

Date of issue: Monday, 21 March 2022

MEETING	CABINET	
	Councillor Swindlehurst	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Forward Strategy & Corporate Resources
	Councillor Mann	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Transport, Planning & Place
	Councillor Akram	Leisure, Culture & Communities
	Councillor Anderson	Financial Oversight, Council Assets & Performance
	Councillor Bains	Regulation & Public Protection
	Councillor Carter	Housing & Environment
	Councillor Hulme	Children's Services, Lifelong Learning & Skills
	Councillor Pantelic	Social Care & Public Health
DATE AND TIME:	TUESDAY, 29TH MARCH, 2022 AT 5.30 PM	
VENUE:	COUNCIL CHAMBER - OBSERVATORY HOUSE, 25 WINDSOR ROAD, SL1 2EL	
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER: (for all enquiries)	NICHOLAS PONTONE	07749 709 868

NOTICE OF MEETING

You are requested to attend the above Meeting at the time and date indicated to deal with the business set out in the following agenda.



GAVIN JONES
Chief Executive

AGENDA

PART 1

<u>AGENDA ITEM</u>	<u>REPORT TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>	<u>WARD</u>
	Apologies for absence.		
1.	Declarations of Interest	-	-
	<i>All Members who believe they have a Disclosable Pecuniary or other Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting must declare that interest and, having regard to the circumstances described in Section 9 and Appendix B of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter is discussed.</i>		
2.	Slough Borough Council First Stage Recovery Plan	1 - 38	All
3.	Slough: Solid Foundations for Recovery	39 - 46	All
4.	Slough: Functional Capability Assessments	47 - 64	All
5.	Initial ICT Improvement Programme	65 - 102	All
6.	Exclusion of Press and Public	-	-
	<i>It is recommended that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the item in Part 2 of the Agenda, as it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding the information) as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (amended).</i>		

PART II

7.	Initial ICT Improvement Programme - Appendices 6 and 7	103 - 128	All
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Press and Public

Attendance and accessibility: You are welcome to attend this meeting which is open to the press and public, as an observer. You will however be asked to leave before any items in the Part II agenda are considered. For those hard of hearing an Induction Loop System is available in the Council Chamber.



Webcasting and recording: The public part of the meeting will be filmed by the Council for live and/or subsequent broadcast on the Council's website. The footage will remain on our website for 12 months. A copy of the recording will also be retained in accordance with the Council's data retention policy. By entering the meeting room and using the public seating area, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings.

In addition, the law allows members of the public to take photographs, film, audio-record or tweet the proceedings at public meetings. Anyone proposing to do so is requested to advise the Democratic Services Officer before the start of the meeting. Filming or recording must be overt and persons filming should not move around the meeting room whilst filming nor should they obstruct proceedings or the public from viewing the meeting. The use of flash photography, additional lighting or any non hand held devices, including tripods, will not be allowed unless this has been discussed with the Democratic Services Officer.

Emergency procedures: The fire alarm is a continuous siren. If the alarm sounds immediately vacate the premises by the nearest available exit at either the front or rear of the Chamber and proceed to the assembly point: The pavement of the service road outside of Westminster House, 31 Windsor Road.

Covid-19: To accommodate social distancing there is significantly restricted capacity of the Council Chamber and places for the public are very limited. We would encourage those wishing to observe the meeting to view the live stream. Any members of the public who do wish to attend in person should be encouraged to contact the Democratic Services Officer.

Key:-

Bold – Key Decision

Not bold – Non-Key Decision

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SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO:	Cabinet
DATE:	29 March 2022
SUBJECT:	Slough Borough Council First Stage Recovery Plan
CHIEF OFFICER:	Gavin Jones, Chief Executive
CONTACT OFFICER:	Steve Mair, Section 151 Officer
WARD(S):	All
PORTFOLIO:	Councillor Swindlehurst, Leader, Forward Strategy & Corporate Resource
KEY DECISION:	NO
EXEMPT:	NO
DECISION SUBJECT TO CALL IN:	YES
APPENDICES:	A – Draft High Level Recovery Plan

1 Summary and Recommendations

1.1 This report sets out high-level proposals for SBC's Recovery Plan.

Recommendations:

1.2 Cabinet is recommended to:

- Agree the key themes and approach for developing the council's Recovery Plan, as outlined in this report (sections 3 & 4).

Reason:

1.3 A robust recovery plan is required to provide a focal strategy for the council's recovery and improvement journey, and to outline the council's new priorities and its approach to realising them. The plan will help demonstrate to residents, staff, partners, and Government that the Council is capable of, and committed to, addressing the causes of failure and delivering rapid improvement.

Commissioner Review

"Commissioners will follow the discussion at Cabinet with interest."

2 Background

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 This report sets out an approach for the development of the council's Recovery Plan, which will ensure a reset in the strategic aims of the council, sustainable financial investment and rebalancing of the budget, as well as providing an initial level of assurance to the Improvement Board that the need for change is understood, and that actions are in train to ensure delivery and improvement takes place.

2.1.2 Options considered

- Produce a Recovery Plan outlining the council's new priorities and improvement journey and replace the previous Corporate Plan – the Five-Year Plan – **Recommended**.
- Adapt the current SBC Five Year (2020-25) Plan – **Rejected** – the current corporate plan makes extensive commitments and the five priority outcomes which comprised its core are no longer fit for purpose. A new corporate plan is required to recognise the scale and severity of the challenges facing the Council.

2.1.3 Slough Borough Council faces exceptionally serious leadership, cultural, financial, governance and operational challenges which have been revealed through a series of external reviews and internal investigations. The scale of the challenge the Council faces is unprecedented and will require a substantial repurposing of the organisation, secured through one of the most significant change programmes in local government.

2.1.4 Since December 2021, the Council has focussed on ensuring that it effectively implements the Directions issued by the Secretary of State. The council has made progress in implementing several specific requirements regarding:

- Financial stability and the long-term budget gap
- Democratic services
- The scrutiny function
- Internal audit
- The procurement and contract management function
- IT
- The officer structure and scheme of delegation

2.1.5 Appendix A provides a summary of the steps that have, and are, being taken to implement these directions.

2.1.6 The Directions also required the council to undertake an assessment of the functional capability of all service areas (see section 3.6), identifying the gaps in capacity and capability. These assessments have identified several strategic themes for improvement, as well as several specific services of significant concern, which will need to be addressed.

2.1.7 SBC is now focusing on producing an effective council-wide Recovery Plan, which will seek to provide assurance to DLUHC, the Cabinet and the Improvement and Recovery Board that it:

- has faced up to its situation and understands its depth and impact
- has acknowledged the errors made in arriving at this position
- is clear about what it needs to do and when
- is continuing to challenge its financial and service issues to ensure that it goes forward as a financially stable organisation

2.1.8 Graeme McDonald, Managing Director, Solace has been providing support to the Council in the development of this Recovery Plan, and this has informed this initial phase of the plan - Appendix A.

2.2 Capitalisation request

2.2.1 The Government has indicated that the Secretary of State is 'minded to approve' SBC's capitalisation request of £307m up to 2022/23, subject to the development of an Improvement Plan encompassing the various recommendations made by DLUHC and delivered to the satisfaction of the Commissioners.

2.2.2 The Government will require demonstrable progress in delivering against this Improvement Plan before considering the provision of any Government support for future years beyond 2022/23 and before converting their "minded to" letter to actual capitalisation directions.

3. **Recovery Plan – key themes**

3.1 The Chief Executive has identified a set of key themes which will need to be embedded in the Recovery Plan.

3.1.1 The council's recovery plan will be built around seven key themes. The key themes will form the content of the recovery programme, against which actions, deliverables, milestones, and targets will be set. The seven themes are:

- Leadership and culture (NB: a separate paper on this topic is being submitted to Cabinet)
- Financial recovery and onward sustainability
- Business planning and performance management
- Governance
- Organisational capability, capacity, and resilience
- Technological capability, capacity, and resilience
- Citizen Service standards and performance

3.2 Leadership and Culture

- 3.2.1 The Council is now under formal intervention from Central Government and has appointed three Commissioners to help the Council take ownership of its recovery and to ensure steps are in place to address subsequent issues.
- 3.2.2 The root cause of any organisational failure of this magnitude is a failure of leadership, at both officer and Member level. Without acknowledgement of this and a formal commitment to addressing this failure, any Recovery Plan is doomed to fail, and as such would be a plan built on sand.
- 3.2.3 For the Council to properly recover over time, the Members and Senior officers must, between them, take responsibility for their individual and collective leadership and for its development across the organisation. Visible signs that the Council is improving its leadership capability will be that at the most senior levels:
- Decisions are based on data and evidence and that professional advice is demonstrably valued
 - Priorities are clear and realistic expectations for delivery are set, supported by timely and effective performance and risk management
 - Clear and effective governance arrangements are in place, understood and followed to support effective decision making
 - A culture of organisational and individual learning and development is firmly established
 - Leaders are visible and approachable they are trusted and trust each other.
 - Communication and engagement with staff and partners is timely and regular
 - The officer/Membership leadership team, design feedback loops to verify from staff, and partners that they are providing the leadership that the organisation needs and to commit to addressing any issues identified
 - The organisation learns from its failures
 - Officers and members are able to move on from the past and focus on the future
 - Meetings, both informal and formal, between officers and members are respectful and focused on collective discussion and debate on proposals
 - The organisation is transparent and openly and actively engages with the public and partners to inform decision-making
- 3.2.4 A separate report is being taken to the Cabinet, which will present a set of 12 recommendations to realise these objectives.

3.3 Financial recovery and onward sustainability

- 3.3.1 The Council has an extensive financial programme that is designed to improve financial standards, rectify the many issues of the past and put the Council onto a sustainable path for the future. The many issues being investigated and reviewed include:

- Statement of accounts and year end close
- Budget setting and delivery
- Investment in companies
- Internal audit and procurement
- Financial systems
- Finance team
- Dedicated Schools Grant
- Insurance
- Business planning
- PFI review
- Revenues and benefits

3.3.2 Detail on the steps that council has taken, and needs to take, to improve financial stability and close the long-term budget gap can be found in Appendix A.

3.4 Business planning and performance management

3.4.1 Business planning, reporting, and performance management need to integrate into one cycle of activity, with mechanisms to celebrate successes and adapt where improvements are required. This cycle is co-owned by CLT and Lead Members, with all Associate Directors and Group Managers also playing an integral role.

3.4.2 Improvements are already underway. Slough is taking learning from other councils who have undergone intervention, as well as further councils who are noted for good practice in this area. An existing monthly Management Information dashboard is being further developed to incorporate new priorities linked to the council's recovery aims.

3.4.3 These changes will be introduced by May 2022 in line with the production of the council's Recovery Plan. A library of potential indicators and external good practice examples has been obtained and reviewed, and options are being developed, which CLT and Lead Members will have the opportunity to shape and define.

3.4.4 The new recovery performance framework will inform decision-making during the period of the Recovery Plan, focusing on elements of risk management, financial management, programme management and operational performance. Updates will be made available to the Improvement and Recovery Board, CLT, and Cabinet on a regular basis. Like all performance frameworks, it will evolve over time in response to learning.

3.5 Governance

3.5.1 The Council has a history of poor decision-making practices. In part this is attributable to the issues of corporate leadership and organisational culture alluded to at 3.2 above and dealt with in greater depth in the accompanying report. In part too, it is attributable to a lack of understanding of what good looks like. Taken together, these factors have resulted in decisions not always being taken by the correct person/part of the organisation; not based on good evidence or high-quality reports; not in a timely manner; and without sufficient openness or accountability.

3.5.2 The work of addressing the issues has begun and includes:

- Officer and member training
- Revised officer scheme of delegations
- Closer monitoring of the report-clearing cycle (including more rigorous quality assurance)
- Specific support for Scrutiny Chairs
- Revised terms of reference to enhance the work of the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee (which among other things reinforces the committee's regular reporting processes and its ability to report to Cabinet in a proactive manner as and when needed)
- Strengthened whistleblowing procedures
- An acknowledgement that the work of Cabinet, Scrutiny, Audit & Corporate Governance Committee, and Full Council must be supported by good forward planning.

3.5.3 This work will be continuous, it will evolve to meet the needs of the Council as leadership and cultural changes take hold; and the effectiveness of measures implemented so far will be monitored.

3.6 Organisational capability, capacity and resilience

3.6.1 In accordance with the Directions from the Secretary of State, each service area has produced a Functional Capability Assessment - identifying the gaps in capacity and capability. These assessments have identified several key strategic challenges for improvement, which will need to be addressed in the Recovery Plan:

- Leadership and Management
- Staffing levels
- Communication
- Programme and change management capacity
- Data, Insight & Performance Management
- Partnerships

3.6.2 The assessments have also highlighted several services, where urgent action is needed to improve capacity and capability:

- Inclusion (SEND)
- ICT
- HR
- Public Health
- Place and Community – Asset Disposal, Planning and Housing

3.6.3 Services are now producing costed action plans to address the gaps in capacity and capability that have been identified. These must be produced to the satisfaction of the commissioners by May.

3.7 Technological capability, capacity and resilience

3.7.1 There are numerous challenges with systems affecting services' capability across the council. A major programme of remedial work is required.

3.7.2 All core systems, reporting solutions and public-facing portals require improvement to some degree. The security and reliability of our systems infrastructure needs enhancing – at present this represents a significant risk of major outage, loss of data and breach of GDPR, as well as risking the Council’s ability to continue to offer front line services. Key challenges include:

- A historic under investment in ICT
- Unsuccessful experience of outsourcing – with the service operating in a state of flux for the past two years, due to transitioning back from an externalised transactional services provider.
- Outdated systems and infrastructure which are no longer robust or resilient and hinder improvements
- Products which are out of vendor support and/or no longer supported
- Challenges adapting to hybrid and remote working
- Risks relating to cyber resilience.

3.7.3 The ICT service is embarking on a significant three-year work programme to secure and stabilise the current operating environment. This will seek to mitigate the key risks and provide a resilient platform for the modernisation and development of an ICT landscape that supports and delivers the opportunity for business operational improvements, through cost savings and improved service delivery.

3.7.4 Multiple reviews and reports have been undertaken both internally and externally and recommendations have been provided. These reviews have confirmed these risk factors. The priorities are:

- **Tactical:** ICT needs to quickly update, replace, or remove systems and services which pose an immediate security or reliability risk to the day-to-day operation of the Council
- **Resource:** ICT is significantly stretched, as many areas are, and as such needs to maximise available time for the staff it has. ICT needs to not only deliver tactical improvements but build a foundation which means a more flexible and effective Council can operate utilising technology.
- **Strategic:** The Council needs to adopt and develop new ways of working and make technology work better and smarter to help provide services to the residents of Slough. However, ICT cannot implement strategic solutions until the foundations are stable, safe, and secure.

3.8 Citizen Service standards and performance

3.8.1 The council’s recovery aims all focus on establishing a consistently good level of service to residents and businesses in Slough. Without consistently good customer service, provision at this level is impossible. It is recognised that the council’s customer engagement offer, across departments, has not been consistently good. How residents can contact the council can be confusing, and many residents tell us that they do not get the response they expect in an appropriate timeframe. The council recognises it needs to proactively engage with, listen to, and respond to the needs of residents and businesses. To address this, will work provide residents with a range of mediums by which they can contact the council, and receive a decent, timely response.

- 3.8.2 The council has already started to take tangible steps to improve the experience that residents have when engaging with the council. During 2021 the council launched a new website alongside a set of new digital options for residents to engage with the council, and the council with them. The number of e-forms completed by residents and businesses are forecast to triple in 2021/22 compared to previous years, and the council's aim is to improve residents' digital engagement options further through this recovery plan.
- 3.8.3 The council also embarked on the largest programme of public consultation in recent years, with a number of public consultations on proposals, including closure of directly provided Adult Social Care services, libraries and the election cycle.
- 3.8.4 However, the council recognises it has not consistently met good standards in customer engagement across each of its departments. To improve this, the council will be developing a customer engagement excellence programme, which will focus on embedding positive values and practices through upskilling staff and recruitment. This strategic HR and organisational development approach will value ambitious employees, create a supportive and challenging learning environment, and embed a strong sense of accountability underpinned by the Nolan Principles for standards in public life:
- Selflessness
 - Integrity
 - Objectivity
 - Accountability
 - Openness
 - Honesty
 - Leadership

4. Recovery Plan – approach and emerging priorities

4.1 Approach

- 4.1.1 From the outset it will be important to set clear principles to operate within so that taxpayers, service users, external partners and staff can see that the Council is taking an approach that is fundamentally different from the past. The political and managerial leadership teams have together committed to greater transparency and openness in the Council's operation, and this will be an integral theme underpinning all aspects of the Council's business.
- 4.1.2 Measuring and monitoring delivery and actual change will be central to provide assurance on the implementation of the Recovery Plan. The Corporate Leadership Team will work with staff and Members to co-create criteria to measure and evidence progress in a meaningful way.

4.1.3 Reaching out to staff, external partners and the wider community and actively seeking their involvement in co-designing and co-delivery of much of the change needed will be another hallmark of the new way of working. A very strong message from the reviews is the need to change the culture (see section 3.2). Designing a new operating environment to tackle this culture without the full involvement of staff would be entirely inappropriate and highly likely to fail.

4.1.4 The work to date has identified significant weaknesses in the corporate elements of the organisations with capability hollowed out in such a way that has constrained the Council's ability to respond to the reviews and Government direction swiftly. An important early stage will therefore be the creation of that strategic capability particularly in areas such as human resources, organisational development, policy and communications.

4.2 Emerging corporate priorities

4.2.1 The political and managerial leadership teams are undertaking a series of externally facilitated workshops to re-set the Council's priorities and new ways of working. This will provide the framework for all service reviews and budgeting activity from that agreement. The output from the initial work indicate that the plan is likely to reflect the following corporate priorities:

- *We will live within our means, balance the budget, and provide best value for taxpayers and service users*
- *We will focus on reducing inequality and poverty in the borough exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic*
- *We will focus on providing the best quality core service we can afford. Providing services that keep our most vulnerable residents healthy, public spaces safe and our environment clean.*
- *To ensure we get full benefit from every pound we spend, other services in these areas will only be provided where they can be shown to have a direct benefit in keeping people safe and reducing demand.*

4.2.2 Over the next few weeks and months we will further refine our new corporate priorities, ensuring decisions are led by data and insight.

4.2.3 Service-level priorities will be developed, and actions implemented. Several priorities are emerging, for example the council has:

- Committed to re-establishing a fit-for-purpose Special Educational Needs and Disabilities service in a Written Statement of Action following a recent Ofsted inspection.
- Started the process of designing a Local Plan, which will guide regeneration and inclusive growth within our town.
- Developed options for reform of the libraries service following a recent completion of a public consultation.
- Started the implementation of reforms to day services provided to users of adult social care services and their carers.

4.2.4 In addition, the leadership teams will also agree new ways of working which will cover themes such as:

- *We will practise sound financial management, being clear and timely about what we've spent and honest about what we can afford.*
- *We will focus on what we, uniquely, can do as the local authority as the democratically elected leaders of our borough. This means we will focus on our core services, and a small number of evidence-based outcomes that deliver our priorities. But we will also continue to use our democratic mandate to convene our local and sub-regional partners around a common purpose and to make a clear case for a better deal for Slough.*
- *We will aspire to be a consistently open and transparent council.*
- *We will involve taxpayers, service users and external partners in our decision making. But we will also need to be clear with residents about what we can do, and what we can't. When we have to say no, we will do so with compassion and take the time to explain our decisions.*

5. Next steps

5.1 Following the analysis undertaken for the Functional Capability Assessments, services are now producing costed action plans to address the gaps in capacity and capability that have been identified. These must be produced to the satisfaction of the commissioners by May. All services are drafting these costed action plans by mid-April. All plans will be within budgets and will take account of the savings required in 22/23, 23/24, and subsequent years.

5.2 Service priorities will be developed during a series of senior officer-member-commissioner workshops hosted by the Local Government Association, and through subsequent discussions. The service priorities will respond directly to the most pressing needs of residents and businesses in Slough.

