**

The Lead Member for Inclusive Growth & Skills and the Service Lead for Economic Development introduced an update on the delivery and implementation of the Inclusive Growth Strategy which had been adopted by the Cabinet in June 2020.

The Regeneration, Economy and Skills Board (RES) had been set up as a strong public-private sector partnership to deliver key projects in the strategy. Several projects were in progress including Slough Innovation Space which would focus on research & development and innovation and a Future Skills Hub to address employability, which was a key priority as part of the Covid-19 recovery. The Hub would offer a sector based academy approach including a Construction Academy and a new Berkshire wide Health & Care Academy.

The Cabinet reiterated its strong support for the strategy which set out clear priorities and actions to support economic growth and crucially how opportunities could be provided to Slough residents. Lead Members discussed the role and membership of the RES Board and asked how small businesses were being engaged. The Officer recognised the vital role that such firms had in growing Slough’s economy and confirmed they were represented by the Chamber of Commerce. The internal governance issues were raised and it was suggested that the Cabinet be provided with an annual update. The recommendations were agreed.

### **Resolved –**

- (a) That it be noted that the Inclusive Growth Strategy and the associated action plan formed the organising framework for the public-private Slough Regeneration, Economy and Skills Board.
- (b) That the initial key projects being delivered under the framework for the Inclusive Growth Strategy, which also formed part of the Recovery and Renewal Strategy, be noted.

**80. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22 - 2023/24**

The Executive Director of Corporate Operations introduced a report that set out an interim position of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and associated spending plans for the three years to 2023/24.

The report was focused on the revenue budget for 2021/22 and it was noted that Covid-19 had had a significant negative impact on the Council's financial plans for next year. All local authorities were facing financial challenges arising from the pandemic and the Council was continuing to manage the in-year pressures, however, the medium term implications were substantial. These included reductions in Council Tax and Business Rates revenues, which accounted for approximately 80% of the Council's income; rising costs; demand pressures on Council services; impacts on savings targets; and reduced income from fees and charges and commercial revenues. It was noted that the Local Government Finance Settlement was due to be published in mid-December.

The Cabinet noted that the current budget gap for 2021/22 was currently £8.6m, which included a one off pressure of £5.4m arising from a one off backdated payment for a business rate revaluation. The main assumptions underpinning the budget were reviewed as set out in paragraph 8.1 of the report. A package of savings totalling £12.4m over the period of the MTFs, £9m of which were in 2021/22 was set out in the appendix to the report. Further work was taking place to identify and refine savings proposals. An overall Council Tax increase of 4.99% was assumed, which included a 3% adult social care precept, subject to Council approval in February.

As with many local authorities the Council had held some informal discussions with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to seek permission for a Capitalisation Directive to help balance the budget. The Cabinet agreed that this option should be progressed, noting that only the Secretary of State could permit such action.

The Cabinet recognised that Covid-19 had had major impacts on the Council finances in the short and medium term and agreed the plan of work to enable a balanced budget to be set for 2021/22. A wide range of actions had already taken place to reduce costs, identify savings and generate income from disposals. At the conclusion of the discussion, the recommendations were agreed.

**Resolved –**

That the following matters be noted:

- (a) The budget gap and the actions being taken to bridge it for 2021/22 – 2023/24. Note that the Housing Revenue Account, Dedicated Schools Grant, Capital Programme and the Flexible Capital Receipts Strategy to

## **Cabinet - 14.12.20**

deliver future transformation and savings will be included in the February 2021 Budget and MTFS Report.

- (b) The need to set a balanced budget, each year, across the whole of the MTFS period

That it be agreed that:

- (c) The Council would apply for a capitalisation directive to enable it to balance the 2021/22 and 2022/23 budgets, allowing time to identify further savings whilst tackling the impact of COVID-19.
- (d) The Council repay its minimum revenue provision by using further capital receipts in 2021/22 and 2022/23; and creates full provision for these costs in the revenue budget by 2023/24.
- (e) The Council be recommended to increase:
  - i. its general band D Council Tax by 1.99% the maximum permitted without a referendum as previously planned; and
  - ii. its Adult Social Care Precept by 3.00% as assumed by Government in the recently announced spending review to cover the rise in demand and more complex needs arising from the pandemic including a growth in mental health issues.
- (f) The proposed service savings and efficiencies of £12.392m for 2021/22 to 2023/24, of which £9.067m relates to 2021/22 as set out in Appendix C to the report be submitted to Full Council in February for approval.

### **81. Covid-19 Decisions Update**

The Cabinet received a report which set out the further significant decisions taken by officers in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and sought ratification of the Executive decisions.

The decisions taken since the previous meeting of the Cabinet included actions in response to the second national 'lockdown' in November, local test and trace capacity and business support schemes.

Members also noted the update on the Winter Grant Scheme which aimed to support vulnerable families and children. The Council had worked quickly to support low income families during the recent half term. The Government had now provided funding through to Easter.

The Lead Member for Sustainable Transport and Environmental Services proposed that consideration be given to setting up a scheme to allow residents to dedicate memorials such as trees or benches to those lost to Covid-19. The Cabinet agreed this idea should be explored.

## **Cabinet - 14.12.20**

At the conclusion of the discussion the significant decisions in Appendix A were ratified.

### **Resolved –**

- (a) That the report be noted;
- (b) That the Significant Decisions taken by Officer as set out in Appendix A be ratified; and
- (c) That the update on the Winter Grant Scheme as set out in Appendix B be noted.

### **82. References from Overview & Scrutiny**

There were no references from Overview & Scrutiny, other than the recommendation considered as part of the Low Emissions Strategy Update (Minute 78 refers).

### **83. Notification in Forthcoming Decisions**

The Cabinet considered and endorsed the Notification of Key Decisions published on 13<sup>th</sup> November 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 December 2020 and February 2021 be endorsed.

### **84. Exclusion of Press and Public**

**Resolved –** That the press and public remain in the meeting for the business in Part II of the agenda as the matters could be resolved without disclosing any exempt information.

### **85. Part II Minutes - 16th November 2020**

**Resolved –** That the minutes of the Part II meeting of the Cabinet held on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2020 be approved.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.11 pm)