5.3 These inputs will feed into a finalised council-wide Recovery Plan which will be brought to Cabinet and Full Council for approval on the 11th and 19th May respectively.

6. Implications of the Recommendation

6.1 Financial implications

6.1.1 The financial implications arising from the recovery plan will be costed and reported with the final plan due at the end of May 2022. The finalised recovery plan will require extensive analysis to ensure it can be delivered within SBC's budget.

6.2 Legal implications

6.2.1 The Council has a duty under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The statutory guidance confirms that value includes economic,

environmental and social value and that social value is about seeking to maximise the additional benefit that can be created by procuring or commissioning good and services, above and beyond the benefit of merely the goods and services themselves.

- 6.2.2 Before deciding how to fulfil the best value duty, local authorities are under a duty to consult representatives of a wide range of local persons, including council tax payers, service users and those appearing to have an interest in any of the local authority's functions. This should include local voluntary and community organisations and small businesses and should apply throughout the commissioning cycle, including decommissioning of services. As part of its recovery plan, the Council needs to consider how it can ensure public participation in decision-making.
- 6.2.3 On 1 December 2021, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities made a direction that the Council had failed to comply with the requirements of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999, following the receipt of two commissioned reports. Commissioners were appointed to support, report on and where prescribed exercise functions of the Council. The Council was directed to take a number of actions, which include preparing and agreeing an improvement plan to the satisfaction of the Commissioners, such a plan to include a number of actions plans. Some of these actions plans have been produced under separate reports and will be aligned with the over-arching improvement plan. The Council must also report to the Commissioners on a 6 monthly basis on the delivery of the Improvement Plan. Due to the scale of the challenges and necessary changes, it is likely that the Improvement Plan will be subject to revision and updating as further work is undertaken to address these challenges.
- 6.2.4 As the Improvement Plan is replacing the Council's Five Year Plan, it forms part of the Policy Framework and its approval is therefore reserved to Full Council. It is proposed that the Improvement Plan is approved by Full Council after the May elections.

6.3 Risk management implications

- 6.3.1 Failure to develop and implement a timely and robust recovery plan will hinder the council's ability to demonstrate that it is effectively facing up to and addressing the major that challenges that have been identified. This will be mitigated through high levels of engagement from the political and managerial leadership teams. Steps are also being taken to bring in additional resource to coordinate the implementation of the Recovery Plan and provide the necessary programme management assurance.
- 6.3.2 The risks surrounding the Recovery Plan are being tracked via the Corporate Risk Register. Identified actions that are required to mitigate risks are as follows:
- Complete review of all functions (Functional Capability Assessments are now complete).
 - Costed improvement plans.
 - Prioritisation of ongoing services and service levels.
 - Sale of assets.
 - Downsizing of the Council.
 - Investment in services that allow the Council to function safely.

- Reprioritised digital and ICT improvement programme.
- Data and Insight to support service delivery and decision making.

6.3.3 As of 14th February, the risks were rated as follows:

	Inherent Risk	Residual Risk	Target Risk
Likelihood	6	5	3
Impact	4	3	2
Score	24	15	6

6.4 Environmental implications

6.4.1 There are no specific environmental implications in relation to this report.

6.5 Equality implications

6.5.1 Producing a robust recovery plan is essential to ensuring that the council can effectively discharge its public sector equality duties. In their recent workshops, the political and managerial leadership teams have agreed that reducing inequalities in the borough will remain a priority for the council. An equalities impact assessment will be produced alongside the finalised recovery plan when this is brought forward for approval.

6.6 Procurement implications

6.6.1 There are no specific procurement implications in relation to this report. SBC's plans to achieve improvements in relation to the proper functioning of the procurement and contract management function are described in Appendix A.

6.7 Workforce implications

6.7.1 There are no immediate workforce implications to this report. Staffing challenges have been identified via the Functional Capability Assessment process, which will need to be addressed in the Recovery Plan.

6.8 Property implications

6.8.1 There are no immediate property implications to this report.

7. **Background Papers**

Previous reports on SBC's Recovery:

- Recovery Plan – Update, Cabinet, 17 January 2022

High Level Draft Recovery Plan – Slough Borough Council

March 2022

Slough Borough Council faces exceptionally serious financial, governance and operational challenges which have been revealed through a series of external reviews and internal investigations. The scale of the challenge the Council faces is unprecedented and will require a substantial repurposing of the organisation, secured through one of the most significant change programmes in local government. The financial challenge on its own is one that is likely to take the lifetime of the medium-term finance strategy to recovery and will result in a very different Council to the one that currently exists.

The final Recovery Plan will be structured around the seven key themes listed below. This initial document outlines the action the council has taken to implement the Directions from the Secretary of State, sets out the steps required to ensure the financial investment and rebalancing of the budget is sustainable, and seeks to provide an initial level of assurance to the Improvement Board that the change is understood, with actions in train to ensure delivery and improvement actually takes place.

-  Leadership & Culture
-  Financial recovery and onward sustainability
-  Business planning and performance management
-  Governance
-  Organisational capability, capacity and resilience
-  Technological capability, capacity and resilience
-  Citizen Service standards and performance

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d) An action plan to achieve improvements in relation to the proper functioning of internal audit, which addresses outstanding management actions and includes the commissioning of an independent review of the internal audit contract and a fully costed plan for establishing an internal audit function that reflects best practice.	7
e) An action plan to achieve improvements in relation to the proper functioning of the procurement and contract management function, which includes an independent review.	8
f) An action plan to achieve improvements in relation to the proper functioning of the Authority’s IT.	9
g) A suitable officer structure and scheme of delegation for the Authority which provides sufficient resources to deliver the Authority’s functions in an effective way, including the Improvement Plan and its monitoring and reporting, prioritising permanent recruitment and/or longer-term contract status of interim positions.	9
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Context

As a result of several reviews and investigations, in December 2021 the Council received direction from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to put into place a range of measures to stabilise the authority and start the road to recovery which will be monitored by an Improvement Board.

Broadly, the Improvement and Recovery Board will require assurance that:

- We have faced up to our situation and understand its depth and impact.
- We have acknowledged the errors made in arriving at this position.
- We are clear about what we need to do.
- We are continuing to challenge our position to establish whether there are any additional financial problems.
- We are further developing a detailed improvement and recovery plan in a timely fashion that incorporates the Secretary of State's directions and the other external recommendation made to the Council.

In summary, this is an opportunity to consider a re-set moment for the Council where it can completely review the previously held ambitions and goals including the Slough 2040, and the operational model that it has in place to deliver services.

Work to address the issues highlighted is underway. It includes:

- Workshops between the Cabinet and the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) to reset direction and relationships.
- The financial recovery and renewal programme.
- A suite of functional capability assessments taking place across the organisation.
- A new contracts and risk management approach.
- The formation of a Data Strategy Board.
- Creation of an Asset Disposal Programme.
- Strengthened scrutiny and governance arrangements.

The Directions

The Directions issued by the Secretary of State in December 2021 have several specific requirements for 28th February 2022, progress on which are set out below.

a) An outline action plan to achieve financial sustainability and to close the long-term budget gap identified by the Authority across the period of its Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

The Council has an extensive financial programme that is designed to improve financial standards, rectify the many issues of the past and put the Council onto a sustainable path for the future

The many issues being investigated and reviewed include:

- Statement of accounts and year end close
- Budget setting and delivery
- Investment in companies
- Internal audit and procurement
- Financial systems
- Finance team
- Dedicated Schools Grant
- Insurance
- Business planning
- PFI review
- Revenues and benefits

Work is ongoing on all of these, is fully reported to Full Council at every meeting, has allocated lead managers and is extensively progress tracked.

There has been regular liaison with DLUHC and it is fully understood that the seriousness of the Council's financial position cannot be understated. It faces a financial deficit of £223.1m up to the end of the current financial year and a further estimated £84.1m for 2022/23. The current estimates for 2022/23 show that the budget requirement is 78 per cent greater than sources of funding. The position is very precarious

A major budgetary focus has been managing in-year pressures in 2021/22, including pressure arising from ongoing Covid 19 pandemic, and identifying and developing savings plans, with detailed business cases and EIAs, to make savings of £20m in 22/23

Some specific examples include a 3 month consultation on library services, a decision to close down direct provision of day centres, residential care and respite in ASC following detailed consultation process, reports to cabinet on major commissioning arrangements and transformation projects, including voluntary sector commissioning, ASC transformation programme among others

b) An action plan to achieve improvements in relation to the proper functioning of democratic services, to include rapid training for council officers, a revised term of reference for the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee, and the agreement of an Annual Governance Statement for 2020-21.

A comprehensive training session on the essentials of local government decision-making (including guidance on report writing) is being delivered to Associate Directors and Group Managers during February and March and this will be followed shortly by sessions on conducting a proper consultation process. This has also included technical training for finance officers which is being rolled out.

In addition, a tailored training programme for Audit Committee members, with agreement of the committee, has been designed. This is set alongside a revised Terms of Reference for the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee which has been designed and agreed. Amended cabinet decision-making rules, to ensure decisions are taken at correct level have also been designed and implemented. A new Standards Committee has also been established with terms of reference agreed and in place.

The Council democratic services team restructure is progressing with a new team expected to be in place from September.

The Council's annual governance statements have been reviewed and revised for 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21. They were considered by the Corporate Leadership Team on the 23.2.22 and will be finalised for the 31 March 2022.

c) An action plan to achieve improvements in relation to the proper functioning of the scrutiny function, to include a review of the Authority's strategic risk register to make it fit for purpose.

We are actively contributing to a Scrutiny Improvement Review with the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) who are due to report on their findings shortly. The LGA has facilitated a session for Scrutiny Chairs to be followed by training on chairing skills and one to one coaching for each Scrutiny Chair. Scrutiny Chairs have all been invited to participate in the LGA's leadership training programme and at least one Member has already taken up the offer and has already attended the sessions. The recommendations of the CfGS and the feedback from the sessions with Scrutiny Chairs will be incorporated into the action plan for ongoing Scrutiny improvement. The improved Scrutiny function will allow Members to take an active (and proactive) role in forward planning their programme of work and to decide not only what they wish to scrutinise but also who they would like to hear from in the process – not only officers and Members but also third-party experts in the field.

In advance of the review and to promote better scrutiny of decisions a series of Scrutiny meetings have been held on budget proposals, themed by directorate area, and the Council has ensured pre-decision scrutiny on key proposals, including ASC provider services, library services re-structure and A4 bus lane.

The Council has also reviewed and amended its risk register, reporting this to each meeting of the A&CG Committee

d) An action plan to achieve improvements in relation to the proper functioning of internal audit, which addresses outstanding management actions and includes the commissioning of an independent review of the internal audit contract and a fully costed plan for establishing an internal audit function that reflects best practice.

A report was presented to the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee in December 2021 outlining a range of options for the future of Internal Audit services. A further report is going to the 1 March 2022 Audit and Corporate Governance Committee setting out the detailed timeline for the implementation of the preferred option, which was to bring the service in-house during 2022. As there will be a delay in recruiting an in-house team an interim solution for maintaining adequate internal audit coverage for 2022/23 has also been produced. This is being considered by the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee on 1 March and by Cabinet on 9 March. The proposal is to extend the current supplier's contract for one year to ensure coverage for 2022/23 and with an option of a further year should recruitment prove unsuccessful. There is a fully costed plan including the potential for savings from constituting a broader financial governance, internal audit, counter-fraud, risk and insurance team within the Finance Department. These teams are currently in different parts of the Council. Given the challenges around governance and finance this should provide a better focus for these assurance functions.

Alongside the organisational changes, the work on reviewing the number of outstanding internal audit recommendations has continued. Resources have been recruited to assist with developing a more detailed monitoring and management system. In addition the Risk and Audit Board has been re-constituted and is beginning to act as a focus for ensuring actions are implemented or more realistic timelines are agreed by management. The Group Manager Commercial chairs the Risk and Audit Board and is reporting to each meeting of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee on the progress made against the outstanding recommendations. Whilst this is showing positive improvement, further work is being undertaken to dissect the recommendations and align them to individual Executive Directors portfolios in order to improve the overall accountability for implementation.

e) An action plan to achieve improvements in relation to the proper functioning of the procurement and contract management function, which includes an independent review.

Amended contract procedure rules to ensure decisions are taken at correct level and proper procurement processes were approved at Full Council in November 2021 and are now followed. The role and purpose of the Procurement Review Board has been reviewed and new Terms of Reference agreed putting plans in place for a more strategic approach once inhouse resources are in place.

The Council has set up an Interim Contract Management Board to deliver a council-wide contracts register, establish processes and procedures for its maintenance and development of reporting to ensure there is profile of all council contracts in place with a forward plan of renewals and procurement activity. Slough Children First are also fully involved in the project to ensure that the councils and the company's processes are integrated.

Offices have also taken a number of reports to cabinet on procurements for approval, demonstrating the Council is adhering to the Council's governance processes and ensuring improved oversight and grip on the Council's procurement activity. We have also secured funded training from LGA for ten officers to secure a qualification in contract management through the contract management pioneer programme.

We have also reviewed options for the future delivery of an inhouse procurement and contract management function and established a procurement pipeline of work, which is closely monitored and controlled by the Group Manager Commercial, supported by expenditure control processes.

f) An action plan to achieve improvements in relation to the proper functioning of the Authority's IT.

The draft improvement plan and business case for ICT modernisation that will be the subject of a report to Cabinet in March and covers a priority programme of modernisation and remedial work that will address the improvements in IT required. It covers the investment in Technical Infrastructure, the changes in Business Applications required and plans to improve Council processes through increased digitisation. The investment will also include a new IT structure that will reduce the need for interim resources going forward. A number of immediate practical steps have also been taken to improve mobile phone reception, provide necessary landline facilities, likewise improve wifi/connectivity and work the Childrens' Company on a service level agreement

g) A suitable officer structure and scheme of delegation for the Authority which provides sufficient resources to deliver the Authority's functions in an effective way, including the Improvement Plan and its monitoring and reporting, prioritising permanent recruitment and/or longer-term contract status of interim positions.

Interim resources for senior leadership team has been secured, including longer term commitments from key interim officers. The Council has re-drafted scheme of delegation in constitution and drafted internal schemes of delegation per directorate.

Each Council service has undertaken a functional capacity assessment, and these have been used to inform the content of this improvement plan.

We have also reviewed company arrangements to ensure council nominated roles possess right skill set and that there is a separate of function between senior responsible officer and company directors. This includes reviewing arrangements for governance of the children's company, which delivers key statutory functions on behalf of the Council.

Further action taken

In addition to the above requirements the Council has also taken public reports to Cabinet and Council from July 2021 regularly updating on the **recovery plan** for the Council. Further action has been taken as follows:

Data Strategy Group - Aspects of the Data Strategy are drafted and engagement with colleagues started at the beginning of February. A stakeholder session is taking place in early March with a view to forming the first Board meeting in May. It is anticipated that the Data Strategy and Data Action Plan will be written by May, in line with the timeframe requested in the DKUHC Directions.

Asset disposals – the Council has agreed an approach to this, has established budgetary and aspirational targets for sales and has procured expert advisors to work with the Council to develop a thorough and formal strategy for disposals . They have been appointed subject to a standstill period and in addition to developing the strategy they will offer professional expertise and support to manage an extensive programme of sales/disposals. At a practical level the Council has been working to address:

- Asset registers with incomplete record of assets, duplicate assets, missing data, wrong data – significant data cleansing required.
- Valuation records prepared on an inconsistent basis and not in line with best consideration requirements.
- Some previous valuers not qualified appropriately – reliance on local agents, rather than RICS qualified valuers.
- Incomplete title deeds and other legal documentation.
- No existing framework for advisors.

Review of council owned companies – all of the Companies are being extensively reviewed and a detailed report was made to the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee on 1 March 2022.

Revenues and Benefits - Council Tax

Collection as at 31/01/22 had reached 88.21%. This is an increase of 0.99% against the same point last year. In cash terms the service has collected £5.9m more than the same time last year. Every effort is being made to continue to improve collection rates but this has been limited by the general availability of court dates during the year. The level of outstanding arrears for 2020/21 a year in which collection and recovery activities were limited which continues to be reduced. At the end of the year residents owed £5.07m to the council, this balance has now reduced by £1.81m to £3.26m. Overall arrears balances have been reduced by 12% (From £18.76 to £16.34m) so far this year

Revenue and Benefits - Business Rates

Collection as at 31/01/22 had reached 86.86%, this is up on last year by 5.51%. Arrears balances have been reduced by £6.35m or 46% (From £13.77m to £7.41m), Arrears relating to the 2 years of the pandemic 19/2- and 20/21 have reduced from £11.35m to £6,07m as collection and recover activities have been returned. Activities to improve collection and chase down debts continue whilst at the same time efforts to review and verify some rates reliefs continue and discussions have been held with the councils supplier.

To ensure performance is stabilised and continues to improve a detailed improvement plan has been developed and business cases and procurement for key projects are progressing through the councils expenditure governance procedures. These include the deployment of robotic automation, additional investment in proactive debt collection and data cleansing activities. Clear priorities have been set and training and development needs identified for staff. Responsibility for Council Tax recovery activities have been passed to a more experienced officer to ensure action is taken at the earliest possible opportunity. Further work to improve the services approach to collection will continue including addressing the culture within the service

Elections – a consultation was undertaken, and the council has agreed move to 4 yearly elections from 2023.

Closure of the accounts

Good progress is being made on completing the accounts for the three years from 2018/19 to 2020/21 as well as preparing for the closure of the 2021/22 financial year. The accounts will be completed on a staged basis throughout 2021/22 and 2022/23, with the 2018/19 accounts expected to be completed by March 2022.

Officers are currently in the process of resolving the issues raised by the auditors and CIPFA as part of their respective reviews as well issues identified as part of our own comprehensive internal review, these include:

- Review of adequacy of business rates appeals provision.
- Correcting accounting treatment of an advance made to Slough Children's Trust.
- Resolving historical understatement of minimum revenue provision.
- Review of adequacy of provisions.
- Data cleansing exercise to ensure entries on the asset register are accurate and up to date.
- Reconciliation of HRA assets to rent collection data.
- Review of debtor and creditor balances.

Reducing the capital programme

The capital programme has been extensively reviewed and reduced. The Previous year's capital programmes contained a number of issues, including:

- Several major projects in any one year and were heavily dependent on borrowing.
- Insufficient capacity to deliver the capital programme, resulting in slippage of 40% in delivering the programme.
- Heavy dependency on borrowing to fund capital expenditure resulting in overall borrowing rising four-fold from £170m at 31 March 2016 to £760m at 31 March 2021.
- Incorrect treatment of £12.2m capitalisation direction approved in March 2021.
- Misstated projections and casting issues.

The then approved programme envisaged spending £309m over three years 2021/22 to 2023/24 of which £119m was to be funded from borrowing and a further £49m from institutional funding. Both incur capital financing charges. This would have resulted in total Council borrowing exceeding £900m. The Council's financial position requires total borrowing to be reduced, therefore the strategy is to minimise the extent to which schemes require additional new borrowing.

The capital programme has been reviewed to:

- Reduce capital expenditure to focus on contractual commitments and health and safety requirements in line with the s.114 Notice – this has reduced the total capital programme by £73m to £236m; it should be noted that the previous programme covered three years whereas the new programme covers five years and therefore if compared on a like for like basis, the reduction would equate to £141m.
- Remove projects which would have required additional borrowing and to re-profile projected spend.
- Reduce the need to borrow by £76m from £119m to £43m; again as the new programme spans a longer period, if compared on a like the reduction would equate to £90m.
- Extend the capital programme from three years to a five year forward look in line with best practice.

Revising the treasury management strategy

All local authorities are required by law to approve a treasury management strategy (TMS), investment strategy and minimum revenue policy before the year to which they apply as part of the budget setting process. The TMS combines all three.

Issues with previous TMS:

- Capital expenditure forecast did not link back to the capital strategy meaning that the Prudential Indicators to limit borrowing and assess affordability of borrowing were misstated. If corrected the Council's borrowing would have exceeded the capital financing requirement, which is not unlawful but would have indicated that the Council was **borrowing to support the revenue budget**.
- No performance measures had been set or reported in previous years.
- Measured against standard benchmarks for investment property, the Council's investment property portfolio (valued at £139m) is yielding a negative rate of return of -0.6% and is fully leveraged **contrary to the Prudential Code**.
- The Council's borrowing of £760m at 31 March 2021 was the **third highest per head of population amongst all unitary local authorities**.
- Annual interest and debt charges totalled £25m, or 24% of net revenue budget in 2021/22 and **rises to 32% in 2022/23**. This is neither affordable or sustainable.
- MRP policy did not comply with statutory guidance, and had not been applied in practice.

The above issues have been addressed in the TMS for 2022/23 to ensure that the Council is compliant with statutory guidance and brings borrowing back to a sustainable and affordable level over the next five years.

Amended lead member roles, including identifying lead member for finance to focus solely on the many financial aspects of the Council's issues and recovery

The above show a very significant identification and resolution workload undertaken in a short period of time. There remains a further substantial programme of improvement work that is needed and comprises a mix of the urgent and longer term which take a number of years to fully achieve.

Diagnosing the size and scale of the challenge for the Council

As has already been stated the challenge the Council faces is to deliver one of the most significant change programmes in local government. The Secretary of State directions include a broad set of specific diagnostic activity with wide ranging implications for the whole organisation.

The Council has undertaken Council-wide functional capability assessment that identify gaps in capability and capacity. These assessment have identified a number of strategic themes for improvement, as well as a number of specific services of significant concern which will require further work and inclusion within the new, more detailed strategic Improvement and Recovery Plan in May. Broadly these are:

Leadership and management

- Directorates have reported issues with fragmented line management arrangements resulting from the fall out of the phase 2 restructure, which are affecting capability.
- This has been raised as a particular challenge in the Place & Community Directorate, where only 60% of the management roles created in April 2021 have been recruited to.
- There is a lack of clear accountability in some areas, with services adapting to circumstances and improvising line management arrangements to fill gaps, which is leading to confusion for officers outside of these teams, councillors, partners, and others.
- An updated, stable reporting structure will therefore have to be developed as an urgent priority.
- In addition, some Associate Directors and Group Managers hold portfolios that they have little or no prior technical knowledge of, as was noted in the Governance Review of 2021.

Staffing levels

- Some teams are significantly understrength in comparison to their self-identified required capacity, with a particular challenge in several corporate support services – Data & Insight; Communications; Electoral Services; Strategy, Policy, and Partnerships; ICT; Commercial and HR are all missing over 25% of their identified required staff.
- These staff shortages will hinder the council's ability to deliver an effective recovery plan.
- There are also significant staff shortages in the School Effectiveness, Inclusion (SEND) and Population Health Management (Public Health) teams.
- In total, Corporate Services had 83% of its identified required roles staffed, People (Adults) 94% and People (Children) 85%.
- The Executive Director for Place & Community has identified the need for a comprehensive realignment and restructure of the directorate.
- As well as the gaps in the identified required structures, there are significant amounts of interim staff. For example

- 31 members of the finance team are interim (45% of the identified required roles), as were 19 of the Revenues & Benefits team (31%).
- There are only 3 members of the Public Health team who are substantive, with the remaining members all interim. This includes the Service Lead and the whole of the Health Protection team.
- The People (Adults) directorate has also identified the reliance on locums and agency staff as a key capability challenge.
- Slough Children First has also identified gaps in terms of agency and permanent staff and does not have the right structure in place for a sustained service.

Communications

- The staff capacity is having a significant impact on the council communications capability.
- Strategic communications, both internally and externally, is an important gap which is having an impact on the ability of the council to progress. Communications will play an important role in all of the organisation's change proposals and the magnitude of the challenge means its impact upon staff and the local community needs to be well communicated.

Programme and Change Management

- All directorates have reported challenges with the management of change programmes and there is currently an absence of a Programme Management Office, following its removal in the phase 2 restructure.
- Services have identified several major programmes which will require improved capacity in programme and change management to be successfully implemented, including:
 - Departmental restructure programmes
 - Savings programmes
 - Training and development programmes
 - A culture change programme
 - A staff mentoring programme
- Programme and project management support is required to successfully deliver the ASC transformation programme, with the directorate anticipating it will need to award a contract to the current contractor from March to supply this – delaying potential savings. The directorate also anticipate that programme management capability will be needed to implement the Health and Care Act.

- The Place & Communities directorate anticipate that they will need significant Project and Programme Management support for construction programmes:
 - Education programme
 - Major highways projects
 - Key capital projects e.g. Nova House
 - House building (HRA)

Data, Insight & Performance Management

- A thorough Data and Insight user needs assessment was undertaken at the council in summer 2020, and the council self-assessed itself to be below average in the management of data and generation of insight overall and within all domains of the assessment – technology, processes, skills, leadership.
- Data improvement work has been undertaken in the past 18 months, deriving from that assessment. These improvements have demonstrated early benefits.
- At the core of the corporate challenges faced is an absence of a single Data Strategy and associated data governance and joined-up decision-making.
- The problems generated from this incoherent approach to data and insight are then amplified by both legacy issues with ICT systems and software and an imbalanced, and in some service areas under-resourced, staffing approach (and associated activity costs e.g. training, licences). A rebalancing of staffing and additional investment will be required to bring the council’s use of data and insight up to an industry good standard across all services.
- The lack of consistent, accurate and timely data and insight and limited benchmarking data has been identified as a risk for good decision making
- New performance frameworks also need to be developed for Place & Community Directorate, which while collecting a lot of data, needs to better understand how to use it to manage trends.
- A scoping exercise needs to take place with CLT and Associate Directors. Council-wide data transformation and analytical resource is currently fragmented post-restructure and there are multiple options for how we set up in the future.
- There is currently a capacity of 4.5 FTE roles within the Data and Insight Team - it is anticipated that 4 FTE (or equivalent agency hires/ procurement budgets) additional capacity will required to meet the skills and capabilities gaps identified that are preventing the full implementation of the data improvement plan. This has been modelled in the capitalisation directive business case.

Partnerships

- As part of the assessment, services were asked to identify areas where partnership arrangements needed to be improved, as well as potential areas which might benefit from working in partnership.
- A significant amount of officer time is currently required in order to support a variety of statutory partnerships – so partnership working is being affected by the workforce issues raised earlier.
- A refresh of strategic partnership arrangements started in October 2021 and changes need to be continually embedded to ensure those arrangements are delivering effectively for the council, for the partners, and for residents and businesses.
- The Associate Director for Education and Inclusion has warned that partnerships are deteriorating with the local community, including schools, parents and those that access the service as a result of the team’s instability.
- Partnership arrangements need to be in the Place & Community directorate to reflect the council’s recovery priorities.
 - SBC’s past funding of Community Sector groups to deliver discretionary services has been significant and has now all but stopped, and there are challenges for supporting these groups to obtain alternative funding and to support / enable volunteers to provide services without significant funding.

Specific services of major concern

Inclusion (SEND)

- The SEND service has experienced transient staffing and high leadership turnover over recent years, leading to the service not being able to effectively meet its statutory duties.
- This was highlighted in the joint inspection of the local area of Slough conducted by Ofsted and the CQC, which determined that a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) was required because of significant areas of weakness in the area’s practice.
- In addition, SBC downgraded the salary of all officers in the team which led to immediate resignations throwing the service into further turmoil.
- The service is therefore under-staffed, although there has been some stabilisation of leadership since November 2020.
- Without further investment and resourcing the team will not be able to improve or meet the requirements of the WSOA. The WSOA will be the basis of any future Ofsted inspection, which is likely within the next 18 months.
- Improvements will be difficult until the team has more stability. Compliance and training are needed.
- The team is being trained on processes, however, implementation of this is being hampered due to inexperienced staff, sickness absence and staff leaving the organisation.
- Once the team is established, improvements can be made through the strategic use of data and the development of a place planning strategy.

ICT

- The individual functional capability assessments outline specific challenges with systems affecting services' capability.
- As a summary of the issues:
 - A major programme of remedial work is required.
 - All core systems, reporting solutions and public-facing portals require improvement to some degree.
 - The reliability of our systems infrastructure needs enhancing
- The service has operated in a state of flux for the past two years, due to transitioning back from an externalised transactional services provider, the COVID pandemic and the more recent Section 114 notice.
- A business case has been produced focussing on the need for investment in IT capacity with a particular focus on both investment in permanent staff and training.
- The existing team continues to be significantly reliant on contract / interim staff (at present there are 7 contractors and 15 permanent staff and 11 vacancies).
- It is worth noting that SCF have highlighted challenges for communicating with young people because of IT issues.

HR

- As noted above, there are significant workforce challenges the council needs to address to improve capability across the organisation. The scale of these challenges is significant, and the HR team may need further support to lead strategic people decisions, including improving policies and culture.
- The Our Futures Programme reduced the size of the HR team by approximately 50%.
- The service also "lost" significant organisational memory and knowledge in core functions.
- The service has also identified that it is paying below the market rate for a range of positions, across a range of levels.
- The council has had a long-term issue in attracting people to hard-to-fill job roles and the nature of the location (close to London and with a large industrial estate within Slough) all contributing to extreme difficulties in attracting staff, particularly at the current pay rates.
- The service is reviewing the needs of the whole function to ensure it can be fit to support the organisation to the level of change that the Council will need to deliver soon. The LGA are supporting this review which it is hoped will conclude by the middle of March.
- SCF have also identified crucial HR and OD posts which have hitherto been DfE funded, which may need to be recruited to, to address the workforce and cultural challenges that they have identified.

Public Health

- There is a significant reliance on agency/interims as noted previously, with only 3 permanent members of staff. It is one of the smallest teams in the country.
- A new structure has been agreed – but will need support to implement this.
- Capacity has been impacted by the ongoing pandemic response – moving into business-as-usual mode means additional tasks and functions being delivered on top of existing functions. Management of covid grants is also affecting capacity.
- There are significant health inequalities across the town – and SBC’s approach will need to be reset after pandemic.
- Further support is needed for options for East Berks PH offer or place-based PH/population health focus.
- There is a limited capacity to deliver major PH core work, the PH offer within the ICS and the health in all policies approach.
- The service will also have to manage the impact of the end of interim contracts that were funded through COVID grants.
- The tracking of delivery of PH outcomes will be needed across the council.

Place and community

The director has identified three priority areas for recovery, which will require structural, and process change to the way the directorate is currently set up and run.

- **Asset Disposals Programme:** The sale of up to £600m of assets is critical to the Councils financial recovery. Everything to do with Council owned buildings needs to be considered as part of our Asset Disposal Programme. Cost-benefit analyses will be undertaken to ensure all cases are considered on their merits and we will look to identify opportunities to reduce operating costs.
- **Implementing the Local Plan:** Enabling regeneration of the town and determining best consideration for Council owned buildings and land must be informed by the existing Local Plan, its monitoring, and associated Planning Policies. We must provide timely and up to date planning advice to enable the major development projects within the town including British Land / ADIA – Slough High Street (Town Centre) to progress efficiently and deliver viably. The new Local Plan has a draft 24-month programme to submission for examination. Cross council and Member engagement, funding, recruitment for a permanent Local Plan Lead and additional officers will be needed to make this happen.
- **Housing:** Publication of a new Housing Strategy and realigning / repurposing housing functions is needed.

Slough Children First

Slough Children First is making good progress on the improvement journey. It has been under Direction by the Secretary of State for the Department of Education since 2016, as children's social care was inadequate. Slough Children First Company commenced in April 2021. This was a new operating model with a combined Chief Executive of the Company and Director of Children's Services role. This is a Council owned Company and provides for a more integrated approach between the Company and the Council for children, young people and families in Slough.

Progress has been made on the improvement journey such that the fostering service is evaluated by Ofsted as Good, as is Breakaway the respite care unit for children with disabilities. Children's social care was evaluated as requiring improvement to be good in 2019 by Ofsted. A focussed visit from Ofsted last year during the pandemic was positive about the way the service was managing to meet the needs of children during this challenging time. In January of this year, there was a focussed visit of the Front Door which found that the multi-agency safeguarding hub was operating effectively, that leaders and managers knew their service but that workforce issues created a level of fragility. Cabinet recently formally congratulated the Company on the progress it has made. The Company and Council is committed to further integration with those parts of children's services that remain in the Council. Further development of partnership working at a strategic level is a priority, as is the development of a multi-agency early help strategy. This will develop a continuum of early help services from universal through to the threshold of children's social care, in order to meet the needs of children, young people and families at the earliest opportunity, to prevent difficulties becoming crisis and to reduce the need for involvement from statutory services.

May's Improvement and Recovery Plan will lay out in detail the improvements the Council needs to make, what actions it will take to deliver those improvements and have programme management disciplines and mechanisms in place to ensure accountability and track progress. It will build a long-term approach to managing a significant programme of work that is likely to take up to five years. This will need to set out how the Council will continue to stabilise its finances, make service improvements, operational improvements and deliver transformational approaches to modernise the way the Council works. This programme of work will need dedicated resource and the Council will need to identify capacity and capability for this to succeed.

Approach to Improvement

From the outset it will be important to set clear principles to operate within so that taxpayers, service users, external partners and staff can see that the Council is taking an approach that is fundamentally different from the past. To do this we will build our Recovery Plan around the following key themes:

- **Leadership & Culture**
- **Financial recovery and onward sustainability**
- **Business planning and performance management**
- **Governance**
- **Organisational capability, capacity and resilience**
- **Technological capability, capacity and resilience**
- **Citizen Service standards and performance**

The political and managerial leadership teams have together committed to greater transparency and openness in the Council's operation and this will be an integral theme underpinning all aspects of the Council's business. Measuring and monitoring delivery and actual change will be central to provide assurance on the implementation of the Improvement and Recovery Plan. The Corporate Leadership Team will work with staff and Members to co-create criteria to measure and evidence progress in a meaningful way.

Reaching out to staff, external partners and the wider community and actively seeking their involvement in co-designing and co-delivery of much of the change needed will be another hallmark of the new way of working. A very strong message from the reviews is the need to change the culture. Designing a new operating environment to tackle this culture without the full involvement of staff would be entirely inappropriate and highly likely to fail.

The work to date has identified significant weaknesses in the corporate elements of the organisations with capability hollowed out in such a way that has constrained the Council's ability to respond to the reviews and Government direction swiftly. An important early stage will therefore be the creation of that strategic capability particularly in areas such as human resources, organisational development, policy and communications.

While building capacity will be important this will need to be done within narrow financial constraints, and its ability to attract and retain suitable staff. Slough will be employing staff in an already difficult recruitment environment, while the challenge that is started to be set out here is without comparison and will take considerable time to resolve. The strategic HR and organisational development approach will therefore need to value ambitious employees, create a supportive and challenging learning environment, and embed a strong sense of accountability underpinned by the Nolan Principles for standards in public life.

Emerging Corporate Priorities and Ways of Working

The political and managerial leadership teams are undertaking a series of externally facilitated workshops to re-set the Council's priorities and new ways of working. These will be confirmed within the new Council Strategic Recovery Plan to be agreed by full Council in May 2022 alongside the budget proposals for 2023/24 and a developing Medium Term Financial Strategy. This will provide the framework for all service reviews and budgeting activity from that agreement.

The output from the initial work indicate that at a high level terms are likely to reflect the following:

Emerging Corporate Priorities

- *We will live within our means, balance the budget, and provide best value for taxpayers and service users*
- *We will focus on reducing inequality and poverty in the borough exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic*
- *We will focus on providing the best quality core service we can afford. Providing services that keep our most vulnerable residents healthy, public spaces safe and our environment clean.*
- *To ensure we get full benefit from every pound we spend, other services in these areas will only be provided where they can be shown to have a direct benefit in keeping people safe and reducing demand.*

Over the next few weeks and months we will further refine our new corporate priorities, ensuring decisions are led by data and insight.

Ways of working

In addition, the leadership teams will also agree **new ways of working** which will cover themes such as:

- *We will practise sound financial management, being clear and timely about what we've spent and honest about what we can afford.*
- *We will focus on what we, uniquely, can do as the local authority as the democratically elected leaders of our borough. This means we will focus on our core services, and a small number of evidence-based outcomes that deliver our priorities. But we will also continue to use our democratic mandate to convene our local and sub-regional partners around a common purpose and to make a clear case for a better deal for Slough.*
- *We will aspire to be a consistently open and transparent council.*
- *We will involve taxpayers, service users and external partners in our decision making. But we will also need to be clear with residents about what we can do, and what we can't. When we have to say no, we will do so with compassion and take the time to explain our decisions.*

Delivering the Plan

The Council has fully acknowledged that it does not have a strong track record of delivery of plans or improvement and is making a positive step to address its internal programme management and performance management capability.

In addition, progress will be reported and overseen by Council Member led bodies: Scrutiny and Overview Committee, Audit and Corporate Governance Committee, Cabinet and Full Council. Commissioner chaired Boards will provide additional scrutiny and challenge: the Improvement and Recovery Board will consider the Council's proposals and monitor its progress in delivery; and the Finance Board will ensure proper, risk based financial scrutiny. It does not preclude or prevent Scrutiny & Overview from fulfilling the duties as described in the Council Constitution and will provide the Commissioners with the oversight required by the Secretary of State's Directions.

The Council will need to fully adopt normal practice programme methodologies which will set definitions to be achieved, milestones and deliverables in sensible time periods to ensure it achieves the required improvement and change. The plans will require regular review to check that delivery is on track, that risks are reviewed and mitigated and any external factors that may affect delivery are taken into consideration.

There are currently over 200 recommendations and actions already developed from different plans and there will be further output for incorporation into existing plans. Some of the recommendations and actions are likely to be cross-cutting, many may duplicate each other, and the Council will need to use best practice frameworks and recognised programme management methodology to track progress and reporting.

The Council will use the CIPFA/Solace standards of governance to model best practice. In addition, it will continue to work with and learn from partner organisations such as the Local Government Association, Solace, Centre for Governance & Scrutiny and other Local Authorities who can provide valuable support and insights.

Immediate Action

The Improvement and Recovery Plan needs to be written and brought to members for review and challenge. It is intended that this will happen in May 2022 at (both Scrutiny?) and Annual Council following the local elections. However, a significant amount of work is required and already underway whilst the detailed plan is being constructed. The Council cannot wait for the Plan to be finally written before it begins the essential work needed.

It is important for the Council to set immediate goals to keep momentum and pace around the actions that need to be taken whilst it builds the more significant overarching Improvement Plan. The following table captures the work currently underway which will all be formally incorporated into the Recovery Plan for formal review in May.

Immediate Priorities	Action	Delivered by:	Funding Source	Lead officer
Cabinet/CLT Workshops	Shape refreshed organisational priorities and new ways of working	February & March 2022	LGA funded support	
Approval of 2022/23 budget	Agree proposals	10 March 2022	N/A	
Workshop on learning from external intervention	Cabinet and CLT learn from the experience of others who have been through external intervention	March 2022	LGA funded support	
Political leadership support	Mentoring support in place for Leader, all Cabinet members and Leader of the Opposition. This is now more tailored to the financial, governance and other challenges that Slough faces as opposed to generic assistance	Ongoing	LGA funded support	
Create more stable, capable senior management structure to deliver short term priorities	Specify gaps and recruit/commission to fill in areas of priority: HR; Comms; democratic services, PMO, strategy & procurement	October 2022	Capitalisation Direction	Chief Executive
Strategic HR and OD plan in place	Initial strategic HR and OD plan in place to deliver recovery plan support and resources identified	August 2022	Capitalisation Direction	Chief Executive / Director of Finance
Strategic Communications Plan in place	Initial strategic communications plan in place to deliver recovery plan support and resources identified	August 2022	Capitalisation Direction	Chief Executive / Director of Finance

Financial planning	Completion of all accounts, identification of financial issues, 2023/24 budget proposals and finalisation of financial services transformation	March 2023	Capitalisation Direction and core budget	Director of Finance
Evaluate localities business model and set new direction	Undertake review of the Localities approach to examine affordability and impact of asset disposal		Core budget	Executive Director Place and Community
Review, consult and implement the Council's medium term management arrangements restructure	Staff consultation on the redesign of management arrangements and resources to reflect new organisation priorities and ways of working. Proposals then brought to Cabinet and Full Council for final decision with a plan for any permanent appointments that may arise.	April – July 2022	Capitalisation Direction and core budget	Chief Executive
Improve Audit Committee oversight	Initial training undertaken by all Audit Committee members	June 2022	LGA funded support and core budget	Director of Finance
Political management	All committee chairs offered chairing skills training with offer extended to all other members	March 2022	LGA funded support	
Decision making skills	All relevant officers received basic local government understanding and report writing skills training	TBC	LGA funded support	Principal Lawyer
Strategic Recovery Plan agreed	Detailed recovery plan in place to provide framework for corporate recovery and future business planning and budget reviews	May 2022	N/A	
Financial planning	Agree approach, timetable and communicate new business planning and zero based budgeting approach for 2024/25	September 2022	Capitalisation Direction and core budget	Director of Finance
Draft 2023/24 budget proposals	Agree proposals and plan to consult staff and the public	July 2022	Capitalisation Direction and core budget	Director of Finance and Executive Directors
Create clear, consistent corporate performance management framework	Use external support including LGA to develop appropriate data reports	May 2022	LGA funded support	Chief Executive

Corporate Finance and Risk reporting in place	Develop and enhance robust assurance framework and reporting system to members.	June 2022	Capitalisation Direction and core budget	Director of Finance
Programme Management Office in place and Programme Management system agreed	Identify resource required and appropriate methodologies	July 2022	Capitalisation Direction	Chief Executive / Director of Finance
Improved finance system to support reporting and management of finances	Scope requirements and establish approach	March 2023	Capitalisation Direction and core budget	Director of Finance
Review of companies	Continue ongoing reviews of all companies. Work will continue throughout 2022/23.	Reports to Council throughout 2021 and Audit and Corporate Governance Committee - March 2022	Capitalisation Direction and core budget	Director of Finance
Service restructures	Launch restructures with consequential assessments, appointments and development programmes eg culture, training and development, productivity, succession planning, "grow your own" etc	First April 2022	Capitalisation Direction and core budget	Executive Board
Council culture	Implement Council wide culture change and standards programme	May 2022	Capitalisation Direction and core budget	Chief Executive
Efficiency programme	Develop and embed efficiency programme	September 2022 and beyond	Capitalisation Direction and core budget	Director of Finance

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO:	Cabinet
DATE:	29 th March 2022
SUBJECT:	Slough: Solid Foundations for Recovery
PORTFOLIO:	Councillor Swindlehurst, Leader, Forward Strategy & Corporate Resource
CHIEF OFFICER:	Chief Executive
CONTACT OFFICER:	Gavin Jones
WARD(S):	All
KEY DECISION:	NO
EXEMPT:	NO
DECISION SUBJECT TO CALL IN:	YES
APPENDICES:	None

1 Summary and Recommendations

1.1 This report focusses on Leadership and Culture at Slough Borough Council and defines what is needed to ensure a solid foundation upon which a recovery programme will be delivered. It should be read in conjunction with the “Recovery Plan”.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to approve the following 12 recommendations to be built into the Council’s wider Recovery Plan:

- **Recommendation 1:** *Cabinet will commit to ongoing, facilitated leadership development as a collective.*
- **Recommendation 2:** *In addition, each Lead Member will have their own tailored development plan, so that they are empowered to fulfil the Executive roles properly.*
- **Recommendation 3:** *Commitment to re-statement and regular communication on priorities within the organisation and outside - clearly outlining what is going well, not so well and what has changed as a result of the intervention.*
- **Recommendation 4:** *Commitments to diversity and how the members will obtain tangible evidence to show change has happened.*

Cabinet is recommended to note the intention of the Chief Executive to ensure the following:

- **Recommendation 5:** *The CLT will commit to ongoing, facilitated leadership development as a collective.*
- **Recommendation 6:** *Regular staff surveys will be undertaken and will include a section on CLT leadership. Any shortcomings will be addressed and fed back to staff.*
- **Recommendation 7:** *Visibility of officer senior leadership –improvements to include Chief Executive/ Executive Director visits to departments, unscheduled walkabouts, use of technology to communicate and obtain feedback, weekly blog from Chief Executive and attendance at induction programme or key message video.*
- **Recommendation 8:** *Recruitment and Retention of staff will be fundamental to the Council’s recovery. The Council will publish a workforce strategy to address*
- **Recommendation 9:** *A working group is established involving staff from across the organisation to propose a set of organisation values and behaviours. Once adopted, these will form a key part of the employer brand and will be used in recruitment, professional development and performance management*
- **Recommendation 10:** *An annual staff survey (with intra year thematic polling) will be undertaken. Results will be published and scrutinised. Any response action will be published and reported back to the organisation*
- **Recommendation 11:** *Bi-annual “Leader and CEO roadshows “will be undertaken, supported by smaller informal sessions with groups of staff. Where staff will have the opportunity to be updated on issues affecting the Council and where they will have the opportunity to interact with senior leaders*
- **Recommendation 12:** *THE COUNCIL should monitor and publish its staff diversity figures and create opportunities through its recruitment and staff development for people from diverse backgrounds to join and advance within the organisation.*

Reason: The recommendations support the Recovery Plan by promoting effective leadership and good organisational culture.

Commissioner Review

“Commissioners will follow the discussion at Cabinet with interest.”

2 Report

Slough Borough Council is in serious difficulties and has to quickly demonstrate to its residents, taxpayers, service users, staff, partners and Government that it is capable and committed to addressing the causes of failure and fixing those things that are now broken. There are multiple causes for the failure of the Council including poor financial practice, weak oversight and a poorly implemented transformation programme entitled “Our Futures”.

The Council is now under formal intervention from Central Government and has appointed three Commissioners to help the Council take ownership of its recovery and to ensure steps are in place to address subsequent issues.

The root cause of any organisational failure of this magnitude is a failure of leadership, at both officer and Member level. Without tacit acknowledgement of this and a formal commitment to addressing this failure, any Recovery Plan is doomed to fail, and as such would be a plan built on sand.

Failure of leadership manifests in many different ways. A poor culture where staff and Members are not empowered to “speak truth to power”. Decision making is not supported by strong evidence and there is a lack of good oversight and scrutiny. Communication is weak and value is not given to personal and organisational learning. Diversity in all its guises is often not valued, including diversity of thinking to avoid “group think”. Priorities are often unclear or too many priorities without a realistic understanding of the skills and capabilities required to deliver. The lack of a golden thread where corporate priorities are not properly cascaded down throughout the organisation and a robust organisational and individual performance management framework is missing to support delivery, making successful delivery impossible. To a greater or lesser degree, all of these symptoms of failure of leadership have been present at Slough Borough Council for some considerable time.

Without the Council formally recognising the above and without taking responsibility for addressing, any Recovery plan will be relatively meaningless. Providing consistent and strong leadership and setting and owning a positive organisational culture are the essential foundation stones of any organisation. The eventual recovery of Slough Borough Council will be highly dependent on the recruitment, development and retention of high quality, dedicated staff and this can only be achieved if the Council provides a positive cultural environment for them to work in.

Taking responsibility for providing effective Leadership

Leadership takes many different forms and can come from any level of the organisation and the wider system in which the Council operates. However, for the Council to properly recover over time, the Members and Senior officers must, between them, take responsibility for their individual and collective leadership and for its development across the organisation. Visible signs that the Council is improving its leadership capability will be that at the most senior levels:

- Decisions are based on data and evidence and that professional advice is demonstrably valued
- Priorities are clear and realistic expectations for delivery are set, supported by timely and effective performance and risk management
- Clear and effective governance arrangements are in place, understood and followed to support effective decision making
- A culture of organisational and individual learning and development is firmly established
- Leaders are visible and approachable they are trusted and trust each other.
- Communication and engagement with staff and partners is timely and regular
- The officer/Membership leadership team, design feedback loops to verify from staff, and partners that they are providing the leadership that the organisation needs and to commit to addressing any issues identified
- The organisation learns from its failures
- Officers and members are able to move on from the past and focus on the future
- Meetings, both informal and formal, between officers and members are respectful and focused on collective discussion and debate on proposals
- The organisation is transparent and openly and actively engages with the public and partners to inform decision-making

There are two main leadership groups in the local authority that must specifically take ownership of the Council's leadership responsibilities. The Members who form part of the Administration (Cabinet) and the Senior officer Team (Corporate Leadership team). Officers and Members work for the public sector, meaning they are both servants of the public and stewards of public resources. However, the roles and responsibilities of each are different.

Lead Members (Cabinet)

The Cabinet team are well established at Slough and recognise their failings in providing the appropriate oversight of the Council that has led to the huge financial and organisational failings and are committed to addressing the issues. Whilst it is clear that very poor financial practice by previous finance officers and a poorly implemented restructuring by the former Chief Executive created enormous destructive shocks to the organisation, this should not have been able to happen if Members had fulfilled their oversight role effectively and created a culture where people had felt safe and confident to raise issues in a timely manner.

Democratic leadership of a local authority is essential, ensuring that elected representatives are accountable to the whole electorate. Members are lay people who bring the needs and hopes of their communities to the fore in an effort for the Council to address key priorities and to tackle disadvantage and inequality. Being elected to do so though, carries a heavy burden of responsibility to ensure that the Council is fit for propose in delivering both its statutory responsibilities and local priorities. To carry out this responsibility well, Members need to take time to understand their role within the organisation, understand and commit to the Nolan principles of public office, and to invest in themselves, to ensure that they can carry out their roles successfully as both Lead Members with portfolio responsibilities and of being part of the Cabinet that provides the focus and culture for the organisation as a whole. Members should comply with the Code of Conduct for Councillors, regularly monitor and review the performance of the Council, represent the Council externally, act as advocates for constituents. Members should not get involved in day-to-day operational activities and should not seek to performance manage staff.

This commitment to good political leadership goes beyond the basics of attending formal meetings. It embraces the opportunity for personal and collective learning. It welcomes good scrutiny, and it works hard to ensure that it creates a culture where officers feel valued and are able to speak freely. Great political leadership is clear about its priorities and recognises its role ensuring that the organisation is "fit for purpose" in delivering those priorities.

Recommendation 1: *The political leadership team will commit to ongoing, facilitated leadership development as a collective.*

Recommendation 2: *In addition, each Lead Member will have their own tailored development plan, so that they are empowered to fulfil the Executive roles properly.*

Recommendation 3: *Commitment to re-statement and regular communication on priorities within the organisation and outside - clearly outlining what is going well, not so well and what has changed as a result of the intervention.*

Recommendation 4: Commitments to diversity and how the members will obtain tangible evidence to show change has happened.

Corporate Leadership Team (CLT)

The Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) consists of the Chief Executive and the most senior officers of the Council. CLT are responsible for providing effective and joined up organisational leadership. The members of CLT are Executive Directors with specific portfolio accountabilities, but they are also part of a corporate leadership team, with responsibilities to ensure effective communication and direction for the organisation as a whole and for ensuring the culture of the organisation remains a positive one.

The current CLT consists of a mixture of interim managers, new in post permanent Members and the only long term established Executive Director has recently announced his resignation. The current team are also tackling the effects of a poorly executed re-organisation and financial collapse that took place under the leadership and direction of the former chief executive. Their individual workload is enormous and stressful and despite their commitment, they are unable to provide coherent, sustained leadership to the organisation without additional support.

Of the three Government commissioners, Gavin Jones (CEO Essex County Council) has also been appointed as the Council's Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) as of 9 March 2022 and will be providing this leadership on a part-time basis up to 3 days per week.

A vital component of the Council's recovery is to have a CLT that is properly resourced, with senior staff in the right roles and are committed to the turnaround of the Council. The current interim Executive Directors have committed to the Council for all, or most of the 2022/23 financial year, and whilst this is positive, the Council will need a more permanent leadership team that can commit to a longer term and at the right time, a permanent CEO who can lead the change the Council needs to make.

The recruitment market for senior Local Government officers is not buoyant and there is much competition for high quality staff. Whilst there will be some senior managers who are attracted to the idea of a "turnaround" role, the Council will need to work hard to attract and retain those Leaders. Of particular importance will be the culture of the organisation and the sense that officers will be joining an organisation that has understood why it has become dysfunctional and has taken steps to ensure that the issues of leadership and culture have or are being, addressed.

Recommendation 5: The CLT will commit to ongoing, facilitated leadership development as a collective.

Recommendation 6: Regular staff surveys will be undertaken and will include a section on CLT leadership. Any shortcomings will be addressed and fed back to staff.

Recommendation 7: Visibility of leadership –improvements to include Chief Executive/ ED visits to departments, unscheduled walkabouts, use of technology to communicate and obtain feedback, weekly blog from Chief Executive and attendance at induction programme or key message video.

Recommendation 8: *Recruitment and Retention of staff will be fundamental to the Council's recovery. The Council will publish a workforce strategy to address*

What does a good organisational culture look like and how will the Council achieve it?

Organisation culture is a combination of senior leaders and employee values, beliefs, and behaviours. It matters to any organisation that it takes time to build and maintain a positive culture as without it, recruitment and retention of good staff becomes very difficult, staff wellbeing is affected, productivity reduced and resident satisfaction is negatively impacted. the Council has a long way to go before it can claim to have a positive organisation culture. The disastrous restructure demonstrated that staff were not listened to nor were they able to raise legitimate concerns. Consequently, many good staff have now left and indeed are still leaving. If the Council had had a positive culture, the restructure is unlikely to have occurred in the way that it did.

At the heart of any good organisation culture is the celebration and valuing of diversity. So far as is possible, the workforce should reflect the communities that the Council serves and should be reflected in the leadership make up of the Council.

The values and behaviours of the organisation should be developed in collaboration with staff from all aspects of the Council, so that there is a sense of being owned by the organisation and its staff. Critical to its success though is the role modelling by Leaders (political and officer). Any published set of values and behaviours are meaningless if the Council leaders do not model the behaviours themselves and openly take action where leadership falls short of the stated values and behaviours.

To be authentic about the culture that the Council seeks, it is recommended that:

Recommendation 9: *A working group is established involving staff from across the organisation to propose a set of organisation values and behaviours. Once adopted, these will form a key part of the employer brand and will be used in recruitment, professional development and performance management*

Recommendation 10: *An annual staff survey (with intra year thematic polling) will be undertaken. Results will be published and scrutinised. Any response action will be published and reported back to the organisation*

Recommendation 11: *Bi-annual "Leader and CEO roadshows" will be undertaken, supported by smaller informal sessions with groups of staff. Where staff will have the opportunity to be updated on issues affecting the Council and where they will have the opportunity to interact with senior leaders*

Recommendation 12: *the Council should monitor and publish its staff diversity figures and create opportunities through its recruitment and staff development for people from diverse backgrounds to join and advance within the organisation.*

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1 Financial implications

- 3.1.1 The financial implications arising from the recommendations will be costed and reported as part of the final plan due at the end of May 2022. The costed recommendations will have to be delivered within the Council's approved revenue budget for 2022/23 and taking account of the estimated capitalisation direction and required budget savings for 2023/24 and beyond.

3.2 Legal implications

- 3.2.1 The proposals in this report will form part of a wider recovery plan, which is the subject of a separate report. This will assist the Council to comply with its statutory duties, including its best value duty.

3.3 Risk management implications

- 3.3.1 The risks of not making the necessary improvements to the Council are considerable. A key risk is not being able to recruit and retain staff. This report is making recommendation to address this risk.

3.4 Environmental implications

- 3.4.1 Not applicable

3.5 Equality implications

- 3.5.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- 3.5.2 Recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce that reflects the wider community of Slough will help to meet this duty and ensure that proposals, decisions and service delivery is led and managed by staff with a diverse approach and background. This should help the Council in its decision-making processes.

3.6 Workforce implications

- 3.6.1 There are no direct workforce implications, but the recommendations are intended to improve recruitment and retention of staff and to ensure the workforce reflects Slough's communities.

4. Background Papers

None

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SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO:	Cabinet
DATE:	29 th March 2022
SUBJECT:	Slough: Functional Capability Assessments
PORTFOLIO:	Councillor Swindlehurst, Leader, Forward Strategy & Corporate Resource
CHIEF OFFICER:	Chief Executive
CONTACT OFFICER:	Gavin Jones
WARD(S):	All
KEY DECISION:	NO
EXEMPT:	NO
DECISION SUBJECT TO CALL IN:	YES
APPENDICES:	None

1 Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report focusses on the council's response to the following DLUHC Direction to assess the functional capability of all services by the end of February 2022.
- 1.2 Following the Directions being issued in December 2022 by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, all council service managers undertook an assessment of the functional capability to identify challenges that prevent a consistently good service being delivered.
- 1.3 This process was coordinated by the council's Strategy and Partnerships Team, who guided the process, analysed the responses, and produced this council-wide synthesis of key themes and areas of concern.
- 1.4 The council has started the second phase of this process, which is to write costed action plans that address the key gaps identified in these functional capability assessments. Those action plans will inform the council-wide Recovery Plan and Recovery Tracker, which will be used by the Improvement and Recovery Board and Cabinet to assess progress towards the council's recovery aims.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to:

Approve the analysis and findings included in this report.

Reason: The analysis and findings in this report will inform the development of costed actions plans that will underpin the council's Recovery Plan.

Commissioner Review

"Commissioners will follow the discussion at Cabinet with interest."

2 Report

2.1 This report highlights the key themes and areas of concern that were highlighted through the functional capability assessment process.

2.1.1 Work to address the issues highlighted in this report are already underway, including:

- Work to develop the Council's Recovery Plan
- The financial recovery and renewal programme
- An ICT remedial work programme
- A new contracts and risk management approach
- The formation of a Data Strategy Board
- Proposals to restructure the Place & Community directorate

2.1.2 A set of key themes emerged from these assessments. The themes are:

- Leadership and management
- Staffing levels
- Programme and change management
- Data, insight, and performance management
- Partnerships

2.1.3 Leadership and management

- Directorates have reported issues with fragmented line management arrangements resulting from the fall out of the phase 2 restructure, which are affecting capability
- This has been raised as a particular challenge in the Place & Community Directorate, where only 60% of the management roles created in April 2021 have been recruited to
- There is a lack of clear accountability in some areas, with services adapting to circumstances and improvising line management arrangements to fill gaps, which is leading to confusion for officers outside of these teams, councillors, partners, and others.
- An updated, stable reporting structure will therefore have to be developed as an urgent priority.
- In addition, some Associate Directors and Group Managers hold portfolios that they have little or no prior technical knowledge of, as was noted in the Governance Review of 2021.

2.1.4 Staffing levels

- Some teams are significantly understrength in comparison to their self-identified required capacity, with a particular challenge in several corporate support services – Data & Insight; Communications; Electoral Services; Strategy, Policy, and Partnerships; ICT; Commercial and HR are all missing over 25% of their identified required staff.
- These staff shortages will hinder the council’s ability to deliver an effective recovery plan.
- There are also significant staff shortages in the School Effectiveness, Inclusion (SEND) and Population Health Management (Public Health) teams.
- In total, Corporate Services had 83% of its identified required roles staffed, People (Adults) 94% and People (Children) 85%.
- The Executive Director for Place & Community has identified the need for a comprehensive realignment and restructure of the directorate.
- As well as the gaps in the identified required structures, there are significant amounts of interim staff. For example
 - 31 members of the finance team are interim (45% of the identified required roles), as were 19 of the Revenues & Benefits team (31%).
 - There are only 3 members of the Public Health team who are substantive, with the remaining members all interim. This includes the Service Lead and the whole of the Health Protection team.
- The People (Adults) directorate has also identified the reliance on locums and agency staff as a key capability challenge.
- Slough Children First has also identified gaps in terms of agency and permanent staff and does not have the right structure in place for a sustained service, highlighting challenges in the following departments:
 - Finance and Resources
 - HR and OD
 - Frontline services:
 - Targeted Early Help
 - MASH (Front Door)
 - Assessment
 - Contextual Safeguarding
 - Youth Offending Team
 - Safeguarding and Family Support
 - Children Looked After
 - Children with Disabilities
 - Care Leavers
 - Virtual School
 - Quality Assurance and Safeguarding

2.1.5 Programme and Change Management

- All directorates have reported challenges with the management of change programmes and there is currently an absence of a Programme Management Office, following its removal in the phase 2 restructure.
- Services have identified several major programmes which will require improved capacity in programme and change management to be successfully implemented, including:

- Departmental restructure programmes
- Savings programmes
- Training and development programmes
- A culture change programme
- A staff mentoring programme
- Programme and project management support is required to successfully deliver the ASC transformation programme, with the directorate anticipating it will need to award a contract to the current contractor from March to supply this – delaying potential savings. The directorate also anticipate that programme management capability will be needed to implement the Health and Care Act.
- Slough Children First will have no project management capacity after a DfE funded post leaves in March 2022. The company anticipates two project managers will be required to deliver savings targets – particularly for their commissioning service.

2.1.6 *Data, Insight & Performance Management*

- A thorough Data and Insight user needs assessment was undertaken at the council in summer 2020, and the council self-assessed itself to be below average in the management of data and generation of insight overall and within all domains of the assessment – technology, processes, skills, leadership.
- Data improvement work has been undertaken in the past 18 months, deriving from that assessment. These improvements have demonstrated early benefits.
- At the core of the corporate challenges faced is an absence of a single Data Strategy and associated data governance and joined-up decision-making.
- The problems generated from this incoherent approach to data and insight are then amplified by both legacy issues with ICT systems and software and an imbalanced, and in some service areas under-resourced, staffing approach (and associated activity costs e.g. training, licences). A rebalancing of staffing and additional investment will be required to bring the council’s use of data and insight up to an industry good standard across all services.
- The lack of consistent, accurate and timely data and insight and limited benchmarking data has been identified as a risk for good decision making
- New performance frameworks also need to be developed for Place & Community Directorate, which while collecting a lot of data, needs to better understand how to use it to manage trends.
- SCF have highlighted a need to improve the visualisation of their data through tools such as PowerBI.
- A scoping exercise needs to take place with CLT and Associate Directors. Council-wide data transformation and analytical resource is currently fragmented post-restructure and there are multiple options for how we set up in the future.
- There is currently a capacity of 4.5 FTE roles within the Data and Insight Team - it is anticipated that 4 FTE (or equivalent agency hires/ procurement budgets) additional capacity will required to meet the skills and capabilities gaps identified that are preventing the full implementation of the data improvement plan. This has been modelled in the capitalisation directive business case.

2.1.7 Partnerships

- As part of the assessment, services were asked to identify areas where partnership arrangements needed to be improved, as well as potential areas which might benefit from working in partnership.
- A significant amount of officer time is currently required to support a variety of statutory partnerships – so partnership working is being affected by the workforce issues raised earlier.
- A refresh of strategic partnership arrangements started in October 2021 and changes need to be continually embedded to ensure those arrangements are delivering effectively for the council, for the partners, and for residents and businesses
- Partnership arrangements need to be updated in the Place & Community directorate to reflect the council's recovery priorities.
 - SBC's past funding of Community Sector groups to deliver discretionary services has been significant and has now all but stopped, and there are challenges for supporting these groups to obtain alternative funding and to support / enable volunteers to provide services without significant funding.
- The Executive Director for People (Adults) who is leading on strategic partnerships work has identified the need to reset the council's contribution to the Slough 2040 Vision.
- The Associate Director for Education and Inclusion has warned that partnerships could deteriorate with the local community, including schools, parents and those that access the service because of staffing instability.
- SCF has identified several key partnership challenges, including:
 - Engagement with the police for joint triaging of domestic abuse
 - Developing partnerships with community and voluntary services
 - A lack of capacity to support the Children and Young Peoples Partnership Board
 - A lack of capacity for engaging with community leaders
 - Developing partnerships with schools
 - Ensuring a continuum for safeguarding issues with adult teams

2.2 **Service areas:** In addition to the functional capability assessments highlighting key themes for consideration, the exercise also highlighted specific services that require urgent attention and improvement plans put in place. These areas were known before these assessments were completed as either the DLUHC Directions or regulatory inspections have highlighted concerns. In the case of public health, the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic has been profound and requires attention to consider the right approach to covid recovery.

2.2.1 The service areas highlighted as needing urgent attention are:

- Inclusion (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)
- Information and Communication Technology
- Human Resources/ Organisational Development
- Public Health
- Place and Community (whole directorate)

2.2.2 *Inclusion (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)*

- The SEND service has experienced transient staffing and high leadership turnover over recent years, leading to the service not being able to effectively meet its statutory duties.
- This was highlighted in the joint inspection of the local area of Slough conducted by Ofsted and the CQC, which determined that a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) was required because of significant areas of weakness in the area's practice
- In addition, SBC downgraded the salary of all officers in the team which led to immediate resignations throwing the service into further turmoil.
- The service is therefore under-staffed, although there has been some stabilisation of leadership since November 2020.
- Without further investment and resourcing the team will not be able to improve or meet the requirements of the WSOA. The WSOA will be the basis of any future Ofsted inspection, which is likely within the next 18 months.
- Improvements will be difficult until the team has more stability. Compliance and training are needed.
- The team is being trained on processes, however, implementation of this is being hampered due to inexperienced staff, sickness absence and staff leaving the organisation.
- Once the team is established, improvements can be made through the strategic use of data and the development of a place planning strategy.

2.2.3 *Information and Communication Technology*

- The individual functional capability assessments outline specific challenges with systems affecting services' capability.
- As a summary of the issues:
 - A major programme of remedial work is required.
 - All core systems, reporting solutions and public-facing portals require improvement to some degree.
 - The reliability of our systems infrastructure needs enhancing
- The service has operated in a state of flux for the past two years, due to transitioning back from an externalised transactional services provider, the COVID pandemic and the more recent Section 114 notice.
- A business case has been produced focussing on the need for investment in IT capacity with a particular focus on both investment in permanent staff and training.
- The existing team continues to be significantly reliant on contract / interim staff (at present there are 7 contractors and 15 permanent staff and 11 vacancies)

2.2.4 *Human Resources/ Organisational Development*

- As noted above, there are significant workforce challenges the council needs to address to improve capability across the organisation. The scale of these challenges is significant, and the HR team may need further support to lead strategic people decisions, including improving policies and culture.
- The Our Futures Programme reduced the size of the HR team by approximately 50%.
- The service also "lost" significant organisational memory and knowledge in core functions.

- The service has also identified that it is paying below the market rate for a range of positions, across a range of levels.
- The council has had a long-term issue in attracting people to hard-to-fill job roles and the nature of the location (close to London and with a large industrial estate within Slough) all contributing to extreme difficulties in attracting staff, particularly at the current pay rates.
- The service is reviewing the needs of the whole function to ensure it can be fit to support the organisation to the level of change that the Council will need to deliver soon. The LGA are supporting this review which it is hoped will conclude by the middle of March.
- SCF have also identified crucial HR and OD posts which have hitherto been DfE funded, which may need to be recruited to, to address the workforce and cultural challenges that they have identified.

2.2.5 *Public Health*

- There is a significant reliance on agency/interims as noted previously, with only 3 permanent members of staff. It is one of the smallest teams in the country
- A new structure has been agreed – but will need support to implement this
- Capacity has been impacted by the ongoing pandemic response – moving into business-as-usual mode means additional tasks and functions being delivered on top of existing functions. Management of covid grants is also affecting capacity.
- There are significant health inequalities across the town – and SBC’s approach will need to be reset after pandemic
- Further support is needed for options for East Berks PH offer or place-based PH/population health focus
- There is a limited capacity to deliver major PH core work, the PH offer within the ICS and the health in all policies approach
- The service will also have to manage the impact of the end of interim contacts that were funded through COVID grants
- The tracking of delivery of PH outcomes will be needed across the council

2.2.6 *Place and Community (whole directorate)*

- The director has identified three priority areas for recovery, which will require structural, and process change to the way the directorate is currently set up and run.
 - *Asset Disposals Programme:* The sale of up to £600m of assets is critical to the Councils financial recovery. Everything to do with Council owned buildings needs to be considered as part of our Asset Disposal Programme. Cost-benefit analyses will be undertaken to ensure all cases are considered on their merits and we will look to identify opportunities to reduce operating costs.
 - *Implementing the Local Plan:* Enabling regeneration of the town and determining best consideration for Council owned buildings and land must be informed by the existing Local Plan, its monitoring, and associated Planning Policies. We must provide timely and up to date planning advice to enable the major development projects within the town including British Land / ADIA – Slough High Street (Town Centre) to progress efficiently and deliver viably. The new Local Plan has a draft 24-month programme to submission for examination. Cross council and Member engagement, funding, recruitment for

a permanent Local Plan Lead and additional officers will be needed to make this happen.

- *Housing*: Publication of a new Housing Strategy and realigning / repurposing housing functions is needed

2.3 Directorate summaries - Each directorate has been asked to produce a briefing summary, laying out the challenges for recovery in their directorate, the impact these challenges are having, potential action to improve them and their priorities for the stabilisation phase of the recovery plan.

2.3.1 *Corporate services*

The directorate has a set of five overarching aims that will guide all of its work throughout 2022/23:

1. Act as a leader for the improvement journey that the council needs to undertake. To show drive and energy, to demonstrate transparency and rigour, and to engage widely and positively
2. Undertake emergency remedial work to ensure core processes are delivered in a safe, secure, and accurate way
3. Improve the reliability of services delivered to internal colleagues and to external customers
4. Deliver against the priority improvement needs as set out in this summary paper. These priority improvement needs will embed the platform for the delivery of consistently good services
5. Deliver a discrete set of best practice initiatives to test new approaches and inspire the next phase of change

The problem

- A fragmented resourcing and line management structure following the Our Futures programme
- Inherited inadequate systems and processes across all functions
- Some significant knowledge and skills gaps due to staff leaving or being reassigned
- Undocumented and/or inefficient business processes across functions
- A reliance on contractors to deliver a range of business-as-usual activity
- Some gaps in capability to inform strategic and operational decisions with reliable evidence
- Impact of the restructure on staff's morale and motivation
- Clear direction on the long-term goal
- Clear communication on problems through all levels in the organisation as some service areas remain unaware of the strategic issues
- A view that most roles can be 'generalist' in nature, diluting specialist skills in key areas

The impact

- Time taken up by fixing historical issues as more become known as further review occurs
- Issues and risks that have been uncovered have further knock-on effects to council recovery e.g., the increasing financial gap
- Being unable to deliver critical core processes either in whole or in part
- An inconsistent support offer to council services, partners, and direct to residents and businesses
- Very limited capacity to improve functional delivery
- Frustrated staff and partners, as processes are slow and confusing
- Lack of engagement in change from some staff across all levels
- High staff turnover is high with many critical roles filled by interims and critical processes managed by external parties

Existing solutions underway

- Intervention support aligned to critical needs e.g., ICT, Governance, HR
- Remedial work on finances, procurement, audit, and risk management
- Member engagement work is underway
- An electoral review has been launched and is underway
- A data improvement plan has been launched and underway, with a Data Strategy in development
- Remedial work in ICT has started
- LGA improvement support has started

New approaches planned

- Restructures to some functions within the directorate
- Invest in skills and recruitment to fill critical gaps across the directorate
- A cross-organisational reporting environments improvement project to make better use of data
- Focus on a set of good practice projects in each team to learn from and to demonstrate future improvement potential
- Develop a directorate engagement plan that aligns to the corporate communications and engagement plan

2.3.2 *Finance and Commercial Services*

The problem

The Council has for several years suffered greatly from a lack of:

- understanding of its true financial position
- corporate and financial ownership, drive and leadership of the problem as it understood it
- professional financial standards at all levels
- skilled project management
- development and leadership of the Council's finances and finance team
- financial drive, ambition, positive attitude, ownership etc

The impact

- no (complete and accurate) accounts for 5 years
- no proper management of its budget
- poor financial systems
- effectively no general reserves
- the need for a capitalisation direction that exceeds any in the Country from what is a very small Council
- a very large DSG deficit with no plans to tackle it
- very poor governance of all its companies
- many extremely adverse external reviews
- the scale of the issues is such that embedding all of the better practise will take several years.

Solutions to date

Since May 2021 the Council has:

- implemented new ways of working to expedite the production of more accurate accounts in future and support the audit process
- designed a proper budget process covering 2021/22 and 2022/23
- begun early work on the budget for 2023/24
- begun reviews of its companies
- revised its planned arrangements for internal audit
- set out an approved asset disposal plan and sought partners to assist with this
- reviewed some of its financial systems
- designed a functional structure and process to develop the Finance team
- started reviews of the Dedicated Schools Grant
- identified and is rectifying its insurance budgets and processes
- prepared an initial business plan
- reviewed its PFI scheme
- developed an action plan for revenues and benefits.
- designed various financial management standards:
 - budget monitoring guidance
 - financial modelling standard
 - business case approaches
 - a fees and charges policy
 - expenditure control processes
 - a procurement strategy
 - budget processes and allocations

Future improvements

Our Business Plan sets out the areas for further improvement:

- development of a Comprehensive Training and Development Strategy
- implementing a culture change programme with support through extensive coaching and mentoring
- development of an approach to Succession Planning
- implementing a Departmental Communications Strategy
- embedding plans for continuity and development through a Rotations policy

- growing our own through investing in a broad-based apprenticeship and trainee scheme
- reviewing our productivity

Focus for 2022/23

Several key themes have emerged which feature as a part of this assessment and will continue to be developed in the coming years as the department consolidates and moves forward for the future. At the time of writing, the scale of the financial deficit continues to rise to a level not previously seen by any other local authority. Our key areas for improvement are:

- Developing our people - At the heart of our organisation and its success are the people who work tirelessly to deliver services to our customers and citizens. We intend to reward their dedication and perseverance by investing in them and the development of their skills. We will be offering colleagues better opportunities for training and career planning so they feel supported and encouraged to progress, enabling us to “grow our own” capability and provide rewarding and fulfilling careers for our team.
- Financial team - Fundamental to the change programme is the recruitment of a new team. The department has been working with a transitional structure during the year and will continue to do so during 2022 whilst we prepare to put in the place the new permanent structure by October 2022.
- Financial reporting - In 2022 we will build upon this year’s significant improvement to the timeliness and quality of financial reporting both internally and to other stakeholders, working closely with colleagues in spending departments to provide greater clarity as to what Slough aims to achieve with its spending plans and then monitoring and reporting the progress we make.
- Financial governance and systems - The pace of change and the achievements to date in overhauling the financial governance framework will continue with the work to automate and rationalise our inconsistent and varied manual processes and to help improve financial control. Improving governance and decision making will be a theme for 2022 working to transform risk management across Slough Borough Council.
- Financial management and budget setting – Following concerns about the 2021/22 budget setting process the team has reworked all department revenue budgets in the light of current key assumptions regarding income levels, spending, and demand for services, and, agreed detailed service targets and delivery plans with budget holders. In addition, the team has worked on the capitalisation direction which was submitted to DLUHC in February 2022 and which will determine the future direction of the Council’s finances.
- Improving financial decision making - Introducing a consistent and rigorous business case framework specialist team will provide a robust platform for decision making going forward, improving the governance and stewardship of our finances. The continued review of all our relationships with partners especially our companies will continue at pace.
- Commercial services – the team has been outsourced for a number of years and we need to build a new team in order to give us the capacity and capability to provide a high-class service.

- Internal audit – the service has been outsourced for a number of years and we need to bring this back in-house in order to apply greater control and flexibility about the deployment of resources.
- The finance recovery and renewal action plan in conjunction with this High-Level Functional Capability Assessment and our Departmental Business Plan show how we will continue to move forward innovating the way we work and provide a coherent and forward-looking service to our customers, both within the Council and to our citizens. This on-going transformation is backed by the Cabinet

2.3.3 *Place and Community*

Directorate aims for the stabilisation phase of recovery (2022/23)

The directorate has a set of five overarching aims that will guide it's work throughout 2022/23:

1. Restructure the Directorate to respond to new priorities and much reduced volume of work. Implementation of a clear structure and set of deliverables.
2. Lead the Asset Disposal Programme including the inter-dependent “where we work from strategy” (locality hubs / locality working) and the leasing, licensing and renting of Council Corporate property.
3. Enable the regeneration of the town by others. Withdraw from self-delivery of property development wherever practicable. Drive the production of Planning Policy leading to the production of a new Local Plan to guide and encourage the right development in the right part of the borough by others.
4. Design, consult on and publish a new Housing Strategy together with integrating Housing Teams under one professionally qualified Associate Director and underpinned by the successful implementation of the Northgate Housing Management System.
5. Improve the reliability of services delivered to internal colleagues and to external customers to become consistently good in all that we do

The problem

- There are no RICS qualified Red Book Assessors through which to deliver the Asset Disposal Programme
- There is a target to produce a new Local Plan by the end of 2023 but the directorates' current strategic planning team and corporate engagement capacity are too small to deliver against this timetable.
- Associate Directors and some Group Managers hold portfolios that they have little or no prior technical knowledge of
- The intended April 2021 management structure was only 60% recruited to, but the directorate is unable to return to 2020 structure as significant numbers of staff were made redundant and more have chosen to leave. The Directorate has approximately 100 vacant posts out of approximately 700. Assumed reporting lines are not the actual reporting lines
- Identity lost due to ‘management speak’ in naming teams on 1 April 2021. There was poorly understood labelling (naming) of teams
- The deletion of teams on 1st April 2021 occurred before new ways of working, including self-serve through web / IT system-based processes, were implemented

- There is a high staff churn and high rates of sickness/absence
- There is an over reliance on a few or, in some cases, a single officer
- There are undocumented and/or inefficient business processes across functions
- The remuneration for several permanent technical posts is significantly out of sync with the market rate
- Ineffective business case and governance processes in the past have resulted in poor decision making, substantial risk to the Council and commitments well beyond expectation

The impact

- There is a delay while the directorate builds a team able to drive the Asset Disposal Programme – a key element of our recovery.
- Reliance on the existing Local Plan and associated Planning Policies is cumbersome for officers and developers
- Officers lack sufficient technical knowledge individually and collectively to make strategic and operational decisions
- The directorate is operating a “fluid meanwhile management structure” with managers and officers filling gaps on a “make do with who we have basis” rather than having the right person for the post in the right structure.
- Impact on morale - urgent need to adopt a stable structure and to communicate this.
- The meanwhile structure is invisible to those outside of the teams effected bringing confusion, frustration and mistrust from outside officers, customers and residents
- Officers have been asked to step in to cover gaps as best as they can. Many need high levels of support from external consultants or officers with responsibility in other areas compounding the overall problem. There is a continuous adaptation of “meanwhile structure” with ever decreasing headcount, resilience and corporate knowledge
- Delays in the provision of technical advice are frustrating fellow officers, customers and residents. Change programmes have to be done in sequence rather than by multiple work streams delivered in parallel
- There is poor and delayed delivery of processes either in whole or in part where “staff with the knowledge” have left
- There is a “needs must” reliance on contractors to deliver a range of business-as-usual activity at above market rates
- Projects such as Nova House, Old Library Site residential development, and Cornwall House need to be managed to an effective and expedient exit position placing a considerable drain on resources

Existing solutions underway

- Procurement of independent Property Advisors is underway with the successful applicant to be in place by end of February 2022.
- This Advisor will advise on the Asset Disposal Programme and train, support and mentor existing and new staff until we have an internal team which has sufficient capability and capacity to be self sufficient
- Clarity that Disposals will be delivered under existing adopted policy is providing stability and more flexibility for disposals and major regeneration sites (such as town centre).

- Progress made to conclude one part of new Local Plan process ahead of agreement on next step.
- Fluid adaptation of “meanwhile structure” realigning displaced teams and officers by spreading the load in a reactive way. Sharing problems openly with ADs and GMs to bring a collective response to deal with the main / most pressing problems first
- Support and mentoring of officers communicating where we are, listening to the issues raised and outlining our plans for the future
- Review of James Elliman Homes (SBC Housing Company used for provision of affordable housing) and, in parallel, assistance with the development of a new Housing Strategy by external advisors - Local Partnerships
- Managers are developing new job descriptions for Job Evaluation and in parallel are researching JDs and remuneration rates paid by other local authorities for similar roles to help inform the process. The focus is on packages to offer for posts which are “hard to attract staff to” and “hard to retain staff in”

New approaches planned

- Creating a new AD Property portfolio control everything to do with property.
- Establish proper systems to control and manage the portfolio in a sustainable manner.
- Recruitment of suitable professionals and/or development of redeployed staff with the mentorship of the Advisor
- Refocus the role and authority of the AD Planning, Regulation and Economic Development to provide technical support, strategic direction and operational decision making to drive the production of a new Local Plan
- Ensure Disposals take account of existing framework and emerging UK Environment Act and other obligations to enable viability and suitability for identified sites.
- Restructure (subject to consultation) - realignment, relabelling and restructure of teams with technical teams led and managed by professionally qualified officers. Fit for purpose Job Descriptions and full recruitment to the new Place & Community structure
- Document and follow new operational procedures to bring operational and financial stability
- Consultation on new Housing Strategy leading to its implementation and adoption

2.3.4 *People (Adults)*

Directorate priorities for the stabilisation phase of recovery (2022/23)

- Identifying programme and project management support
- Conducting two restructures - ASC and Public Health – and recruiting to key posts across the directorate - for which HR support will be required.
- Getting the outstanding contracts issues resolved – procurement and legal support
- Improved performance and activity reporting – from performance team
- Improved financial reporting – with net and gross budget/expenditure reporting

The problem

- Capacity impact of ongoing pandemic response – moving into business-as-usual mode means additional tasks and functions being delivered on top of existing functions
- Permanent leadership with relevant qualifications and skills is in place across all of the directorate apart from PH where need to employ permanent consultant
- Reliance of locums and agency staff across most parts of the directorate – recruitment and retention is difficult.
- Lack of any programme and project management – and reliance on external contractor to deliver this for the ASC transformation programme
- Lack of consistent, accurate and timely data and insight and limited benchmarking data is a risk for good decision making and understanding areas of poor performance. Much of this is DIY at the moment
- Financial reports – net and gross budget reporting
- Significant savings programme 22/23 and 23/24 across all parts of the directorate – capacity and capability issues across various parts of the programme. Need for additional external capacity and expert support
- ASC reform is looming – with uncertainty of funding – nationally and locally. Key areas will be:
 - Fair Cost of Care 22/23 and 23/24
 - Charging reforms and implementation of the cap for care – from April 23
 - ASC assurance/inspection – from April 23
- Options for further integration with the NHS at Place and/or across East Berks will require support to deliver
- Health and Care Bill and Integration White paper implications uncertain but will require focus

2.3.5 *Slough Children First/ People Children*

What is going well

- Targeted Early Help decisions are appropriate and well considered
- MASH operating in real time with effective application of thresholds for interventions
- Improved quality of assessments with strong focus on impact of children
- Exploitation Team completing holistic assessments informed by multi-agency mapping, supporting children to remain in the family home and keeping them safer
- Range of services for domestic abuse and a program which is being accredited
- Improved management oversight and more regular supervision providing a better grip, and supporting leaders to have a good understanding of service
- Performance management reporting is well-established and driving improvements
- 78% of children have been on a CP plan for less than 1 year
- All children Looked After 16+ have an allocated PA
- Virtual School has extended its remit to include all children with an allocated social worker with positive impact on children re-engaging in education
- Staff morale is high, there has been increase in permanent staff and good pipeline of AYSE
- Practice improvement mentors have supported staff to ensure more consistent practice

- Focus on sufficiency of emergency placements, short breaks and local provision
- The impact of clinicians' work on individual children
- Good Ofsted outcome for IFA and Respite unit

Areas of focus for further improvement

- Focus on quality to ensure consistent effective child centred interventions
- Review of Early Help Target Operating model and alignment of edge of care services
- Implementation of an effective edge of care strategy
- Review our CIN interventions to ensure they are timely and evidence informed
- Strengthen our approach to hear the voice of the child in our recording
- Further develop our participation strategy to include CIN, those subject to CP plans and families' wider networks
- Further embed our quality assurance framework to ensure we close the loop and involve front line practitioners and managers more effectively
- Embed our organisational development strategy to assist in the attraction, recruitment, development, and retention of experienced quality staff
- Develop local sufficiency of placements for 16+
- Improve SEND our provision
- Review our exploitation strategy to ensure we maximise the impact on children across the whole child's journey

Directorate priorities for the stabilisation phase of recovery (2022/23)

- Filling key posts in the following priority order:
 - Social workers, particularly in Safeguarding and Family Support
 - Posts to deliver the savings programme - 2 x project managers; 1 x HR advisor; 0.5 FTE finance business partner; 0.2 Comms officer
 - Placement Officers
 - Permanent Team Managers
 - Business Support across operational teams
 - Communications Officer
 - Capacity to support the strategic partnership work incl. Children and Young People's Partnership Board.
- Development and implementation of a multi-agency strategy for Early Help with partners which will reduce the demand for statutory services.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1 Financial implications

- 3.1.1 The financial implications arising from the functional capability assessments will be costed and reported with the final plan due at the end of May 2022. The costed plans will have to be delivered within the Council's approved revenue budget for 2022/23 and taking account of the estimated capitalisation direction and required budget savings for 2023/24 and beyond.

3.2 Legal implications

- 3.2.1 The Council has a duty under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 3.2.2 On 1 December 2021, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities made a direction that the Council had failed to comply with the requirements of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999, following the receipt of two commissioned reports. Commissioners were appointed to support, report on and where prescribed exercise functions of the Council. The Council was directed to take a number of actions, which include undertaking an assessment of the functional capability of all service areas identifying the gaps in capacity and capability within 3 months of the date of the Direction. The Council should also prepare and agree action plan to the satisfaction of the Commissioners within 6 months of the date of the Direction. This report provides Cabinet with the findings of the functions capability assessments.

3.3 Risk management implications

- 3.3.1 A thorough and accurate assessment of services' capacity and capability is required to properly implement the Directions of the Secretary of State, and to provide an evidence base for the council's Recovery Plan.
- 3.3.2 Services are now producing action plans to address the capacity and capability gaps that have been identified in these assessments. There is considerable risk to the Council if these capacity and capability gaps are not addressed as the Council will be unable to effectively deliver its statutory functions. As part of the wider recovery plans, the Council will be reviewing its corporate and directorate risk registers to ensure these risks are adequately reported, monitored and mitigated against.

3.4 Environmental implications

- 3.4.1 Not applicable

3.5 Equality implications

- 3.5.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3.5.2 Addressing the gaps in capacity and capability identified in these assessments will be vital for ensuring the council can effectively meet its statutory duties and discharge its equality duties.

3.6 Procurement implications

3.6.1 Not applicable

3.7 Workforce implications

3.7.1 The report highlights several workforce challenges that have been identified through these assessments – which are summarised in sections 2.1.3-4.

3.8 Property implications

3.8.1 Not applicable.

4. Background Papers

None

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO:	Cabinet
DATE:	29 March 2022
SUBJECT:	Initial ICT Improvement Programme
PORTFOLIO:	James Swindlehurst, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Forward Strategy & Corporate Resources
CHIEF OFFICER:	Steven Mair: Director of Finance (s151 Officer)
CONTACT OFFICER:	Vijay McGuire: AD Business Services
WARD(S):	All
KEY DECISION:	Yes
EXEMPT:	No, except appendices 6 and 7, exempt under paragraph 3, Schedule 12A of the LG Act 1972
DECISION SUBJECT TO CALL IN:	Yes

Appendix 1 – ICT Improvement Plan
 Appendix 2 – ICT Modernisation Programme – Spending Breakdown
 Appendix 3 – Digital Team Developments
 Appendix 4 – Major ICT projects
 Appendix 5 – Licensing & Contracts

Part 2

Appendix 6 – Cyber Security & Resilience Activities
 Appendix 7 – DLUHC Cyber Treatment Plan

1. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 This report updates Members on the current programme of work which is in development to:
- start to stabilise and modernise the Council’s ICT to begin to mitigate existing risks and
 - improve ICT capabilities to then enable it to realise future benefits in terms of cost savings and service delivery improvements.
- 1.2 This work will be continually developed and as such this report represents the first phase of a much longer term analysis, assessment, and improvement plan for ICT. Recovering from this situation will be a long term programme and is subject to a continuous review of the current assessment of the position of the service
- 1.3 The report also addresses one of the recommendations from the Department of

Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) which requires an action plan to achieve improvements in relation to the proper functioning of the Authority's IT

2. Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to:

- note the initial assessment of the issues with the service set out in the Reasons for Recommendations
- note that these will be continuously worked on from now going forward
- approve the expenditure set out in Appendix 2 and contained within the Council's recently approved budgets
- note the work being undertaken by the digital team and the projects outlined in appendices 3 and 4 and that a delivery update will be brought back when the work has been fully assessed
- note that the Director of Finance will be approving the licences and contracts set out in appendix 5 and taking forward actions to avoid this reoccurring for these contracts in the future
- note that work continues to identify any other such matters
- note the outcome of the DLUHC cyber security assessment and the work being undertaken, appendices 6 and 7
- delegate authority to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Leader, to appoint ICT officers on an interim basis and to commence procurement for an ICT partner (s)
- agree that a report is presented to Cabinet with an updated plan for future phases in quarter 3 2022/23

Reasons for Recommendations:

The Council faces a number of long standing and more recent issues with its ICT service, these include the below:

- old systems & infrastructure which are not robust, resilient and do not provide a foundation to deliver improvements
- old products which are out of vendor support and/or no longer supported
- a service heavily dependent on interim staff and urgently in need of a restructure
- historic under investment in ICT
- a digital function which while making changes to the service offered has a large number of further improvements to bring about
- a series of projects which are dependent on resource which is heavily temporary, and which have not been reported to CLT/Members on a regular basis
- a number of licences and contracts which have come to contract renewal on the 1st April 2022 without proper preparation to renew the contracts and which will have to be approved by the Chief Officer
- the need to protect the Council against potential cyber attacks
- unsuccessful experience of outsourcing
- the changing nature of work i.e. much reduced full time office environment
- peer reviews by both the LGA & the DLUHC have confirmed risks relating to cyber resilience

Commissioner Review

“The improvement of IT is an essential component of the Council's recovery plan required as part of the Directions regime. Progress on its delivery and implementation will be monitored as part of the Council's reporting to the Improvement and Recovery Board.”

3. Report

Introduction

- 3.1. The report begins a long overdue process of addressing the many issues noted above in the Reasons for the Recommendations
- 3.2. It also starts to address one of the requirements of the Secretary of State's directions issued on 1st December 2021 to produce an action plan to achieve improvements in relation to the proper functioning of the Authority's ICT. This will feed into the Council's wider improvement and recovery plans

Options considered

i. Do Nothing

This is not a viable option. There are significant risks with the current ICT systems and infrastructure. Without investment in an alternative approach, the Council will not be able to deliver the improvement and recovery works necessary to respond to the Secretary of State's direction, nor will it be able to improve services to residents and businesses and increase value for money.

ii. Outsource ICT services

Whilst bringing in an external partner can ensure specialist skills, in the past this has not worked well, partly due to the lack of an intelligent client function and robust contract management. The Council needs to have an adequate level of control over its critical ICT systems and for that reason it is recommended that a more hybrid model is considered.

iii. Build an in-house team to deliver the improvements

The current market for ICT specialist is challenging and the Council needs to act at pace to secure significant improvements and reduce risk. There is insufficient time to build up the skills solely in an in-house team.

iv. Hybrid approach to in-house capacity and securing an ICT partner

This option provides the ability to bring in interim resource and build up a high performing in-house team, whilst also utilising the market by commissioning a specialist partner (or partners) where required. This approach will allow the Council to determine what elements of the architecture can be modernised using acceleration and cloud technology and combine these with off-the-shelf solutions that meet the remaining gaps, creating an orchestration layer to link these elements together. An interim partner may also be procured to act as an interim intelligent client

Background

- 3.3. To understand the context for the stabilisation and modernisation work programme that this report begins to address the reasons for the recommendations shown above have summarised the issues the Council ICT service faces
- 3.4. The urgent critical risk from the above situation is for a significant failure of business operations leading to an inability to deliver services. Amongst the specific risks are loss of data and a failure to execute in a disaster recovery scenario. A second longer term key risk is that the current state does not provide a platform for modernising ICT to better support business operations.
- 3.5. The Governance Review of the Council for DLUHC by Jim Taylor in September 2021 recommended that there needed to be a focus of support to the Council, particularly in corporate functions that included ICT. An action plan for ICT was also one of the seven actions in the Secretary of State's Directions.
- 3.6. The development of the infrastructure modernisation programme (See Appendix 1), presented within this report has undergone a series of validations to ensure that the approach and the investment required is proportionate to manage the severity of the risk to secure an efficient, modern, and stable infrastructure for the organisation.

These validations are:

- ICT Health Check (October 2020)
An independent ICT Health Check conducted by an accredited and qualified ICT Consultancy called Rainmaker was carried out on our infrastructure in the spring of 2020 which concluded that the Council had ageing infrastructure which essentially would lead to limited availability of vendor support to maintain the physical infrastructure. They further highlighted the heightened risks of system outages and failures.

Progress on these identified areas has been limited due to a number of factors. Resource skill availability, capacity and the ICT service response to the covid pandemic and the shift to remote working for all staff while also prioritising the transformation work programme. The ICT restructure from Our Futures programme, which was launched and then subsequently withdrawn as not 'fit for purpose' had an adverse impact as key posts and responsibilities for areas were not put in place.

- LGA Peer Review (December 2021)
With the direct support of the LGA, a modernisation business case and the 2019 ICT & Digital strategy was externally reviewed by an independent ICT expert in December 2021. The business case was broadly supported both in terms of the design proposals for a revised ICT restructure but also the approach to implement the modernisation programme of the SBC infrastructure. The report made specific reference to the technology direction being coherent and the level of proposed investment being appropriate. The report further stated that the Council could be confident in the basis on which the business case detailing the programme of modernisation had been produced.

- LGA Cyber funding (January 2022)
Following on from the LGA peer review of the Council's Modernisation business case, funding of £17k was made available to the ICT service to focus specifically on developing the councils response to cyber resilience.
- DLUHC & National Cyber Security Centre Review and Funding (January 2022)
In December 2021, the Council responded to the DLUHC local digital team. This set out to understand what mitigation Councils have in place to reduce cyber risk and the impact of malware and ransomware attack – Cabinet is asked to note that an award of £200k was made to the authority in Feb 2022 to support Cyber specific remedial work. (See Appendices 7 & 8)

Improvement Plan

- 3.7. This report sets out a significant three-year work programme to secure and stabilise the current operating environment, to start to mitigate the key risks and to provide a resilient platform for the modernisation and development of an ICT landscape that will then in the future support and deliver the opportunity for business operational improvements through cost savings in ICT and business operations and improved service delivery. It is possible the estimated costs will need to increase, if so this will be reported in the future
- 3.8. The first step is stabilisation and the need to focus and deliver on this challenge is such that the longer-term modernisation questions will need to be returned to in a subsequent phase.
- 3.9. Multiple reviews and reports have been undertaken both internally and externally and recommendations have been provided. These reviews have confirmed these risk factors. The priorities are:
- Tactical:** ICT needs to quickly update, replace, or remove systems and services which pose an immediate security or reliability risk to the day-to-day operation of the Council
 - Resource:** ICT is significantly stretched, as many areas are, and as such needs to maximise available time for the staff it has. ICT needs to not only deliver tactical improvements but build a foundation which means a more flexible and effective Council can operate utilising technology.
 - Strategic:** The Council needs to adopt and develop new ways of working and make technology work better and smarter to help provide services to the residents of Slough. However, ICT cannot implement strategic solutions until the foundations are stable, safe, and secure.

Appendix 1 contains a high level summary Improvement Plan setting out an approach to modernisation and improvement.

- 3.10. The critical first step is stabilising the ICT infrastructure as the current situation exposes the Council to major risks and needs to be tackled with some urgency. This reflects the first element above and is split into two stages. The infrastructure improvements are set out in Appendix 2 identified by cost and financial year. In respect of application modernisation, the following are key components of further detailed work that will be undertaken as a matter of urgency:

- i. List of Line of Business (LOB) Applications with details on each, as per a service catalogue
For each application:
- ii. Vendor Licensing costs and implications related to new infrastructure proposed
- iii. LOB Version upgrade path, or replacement if it is obsolete and cannot be migrated
- iv. Data migration plan
- v. Security considerations of the above
- vi. Support models

3.11. On timing for the first two phases, a high-level indicative timeline for the first two phases can be seen below.

SBC High level stabilisation and modernisation time line									
	2022/23								2023/24
	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	etc	
Phase 1									
Determine solutions for modernised Infrastructure elements	█								
Procure solutions		█			█	█	█		
Build infrastructure			█	█	█	█	█	█	
Roll out new infrastructure			█	█	█	█	█	█	
Phase 2									
Detailed analysis of application portfolio			█	█	█	█	█		
Determine future state options			█	█	█	█	█	█	
Develop migration plans				█	█	█	█	█	
Carry out migrations					█	█	█	█	
Modernisation (Phases 3-5)									█

3.12. Beyond these first two phases but where possible running in parallel the vision for this program is that it should not only be secure, modern, and cost effective, but also that it is innovative, to ensure sustainability, longevity and meets the needs of an increasingly digital citizen profile. The aim is that the role of ICT shifts from being a cost to becoming an enabling tool for operational and financial improvements, with a modern and flexible infrastructure, a customer centric design and optimised processes and governance. This will be the subject of a future report.

Programme Delivery Approach – Interim appointments, procurement of partner

3.13. In terms of implementation of all elements of the immediate work and the ongoing digital developments and existing projects a partnership approach as set out paragraph 3.2 above will be adopted, leveraging the skills and expertise of:

- i. an Interim Chief Digital and Information Officer (CDIO)
- ii. the ICT Team
- iii. a technical PMO
- iv. cloud adoption partner / Software engineer partner
- v. experienced Interims

- 3.14. The existing team is very heavily committed in managing day to day ICT operations and have limited time to consider a strategic path forward. Given the scale of work that is needed to drive the ICT improvement plan, with no strategic technical role to oversee the delivery, approval has been sought and action taken to move to urgent recruitment to an interim Chief Digital and Information Officer post. This post will be in place for an initial period of six months to strategically drive the ICT improvement programme and provide technical knowledge and expertise to mentor and support the 'acting up' GM role.
- 3.15. The current ICT structure does not allow for a 'fit for purpose' service to be provided to the wider organisation or the Children's company either on an as is basis or for future proofing the Improvement programme referred to throughout this report.
- 3.16. A new permanent structure for the ICT service, including the digital function will need to be implemented to provide resilience, bridge technical gaps, eradicate single points of failure as well as reduce the over reliance on temporary resources – fostering a culture of development, growth, and investment in the service. Further detail will be provided in a future report to Cabinet.
- 3.17. Migration, modernisation, and major ICT projects can be complex, time consuming and costly. Therefore, appropriate preparation, planning and delivery approaches (such as partnerships with appropriate experts to complement the in-house teams knowledge) and built on a phased approach is required.
- 3.18. A Programme Delivery Board will be established to oversee the programme that will provide regular updates on progress to the Lead Member. Regular updates will also be provided to the Improvement and Recovery Board
- 3.19. Appendix 3 and 4 detail the digital work and the corporate ICT projects that are either currently in progress or known about that will require significant ICT effort to support / complete and which will be reviewed.

Licensing and contract management

- 3.20. A number of business applications, integral to the operation of the Council have reached the end of their contracts. Replacing this software requires a long lead in time and individual implementation projects. The ICT team have been under significant pressure to keep applications running under the current infrastructure and it has not been possible to undertake reviews required and tender processes. This has recently started to be addressed and will not recur. As all renewals were under £180,000 and have only been renewed for one year, decisions were made by the Executive Director of Corporate Services under delegated authority. Details are provided in Appendix 5. A further report will be brought to members seeking approval for the procurement process to renew these from 2023.

Cyber

- 3.21 A current assessment and work in progress is reported in Appendices 6 and 7.

4 Implications of the Recommendations

4.1 Financial implications

4.1.1 The £4.618m cost of phase 1 of the programme of work to stabilise and modernise the Councils ICT are set out in detail in Appendix 2. The costs have been included in the Capitalisation Direction.

4.1.2 Total spend on the programme, including that spent in 2021/22 is set out below.

2021/22		2022/23		2023/24		Total	
Revenue (£000s)	Capital (£000s)	Revenue (£000s)	Capital (£000s)	Revenue (£000s)	Capital (£000s)	Revenue (£000s)	Capital (£000s)
201	50	2,537	1,480	150	200	2,888	1,730
251		4,017		350		4,618	

4.1.3 The Capital spend of £1.680m for 2022/23 and 2023/24 is included in the capital programme and the one-off revenue costs of £2.687m is included in the revenue budgets for the same period. Any additional costs will be the subject of a further report.

4.1.4 Cost of current staffing who will support the management of the programme are covered by the current ICT budget.

4.2 Legal implications

4.2.1 Legal implications will be addressed as part of the individual business cases / procurement to support the three-year remedial and modernisation programme.

4.3 Risk management implications

4.3.1 *Delivery*

A purely contractor led approach carries delivery risks:

- i. The Council would have a very limited leverage over work product delivery, quality, and costs
- ii. The Council would find it difficult to secure end to end responsibility for the project outcomes with 'independent' contractors
- iii. There is unlikely to be any skills transfer to staff from contractors
- iv. Handover from the project to BAU operation is likely to be difficult.

The use of a software development partner will therefore be explored to mitigate these risks as well as upskilling the in-house team.

4.3.2 *Supply Chain*: There is a potential risk to procurement of technology components to support the modernisation. There has been since Covid a significant shortfall in global silicon chip and microprocessor production. This has led to significant constraints in

manufacturing and delivery of all technology devices from memory chips to servers and has even affected car production. Therefore, it is imperative that once the funding is approved orders are raised on selected suppliers as soon as is practically possible.

4.3.3 *Governance*: There is a risk to delivery if the programme is not under enough control and governance. At present there is limited governance in ICT. So, to ensure the effective and successful delivery of the programme there will be a need to establish the project and programmes governance framework. This will ensure rigour and controls are applied for the scale and size of the programme both from a financial and technical perspective. A new technical project governance approach will be implemented to support this initiative as well as all ICT projects. This will specifically include:

- technical PMO support which will ensure the work is fully planned, implemented and progress tracked
- full partner engagement when appointed to provide further technical expertise
- all activities will be fully costed
- regular reports to CLT/Cabinet starting in quarter 3 2022/23

4.4 Environmental implications

4.4.1 The work being undertaken will allow the Council to continue to function, thus help address its environmental aspirations and will also support hybrid working which will reduce day to day travel for staff and therefore improve the environment.

4.5 Equality implications

4.5.1 The Council has duties under the Equality Act 2010 and will ensure it properly assesses the equality implications of each programmed activity of the improvement plan. Having better ICT functionality and systems will enable the Council to collect and analyse data, which will support its understanding of impact on particular protected groups. Failure to ensure effective ICT systems, including failure to prevent a cyber-attack or having in place effective disaster recovery system, places a significant risk on services, which will particularly impact on those groups who have a need for such services, including vulnerable children and young people, older persons, persons with disabilities and groups on low incomes applying for financial or other support. Modern ICT will also enable staff and residents including those with protected characteristics to better access Council services.

4.6 Procurement implications

4.6.1 In some cases, the solution will be to utilise the products already available such as using more of the Microsoft products and designing and implementing that solution with no additional cost for products.

4.6.2 Work has already commenced on determining the best routes to market for each of the programme deliverables in collaboration with procurement. The options identified include:

- Use existing contracts with incumbent suppliers where contracts permit
- Take multiple quotes from suppliers when the value permits
- Use frameworks or G-Cloud to procure services or solutions.

4.7 Workforce implications

4.7.1 Implications relating to the proposed restructuring will be brought to Cabinet under a separate report.

4.8 Property implications

4.8.1 Any implications arising from the remedial and modernisation programme will be addressed under the associated business cases for each milestone of activity.

Background Papers

None.

ICT Improvement Plan

The below programme of works seeks to remediate the legacy position of the IT estate through stabilisation and modernisation. This improvement plan highlights the key activities required.

ICT Modernisation Programme				
<u>Service Objective:</u>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable the Council to make effective use of the ICT systems and achievements service objectives through the stabilisation and modernisation of the IT infrastructure • Ensure best value of money for service delivery • Improved experience to staff 				
Improvement Objective	Activity/Actions	Supporting Information	Progress to Date	Responsible Officer
Full restructure of ICT service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of design structure • Consultation document • Job descriptions • FAQ's • HR/Finance engagement • Job evaluation • Union engagement • Key stakeholder engagement • Appropriate sign offs for permission to proceed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build resilience • Build capacity • Build capability • Bridge technical knowledge gaps • Eradicate single points of failure • Reduce reliance on interims • "Grow you own" ICT service provision 	Draft design structure developed Draft consultation document Draft job descriptions Draft FAQ's Dates to be agreed with HR/Finance, indicative dates for launch summer 2022.	AD-VM

<p>Slough staff have access to fit for purpose devices that enable them to work in a fast and efficient collaborative way that enables them to perform their job and serve our residents.</p>	<p>Implementing “Autopilot” build and cloud management to efficiently deploying mobile devices</p>	<p>Resources: ICT staff, 3rd parties, modernisation funding. Outputs: Auto configured and managed device. Outcomes: Faster, standardise & secure device deployment Risks: 3rd parties unable to meet council aspirations/expectations. Project slippage has knock on effect for other service enhancements. Internal resources over stretched leading to inability to fully engage with project requirements and objectives. Internal skills not sufficient to progress the development leading to increased reliance on 3rd parties. Costs escalate as a direct result of any of the above.</p>	<p>Engagement with 3rd party supplier underway to begin testing of Autopilot configuration with IT engineers Expected to be completed by April/May 2022.</p>	<p>GM – AC PM – AR</p>
<p>Slough staff have access to fit for purpose devices that enable them to work in a fast and efficient collaborative way that enables them to perform their job and serve our residents.</p>	<p>Replacing the Council’s mobile device management (MDM) solution</p>	<p>Resources: ICT staff, Departmental staff. 3rd parties, modernisation funding. Outputs: New MDM solution Outcomes: Improve experience for staff Risks: Project slippage has knock on effect for other service enhancements. Internal resources over stretched leading to inability to fully engage with project requirements and objectives. Internal skills not sufficient to progress the development leading to increased reliance on 3rd parties. Costs escalate as a direct result of any of the above.</p>	<p>Scope discovery and market testing with inform milestones for delivery</p>	<p>GM – AC PM – PK</p>

<p>Slough staff can work and be productive from the office and any mobile location, their experience should be seamless wherever they work and be fast and efficient.</p>	<p>Commissioning a new wide area network enabling faster access to the cloud-based services from Council buildings</p>	<p>Resources: ICT staff, Procurement staff. 3rd parties, modernisation funding. Outputs: Faster and improved access to network from Council buildings Outcomes: Improve experience for staff Risks: 3rd parties unable to meet council aspirations/expectations. Project slippage has knock on effect for other service enhancements. Internal resources over stretched leading to inability to fully engage with project requirements and objectives. Internal skills not sufficient to progress the development leading to increased reliance on 3rd parties. Costs escalate as a direct result of any of the above.</p>	<p>Statement of requirements currently been produced in conjunction with Procurement.</p> <p>Scope discovery and market testing with inform milestones for delivery</p>	<p>GM – AC PM – AR</p>
<p>Slough staff can work and be productive from the office and any mobile location, their experience should be seamless wherever they work and be fast and efficient.</p>	<p>Replacing and standardising the remote access service for Staff</p>	<p>Resources: ICT staff, Procurement staff, 3rd parties, modernisation funding. Outputs: One fit for purpose, secure remote access service Outcomes: Improve experience for staff Risks: 3rd parties unable to meet council aspirations/expectations. Project slippage has knock on effect for other service enhancements. Internal resources over stretched leading to inability to fully engage with project requirements and objectives. Internal skills not sufficient to progress the development leading to increased reliance on 3rd parties. Costs escalate as a direct result of any of the above.</p>	<p>As a temporary solution to improve to current service, a change is being reviewed regarding the existing VPN configuration.</p> <p>Discovery work on a new solution is running in parallel and is currently underway and will inform milestones for delivery</p>	<p>GM – AC PM – PK</p>

<p>Collaboration tools and data storage will be cloud based (where appropriate) to enable access to data and tools to support business functions.</p>	<p>Replacing end of life disk storage systems</p>	<p>Resources: ICT staff, 3rd parties, modernisation funding. Outputs: New storage systems in place Outcomes: Continued access to data and tools to support business functions Risks: 3rd parties unable to meet council aspirations/expectations. Project slippage has knock on effect for other service enhancements. Internal resources over stretched leading to inability to fully engage with project requirements and objectives. Internal skills not sufficient to progress the development leading to increased reliance on 3rd parties. Costs escalate as a direct result of any of the above.</p>	<p>Quotes for new hardware have been received with procurement intended to be completed in March 2022. Installation will be prior to the end of the current maintenance contract (Jun 22)</p>	<p>GM – AC PM – AR</p>
<p>IT systems and services will be migrated to appropriate platforms, they will be rationalised across the organisation, support modern collaborative ways of working, support business transformation and be a firm foundation for digitisation of business processes.</p>	<p>Migrating business applications to appropriate platform</p>	<p>Resources: ICT staff, departmental staff, Procurement staff. 3rd parties, modernisation funding, existing revenue budgets. Outputs: Cloud based business applications Outcomes: Business transformation Risks: 3rd parties unable to meet council aspirations/expectations. Project slippage has knock on effect for other service enhancements. Internal resources over stretched leading to inability to fully engage with project requirements and objectives. Internal skills not sufficient to progress the development leading to increased</p>	<p>Applications including Modern.Gov (Committee Management System) and APAS (Planning & Building Control System) have planned migrations in March. Full application audit underway to identify further cloud migrations and upgrade paths. Scope discovery and market testing with inform milestones for delivery</p>	<p>GM – AC PM – AK</p>

		reliance on 3rd parties Costs escalate as a direct result of any of the above		
IT systems and services will be migrated to appropriate platforms, they will be rationalised across the organisation, support modern collaborative ways of working, support business transformation and be a firm foundation for digitisation of business processes.	Implementing a full IT Service Management (ITSM) function	<p>Resources: ICT staff, Procurement staff 3rd parties, modernisation funding.</p> <p>Outputs: Fully implement ITSM function</p> <p>Outcomes: Improve IT service delivery to staff</p> <p>Risks: Project slippage has knock on effect for other service enhancements. Internal resources over stretched leading to inability to fully engage with project requirements and objectives. Internal skills not sufficient to progress the development leading to increased reliance on 3rd parties. Costs escalate as a direct result of any of the above.</p>	Scope discovery and market testing with inform milestones for delivery	GM – AC PM – AK
IT systems and services will be migrated to appropriate platforms, they will be rationalised across the organisation, support modern collaborative ways of working, support business transformation and be a firm foundation for digitisation of business processes.	Commissioning a new corporate and contact centre telephony solution	<p>Resources: ICT staff, Procurement staff 3rd parties, modernisation funding.</p> <p>Outputs: New corporate and contact telephony solution.</p> <p>Outcomes: Business transformation</p> <p>Risks: 3rd parties unable to meet council aspirations/expectations. Project slippage has knock on effect for other service enhancements. Internal resources over stretched leading to inability to fully engage with project requirements and objectives. Internal skills not sufficient to progress the development leading to increased reliance on 3rd parties. Costs escalate as a direct result of any of the above.</p>	Statement of requirements currently been produced in conjunction with Procurement. Scope discovery and market testing with inform milestones for delivery	GM – AC PM – AR

<p>Sloughs infrastructure will be efficient, scalable, and secure, ensuring council systems and data are available and protected.</p>	<p>Replacing the Council's dated backup solution</p>	<p>Resources: ICT staff, Procurement staff 3rd parties, modernisation funding. Outputs: New backup solution in place Outcomes: Council systems and data are available and protected Risks: 3rd parties unable to meet council aspirations/expectations. Project slippage has knock on effect for other service enhancements. Internal resources over stretched leading to inability to fully engage with project requirements and objectives. Internal skills not sufficient to progress the development leading to increased reliance on 3rd parties. Costs escalate as a direct result of any of the above.</p>	<p>A health check review of the existing backup system has been scheduled for the 1st, 7th & 8th April. This will be undertaken by our 3rd party support partner who will produce a health report and remediation recommendations for the backup service.</p>	<p>GM – AC PM – PK</p>
<p>Sloughs infrastructure will be efficient, scalable, and secure, ensuring council systems and data are available and protected.</p>	<p>Replacing aged infrastructure</p>	<p>Resources: ICT staff, Procurement staff 3rd parties, modernisation & DLUHC funding. Outputs: Cyber reporting in place Outcomes: Council systems and data are available and protected Risks: 3rd parties unable to meet council aspirations/expectations. Project slippage has knock on effect for other service enhancements. Internal resources over stretched leading to inability to fully engage with project requirements and objectives. Internal skills not sufficient to progress the development leading to increased reliance on 3rd parties. Costs escalate as a direct result of any of the above.</p>	<p>Scoping of the council's critical applications has commenced. This is a significant programme of work which will roll into 22/23</p>	<p>GM – AC PM – AK</p>

Robust policies, procedures and governance is in place for the IT estate	Responding to all audit actions	<p>Resources: ICT staff, existing revenue budgets</p> <p>Outputs: Audit actions completed</p> <p>Outcomes: Robust policies, procedures and governance is in place for the IT estate</p> <p>Risks: Existing budgets may not be able to fully support the action requirements. ICT or user resources may not be available when they are required</p>	Ongoing completion of audit actions liaising with RSM	GM – AC
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DLUHC – Cyber Treatment Plan				
Service Objective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address identified issues in the DLUHC Cyber Treatment Plan. Improve the councils cyber resilience 				
Improvement Objective	Activity/Actions	Supporting Information	Progress to Date	Responsible Officer
Sloughs infrastructure will be efficient, scalable, and secure, ensuring council systems and data are available and protected.	All actions as identified in the cyber treatment plan Part II papers.	<p>Resources: ICT staff, existing revenue budgets</p> <p>Outputs: DLUHC Cyber treatment plan completed</p> <p>Outcomes: Sloughs infrastructure will be efficient, scalable, and secure, ensuring council systems and data are available and protected.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding received Kick off meeting with Local Digital team at DLUHC 	GM – AC

		Risks: Existing budgets may not be able to fully support the action requirements. ICT or user resources may not be available when they are required		
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ICT Modernisation Programme: Financial Breakdown

High Level Plan

Activity	21/22		22/23		23/24	
	One off Revenue (000s)	One Off Capital (000s)	One off Revenue (000s)	One Off Capital (000s)	One off Revenue (000s)	One Off Capital (000s)
Migrating business applications appropriate platforms	94		386		150	
Replacing aged infrastructure (Server & Network)		28		822		200
Commissioning a new Wide Area Network			125			
Replace end of life disk storage systems		11		139		
Implementing Autopilot laptop build		11		39		
Replacing & standardising remote access service				170		
Replacing the Council's dated backup solution			75			
Replacing Mobile device management solution			80			
Commissioning new corporate and contact centre telephony solution			350			
Implementing a full ITSM function				100		
IT Resources to deliver modernisation	107		1,446			

Activity in Confidential Appendix 3			75	210		
	201	50	2,537	1,480	150	200
Total Yearly Funding	251		4,017		350	
Total Funding Requested	4,618					

2021/22 Breakdown

#	Reason	One off Revenue £000	One off Capital £000	Total 21/22 Cost (000's)
1	To upgrade, replace or consolidate or decommission c240 aged servers which support SBC applications and services		28	28
2	To migrate several key lines of business applications from being hosted at SBC datacentre to the application providers cloud bringing resilience and security.	94		94
3	To replace 3 old and end of life disk storage units which hold all the SBC data. In the result of a system or hardware failure it is unlikely they could be recovered, and the data could be lost.		11	11
4	To implement a standardised autopilot laptop build mechanism to improve speed of delivery, quality and security to laptop devices.		11	11

5	To establish the modernisation programme and have resources working on it this financial year.	107		107
	Total	201	50	251

1. There are approximately 240 servers, of the Council's 400 servers, which need urgent replacement, upgrade or a move to a cloud solution. Some of these are running operating systems over 18 years old. This gives rise to reliability and support issues. Resources recruited and assigned to this work programme and scoping of the council's critical applications has commenced.. This is a significant programme of work which will roll into 22/23 and will on completion provide the council with a supported platform to run council services.
2. Business applications that can be hosted by the software provider in their own secure resilient cloud are in the process of being reviewed and identified. This will give some cost benefit but will more importantly mean that they can be managed, updated and monitored by the supplier of the service . These will then be robustly performance managed through the contract management controls. Cloud migration reduces the organisation's risk and need to keep servers and provide system support. SBC would only need to provide the existing application support it already does and ICT resources would be more available to manage other systems. Applications including Modern.Gov (Committee Management System) and APAS (Planning & Building Control System) have already been migrated to the Cloud with further applications being scoped
3. The Council has application and user data stored on storage units which are all coming to, or are already, end of life both in their age and in support from their respective manufactures. IT are working with third party suppliers to replace the existing disk storage units and migrate the council's data and services onto these units. This will ensure the council's data and systems are stored on a supported platform and has the necessary performance and capacity to meet the current and future demand. Quotes have been received and it is intended the procurement will be completed in March 2022 with installation prior to the end of the current maintenance contract in June 2022.
4. The Council has moved to a deploying number of laptops for staff rather than the previously used desktop based ('thin') client devices. This has created a significant demand to install and configure laptops to a consistent standard. To address the council has identified a partner who is assisting with the setup of a solution that provides a standard laptop configuration and management service. This will benefit the council by automating a currently manual process and the reliance on interim staff to build and deploy laptops. This will enable the service to be more responsive to the needs of the council and will allow a more effective deployment of devices. Consultancy to support testing and configuration has been procured and testing is underway with IT engineers. This is expected to be completed by April/May 2022.
5. Resources recruited.

2022/23 Breakdown

#	Reason	One off Revenue £000	One-off Capital £000	Total 22/23 Cost £000
1	Continued Server upgrades and migrations		822	822
2	Migrate specific line of business systems to their provider clouds. E.g., Revs & Bens Academy system	386		386
3	Expand the scale of the network upgrade and replacement programme		139	139
4	Commission high speed WAN links for cloud access	125		125
5	Replace backup solution	75		75
6	Mobile Device Management	80		80
7	Replace and upgrade capability of remote access solution.		170	170
8	Implement improved software build and control		39	39
9	Upgrade Service Management platform (helpdesk and self-serve)		100	100
10	Telephony (contact centre and internal corporate phone system)	350		350
11	Resource costs for implementation of this programme of work.	1446		1446
12	Options in Confidential Appendix	75	210	285
	Total	2,537	1,480	4,017

1.Continued Server Upgrades and Migrations– Continue to replace or upgrade systems which have run on out of vendor support hardware, based on a “Cloud Appropriate” strategy, whereby the best solution (Software as a Service or SaaS, or public cloud would be selected. Physical or “on premise” servers are not excluded but would be minimised to reduce Data Centre costs and maintenance. The risk of not continuing with this work to the organisation is very high given the inability to repair or replace current hardware components should an issue arise. This is a highly complex area. Each upgrade or migration will require careful project management – provided by the Modernisation Programme Team. It should be noted that this will not be a single procurement, but

will consist of multiple elements, each of which will need to be properly assessed for value, technical compatibility, service need and high availability. This part of the programme links closely with the Business System reviews and plans to use system provider private cloud services.

2.Migrate specific line of business systems to their provider clouds. E.g. Revenues & Benefits Academy system– This work stream relates to the migration of key (and very complex) applications to provider cloud services (known as SaaS). These services provide a greater resilience for each application, removing the pain of upgrades and regulation changes (done automatically), protecting accessibility for the officers and reducing our server footprint.

One-off costs relate to the actual migration work required and undertaken by the provider (data integrity and transfers, training, system configuration specific to Slough BC), on-going revenue charges relate to the subscription (or licence) for access to the application.

3.Expand the scale of the network upgrade and replacement programme– Complete the replacement of end-of-life network equipment, across sites, office locations and data centre. Failure to replace this equipment will lead to areas of buildings not being able to work and increases the opportunity for cyber-attack. Legacy out of support hardware has no maintenance or patches released and could leave the council vulnerable. This work will be led by the Network team and fed into the wider modernisation plan. Key milestones will include, the purchasing, the installation, testing, migration and the set-up of the solution.

4.Commission high speed WAN links for cloud access– Replacement of the existing wide area network access to provide better bandwidth for cloud services and utilise more modern technology (called SDWAN) to manage the network.

5.Replace backup solution– Continue and complete the replace of the data storage back-up solution. The Council has its data stored on three storage units (racks of hard disk drives). These operate as individual units providing many Terabytes of storage. These units are all coming to, or are already in some cases, end of life both in their age and in support from their respective manufactures. SBC must consolidate the data storage into one larger unit which will provide greater performance, resilience, and reliability. The risk of not undertaking this is high and will amount to a catastrophic failure resulting in a loss of systems / data and applications/services. This work will be led by the infrastructure team and the key milestones will include, the purchasing, the installation, testing, migration and the set-up of the solution.

6.Mobile Device Management– A replacement is required for our currently outdated mobile device management software. This is the tool that allows mobile devices to be updated and maintained remotely and is used to secure stolen or lost devices.

7. Replace and upgrade capability of remote access solution– Complete the replacement of the current remote access solution. Currently there are a variety of solutions to support remote access to the council’s network, this will enable discovery and solution design of a consolidated solution ensuring continued staff access to hybrid, on premises and cloud as the systems are modernised. The work is being led by infrastructure team and the ICT modernisation programme lead and the key milestones will include the creation of a work programme and a replacement programme, followed by procurement, installation, testing and live deployment.

8. Implement improved software build and control– All newly deployed laptops have to be built manually – by built, we mean the software is loaded individually by one or more of the IT Operations Team. There are products that will automate this process and also control any unofficial loading of applications or data. These are commodity products, so a full tender process will determine the best product at the right price for Slough.

9. Upgrade Service Management platform (helpdesk and self-serve)– The IT Service currently utilises the Helix (Remedy) system to log, manage and complete IT Help Desk requests. This system is known as an ITSM (IT Service Management). The system was inherited following the transfer from Arvato into Slough BC. As an ITSM, the system is inadequate as it does not provide self-serve functionality, no AD integration, limited knowledge base functions, no asset management tools configured and more complex than is necessary.

An upgrade or replacement of the Helix (Remedy) ITSM is required to ensure Slough ICT are properly equipped to manage the IT estate in all its complexity

10. Corporate Telephony Solution – The telephony service is fragmented and uses different, somewhat old-fashioned, technology. This project will look at leveraging the MS365 functionality to provide a cohesive, robust and highly functional telephony solution. This will need to be done in the light of any Corporate or Service restructures, the need to reduce the number of inbound calls but maintain an acceptable service level to residents and visitors or Slough. This solution will also include telephony for the councils contact centre, IT service desk & Track Trace call centre.

11. Resources – Resource costs.

12. Refer to part 2 papers

2023/24 Breakdown

#	Reason	One off Revenue	One off Capital	Cost (000's)
1	Annual cost of Disaster recovery solution			
2	Continued Server upgrades and migrations		200	200
3	Continue planning and migration to cloud and cost of cloud environments	50		50
4	Migrate specific line of business systems to their provider clouds. E.g. Revs & Bens Academy system	100		100
5	Security Solutions			
6	Annual disk storage maintenance			
7	Expand scale or network upgrade and replacement programme			
8	Commission high speed WAN links for cloud access			
9	Cyber reporting			
10	Replace backup solution			
15	Infrastructure and cloud monitoring			
16	Upgrade Service Management platform (helpdesk and self-serve)			
17	Telephony (contact centre and internal corporate phone system)			
	Total	150	200	350

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Digital Team Developments

A large and growing internal technology estate

1,700 staff

With the IT department providing them with laptops, Office 365, network, and telephony



2,500 tech support requests

raised by council employees per month

Growing demand for online services and ability to self-serve

149,577 residents



In 2020, there were 149,577k residents in the Slough postcode area with over 109k being over 16 years of age.



Over 9,000 citizen accounts registered to date

Enabling residents to apply for jobs, report missed bins, log faults with streetlights and get notifications of progress of their reports

30+ business intelligence dashboards

Council departments have access to over 30 dashboards, including telephone stats, call waiting times, Google analytics and case management (CRM).

These dashboards are used for monitoring and performance



163,000

visitors to the council's website every month



396,000

Unique Pageviews page views

66% via mobile or tablet devices

134 online forms



Enabling residents to self-serve, saving the Council money, and making it easy for residents to communicate with us.

Over 8000 forms submitted per month



60+ line of business applications

powering the council's activities from council tax collection to case management via JADU CXM.

Each system needing maintenance, support, frequent upgrades, and regular replacement

Live Council Website Forms:

1	Service satisfaction survey	24	Customer access cancel appointment	47	Community centres for hire enquiry
2	Graffiti removal	25	Customer access cancel block booking	48	Adult social care complaints
3	Domestic abuse referral	26	Customer access reschedule appointment	49	Adult social care feedback
4	Report a road spillage	27	Contact us	50	Alternative resolutions
5	Report litter or a problem with a litter bin	28	Driver licence application	51	Community learning and skills service feedback
6	Allotment request	29	Vehicle licence application	52	Housing service repairs request
7	Building regulations submission	30	Better by newsletter sign up	53	Charitable discretionary rate relief
8	PPE request	31	Property buy back enquiry	54	Neighbourhood services complaints and comments
9	Customer access block book calendar	32	Report council fraud	55	Report an alleged breach of planning control
10	Report a COVID-19 related issue	33	Change of vehicle	56	Slough SENDIASS user evaluation
11	Customer access book an appointment	34	Private tenant service request	57	Update Business rates contact details
12	Report a highways issue	35	Parks and play areas faults	58	Slough local offer feedback
13	Active Slough registration request	36	Report an abandoned vehicle	59	Council tax refund application for executors
14	Fob request	37	Report dog-related issues	60	Garage application
15	Learning and development training application	38	Report electoral fraud	61	Members code of conduct complaint
16	Libraries volunteer application	39	Self and custom build registration	62	Council tax exemption
17	Outbuildings adapted for human habitation	40	Slough Youth award nomination	63	Housing benefit - Landlord application for payment by BACS
18	Report missed bin collection	41	Report a street cleaning issue	64	Bulky waste collection discount qualification
19	Adult social care general enquiry	42	Staff whistleblowing form	65	Housing benefit or Council tax support review entitlement
20	Council tax enquiry	43	Job application	66	Report antisocial behaviour
21	Council tax refund application	44	Staff car details form	67	Report a statutory nuisance
22	Council tax single person discount review	45	Social care personal assistant application	68	School admissions late application
23	Housing Direct Debit application	46	Child entertainment and performance licence	69	Housing benefit - Claimant application for payment by BACS

70	Insurance claims	87	Housing benefit - Request from landlord to be paid direct	104	School admissions Part B in-year application
71	School admissions appeal	88	Report flytipping, flyposting or flyboarding	105	Environmental enquiries - Customer set up
72	School admissions change a place application	89	Report a food problem	106	General enquiry
73	School Governor volunteers application	90	Leaseholder enquiry	107	Freedom of Information request
74	Vehicular access application	91	Benefits change of circumstances	108	Corporate complaints
75	Food business registration	92	Report faulty street lighting furniture	109	SBC website content update form
76	Customer feedback	93	School admissions enquiry	110	SBCinsite feedback form
77	Staff ID badge application	94	Free school meals - eligibility outcome	111	Provide additional information for a Council tax support or Housing benefit appeal
78	Staff PPE stock update form	95	Partially unoccupied relief	112	Provide additional information for a Council tax support or Housing benefit reconsideration request
79	Staff parking permit Hatfield application	96	Community trigger form	113	Housing benefits overpayments - Income and expenditure
80	IT work request	97	Follow up a Council tax support or Housing benefit decision	114	Concessionary bus pass application for the elderly and disabled
81	Building control - upload documentation	98	CTS/HB SoR, reconsideration or appeal - send letter	115	Bulky waste collection
82	Report dog fouling	99	Concessionary bus pass reschedule appointment	116	Concessionary bus pass cancel appointment
83	Free school meals application	100	Pavement licence application	117	Tenancy termination
84	Building control - make a payment	101	Council tax enquiry v2	118	Housing benefit - Change of address
85	Household support fund application	102	Council tax single person discount	119	Housing benefit - Self employed income
86	Electric vehicle charging points survey	103	Registrars feedback	120	Housing benefit - Request from tenant to pay landlord

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ICT Major Projects

Alongside the modernisation programme of works, there are projects that are either in progress, or known about that will require significant ICT effort to support / complete. Below is a list of the knowns at this time but this is likely to increase as service seek to drive efficiencies and to improve system capability.

Project Name	Description	Estimated completion / go live	Lead Officers	Significant Milestones	RAG Status
Completion of O365 Roll out	Migration of users to Microsoft O365 & provision of Microsoft teams. This includes roll out of windows 10 laptops.	June 2022	GM - ICT With service GM's	Service areas completed	Green
Migration of Revs & Bens to new modernised platform	Revs & Bens application (Capita Academy) comes unsupported on the current platform by October 2022, a new contract will need to be awarded and the system will need to be re-platformed to an on premise or cloud version.	October 2022	GM – Revs & Bens GM - ICT		Amber
CapitaOne Contract Renewal	Education system re-tendering and potential migration to new platform.	March 2023	AD - Education & Inclusion GM - ICT	Scoping stage	
Corporate Telephony	New corporate telephony solution needs to be contracted for providing desk-based telephony services.	March 2023	AD – Business Services GM - ICT	Scoping stage	
Data Strategy	Supporting the development and roll out of the corporate data strategy programme.	In progress	GM- Business Insight GM- ICT	Initial meeting held in March.	

				Milestones to be agreed pending scoping.	
Contract Procurements	Re-contracting of all ICT contracts and new contracts associated with the remediation / modernisation programme of work.	Ongoing	GM - ICT	Full contracts register of procurement action in place.	Green
Northgate Housing	Ongoing support of the migration and implementation of the new hosted housing system.	June 2022	PM – HMS GM - ICT	User Acceptance Testing End user Training	Green
Freshdesk Replacement (Agresso ITSM).	Migration of Agresso service management tool to Remedy (Corporate ITSM) including knowledgebase.	May 2022	HR/IT/Finance	Scoping stage	
New Data Reporting Platform	Development of a new environment to host development of data insight reporting and the future data insight strategy.	In progress	GM- Business Insight GM- ICT	Scoping stage	
Data Centre Hosting Renewal	Contract negotiation of a new data centre hosting contract for all council systems, potentially could result in a complete migration of all council systems to a new site.	November 2022	GM - ICT	Identifying scope/requirements Procurement Migration	Green
Digital Team Form Developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UAT form migrations - Helix Remedy access and training - Review of Registry Office processes to identify areas of digital opportunities. - Replacement bin form - Homeless or at risk form 	April 2022	GM - ICT	Service development activity	Amber

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flexible home improvement loans form - Building control forms - Demolition notice and Permission to erect scaffolding - Report antisocial behaviour potentially convert to CXM process - Report flytipping, flyposting or flyboarding potentially convert to CXM process - Report a statutory nuisance potentially convert to CXM process 				
Robotics Process Automation (RPA) – Revs & Bens	Explore RPA for Capita Revs & Bens services.	TBC	GM – Revs & Bens GM - ICT	Scoping stage	
Flare – Environmental Health & Trading Standards System Upgrade	Flare system re-tendering and potential migration to new platform.	Awaiting service engagement	AD- Place Regulation GM - ICT	Scoping stage	
EDRMS Replacement (Document Management)	EDRMS system re-tendering and potential migration to new platform.	March 2023	GM - ICT With service GM's	March Cabinet Approval	Amber

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Licensing and contract management

- 1.1. In determining the way forward on individual applications individual licensing decisions will need to be made. Indeed, there are already some such cases that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.
- 1.2. All of the contracts can be extended by the Executive Director for Finance under the scheme of delegation as all are below £0.500m. These contracts are listed below:

System	Supplier	Contract Length	Contract Value £000
Website & Digital Platform - 2 nd Year Contract Extension	Jadu	24.02.22- 23.02.23	104
Electronic Document Records Management System	Civica	01.04.22 - 31.03.23	179
Citrix Licence Renewal	TBC	01.04.22 - 31.03.23	130
Citrix Support Desk	ProAct	01.04.22 - 31.03.23	49
Email & Web Gateway (Clearswift) Licence Renewal	TBC	01.04.22 - 31.03.23	50
Wi-Fi Managed Service, Hardware Support & Licences	Intercity	01.04.22 - 31.03.23	27
Support & Maintenance for Revenues & Benefits System	Capita (Academy)	01.04.22 - 31.03.23	96
Support & Maintenance for Adults, Children's, and Early Help Case Management	Liquid Logic	01.04.22 - 31.03.23	170
Support & Maintenance for Adults, Children's Social Care Finance Systems	Oxford Computing Consultants	01.04.22 - 31.03.23	35
Support & Maintenance for Environmental Services System	Civica	01.04.22 - 31.03.23	42
ICS Consultant (ICT development)	Family Support Practise Ltd	01.04.22 - 31.03.23	90
ICS Floorwalking	Bytesize Training ltd	01.04.22 - 31.03.23	41
Total			1,013

Website & Digital Platform - 2nd Year Contract Extension

- 1.3. The Jadu digital platform was procured on the 24/02/2020 following a tender process under the G-Cloud 11 CCS framework. Three responses were received and reviewed by an evaluation panel. The decision to go with JADU was predicated on the combination of price and matching functionality and it was the only solution tendered that met the need for a CMS (website creation), on-line forms and a digital platform allowing for case management and links to line of business systems through API's (Application Process Interfaces). (See Appendix 3)
- 1.4. The product comprises three elements: The Website build process, the forms creation functionality (allowing us to create bespoke forms for customers to complete), and the

digital case management system. Each of these are fully integrated and work in tandem to provide an end-to-end digital service

- 1.5. JADU powers the Council's website which is the central and preferred point of all customer interaction with the Council. The website receives over 163,000 visitors per month, and over 8,000 form submissions. As more services are digitised it is predicted that the council will see an increase of up to 30% across this channel. The digital website provides clear signposting for what customers can do online, linking them with the service or information they need. With online form capabilities, JADU also offers customers with the full range of digital channels for both self and assisted service.
- 1.6. Customer Services use JADU as their CRM platform to log customers calls, emails and enquiries. The system replaced the legacy Oracle CRM system in October 2021, delivering £66k in savings in 2021/22

Electronic Document Records Management System

- 1.7. Slough Borough Council have been a Civica customer since 2004 and have been successfully using the desktop version of Digital360 Contact Management and EDM software in a number of key services. The current licence and support arrangements for Digital 360 with Civica expire on 31st March 2022. Hence this needs to be renewed for 1 year. During this one-year extension, Slough will explore options for an Electronic Document Management system that align with the future strategy of Slough Council

Citrix Licence Renewal

- 1.8. The renewal covers the Council's Citrix licences ensuring the relevant licences and subscriptions are in place for the 1 April 2022. Most staff access the Council's Citrix to access their applications and files. A valid subscription also provides the Council with licences to download the latest updates/bug fixes and version releases.
- 1.9. The renewal also covers the Council's Citrix environment that run on cisco servers. These servers need to have support and maintenance contracts in place should any issues arise that require. It is essential that the Council's hardware is supported for PSN compliance.

Citrix Support Desk

- 1.10. The support covers:
 - Unlimited four-hour Response Telephone Help Desk Support
 - Unlimited Remote Access / dial in diagnostic
 - Unlimited access to Proact Help Desk and Senior Consultants
 - Escalation through to Vendors via Proact held Support Contracts
 - Monday - Friday 09:00am to 17:30pm excluding public and bank holidays
- 1.11. ProAct have been a partner working with SBC (and previously Arvato) for seven years. Proact installed the Council's citrix Infrastructure and have provided valuable citrix support resolving several priority 1 ICT issues. They have knowledge about the Council's Citrix set up and configuration.

Email & Web Gateway

- 1.12. The Clearswift email appliances ensure all content and attachments on incoming and outgoing emails are scanned for viruses and malware and that spam emails are blocked. It provides key word (swear words) blocking so that undesirable words cannot be sent or received externally via email.
- 1.13. The Clearswift web appliances ensure staff are restricted from accessing undesirable or inappropriate websites as well as protecting from malware related to websites. It allows ICT to have different restriction policies and controls in place depending on business requirements.
- 1.14. If the annual licences for the Council's email and web gateway appliances are not renewed, the Council will not have any filtering or protection on incoming and outgoing emails as well as website access by staff. This could expose the Council to viruses, malware, and undesirable content.

Wi-Fi

- 1.15. The renewal covers the Council's managed service for the Wi-Fi. This is undertaken by a 3rd party to provide the following: -
 - Monitoring and incident management of the wireless network
 - Configuration & Patch Management of the wireless network
 - Change Management
 - Ongoing Service Management
- 1.16. This renewal covers the hardware maintenance for Aruba 7000 Controllers including an engineer to site with next business day response (if required). This ensures all the Wi-Fi hardware is supported and maintained. The renewal also covers the licence renewal for the Wi-Fi access points. All the Council's access points need to have a valid licence to operate. If there is no valid licence, the access point will not work

Support and Maintenance for Revenues and Benefits System - Academy

- 1.17. Academy is the main processing and administrative system for the Revenue and Benefits service. This includes Council Tax, Business rates, Business rates BID, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction Scheme processing and related on-line and supplementary services.

Support & Maintenance for Adults, Children's, and Early Help Case Management

- 1.18. Liquidlogic is the current supplier for the Adult and Children's and social care management systems.
- 1.19. The children's system (also Known as LCS) is a case management system that supports all aspects of social work with children and record keeping this includes children in need, looked after children, adoption, and child protection cases. It is also the main depository for all statutory reporting information for children's social care.
- 1.20. The Adult Social Care system (also Known as LAS) Is the main case management system for Adults Social Care it has comprehensive functionality to enable the management of contacts, referrals, assessments, reablement plans care commissioning, personal budgets, self-funders, safeguarding, DOLS, provider

management, financial management and assessment. It is also the main depository for all statutory reporting for Adult Social Care.

- 1.21. Liquidlogic is critical to ensuring that SBC and Slough Children First can deliver statutory services to the residents of Slough. The systems are also the main information repository for all our annual statutory reporting for both Children and Adult social care

ICS Consultant

- 1.22. This contract supports all ICT application development for children's services, including, project management, process design, system form development, upgrades and technical lead on integration projects. This role is fulfilled by a qualified social worker with ICT/Project management skills.

ICS Floorwalker

- 1.23. The support provided by the role is targeted primarily to support busy frontline social workers in children's services to deliver on their statutory responsibilities. One of the functions of this contract is to support and train new staff on how to use ICS which is the primary tool used within the service, this also supports the high turnover of staff. Floorwalking support for ICS has been identified as a top priority from the company leadership team in delivering services to children.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

AGENDA ITEM 7

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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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