

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Meeting held on Monday, 7th June, 2010.

Present:- Councillors M S Mann (Chair), Haines (Vice-Chair), Bains, Bal, Basharat, Coad, Shine, O'Connor and Walsh.

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Matloob, Parmar and Small.

PART I

1. Declaration of Interest

Councillor Bal declared a personal interest as Members of his family were employed by Slough Borough Council.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 7th April, 2010

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7th April 2010 were approved as a correct record subject to the following addition:-

Minute No. 83 – Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) update:

The following comment was added under the discussion points raised by Members:

- Some Members were concerned that NI 35, Preventing Violent Extremism, could create a stigma for the Muslim community.

3. Appointment of Scrutiny Panels

The Committee considered a report recommending the re-appointment of the four Overview and Scrutiny Panels for the 2010/11 Municipal year. The Panel noted the seat allocations that had been calculated to reflect Political Group membership and statutory proportionality entitlement, which equated to five appointments to be offered to the Labour Group, two to the BILLD Group and two to the Conservative Group. The Committee noted that the Chairs of the Panels would be offered to a Member of the Administration and it had been indicated that the 4 Vice-Chair positions would be offered to the Opposition Group.

Details of the nominations received from the political groups were noted and the Committee was requested to appoint the four Scrutiny Panels and the Members nominated. Details were also presented of the Co-opted Members for formal approval.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Panels set out in paragraph 5.1 of the report be appointed for the 2010/11 Municipal year.
- (b) That the Committee note the allocation of seats to the Panels.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 07.06.10

- (c) That the Committee agree the allocation of Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Panels on the basis as set out in paragraph 5.3 of the report and that the Panels be invited to appoint their Chairs and Vice-Chairs at their first meeting accordingly.
- (d) That Members be appointed to serve on each of the Panels in accordance with the wishes expressed by Political Groups in respect of the seats allocated to them as set out in paragraph 5.4 of the report.
- (e) That the Co-opted Members as listed in paragraphs 5.5 and 5.6 of the report be appointed to the Education and Children Services and Neighbourhoods and Renewal Scrutiny Panels.

4. Statement of Accounts and Outturn Position for 2009/10

The Strategic Director of Resources outlined a report setting out the Statement of Accounts 2009/10, prior to its consideration by the Cabinet on 14th June, 2010, and by an extraordinary meeting of the Council on 29th June, 2010. The final outturn position on the budget was a surplus of £253k against a budget of £106m. The Director outlined the financial position of the Council in detail and advised that although this was a period of real challenge for Local Government, the Council was in a strong position to face challenges in public spending.

On completion of the presentation Members asked a number of questions including the following:-

- A Member asked whether the Council would achieve the 4% efficiency savings required by Government for the 3 year period to March 2011. The Deputy Director of Finance advised that this would be achieved because provision had been made for the additional 1% that was required in 2010/11.
- A Member referred to the prudential borrowing and capital receipts and asked when the Council would be advised of the capital budget for this year. The Deputy Director of Finance advised that the budget had been agreed in February and nothing had changed since then; further details of the capital budget would be made available within the first monitoring report that would be available in July 2010.
- In relation to the forthcoming budget on the 22nd June, a Member was concerned that local government cuts were anticipated which could affect the Council's budget and she asked the Director to comment on this. The Committee was advised that some funding was vulnerable but the Government would leave the decision on how cuts would be implemented to individual authorities. More information would be available following the budget but the Council was in a good position in that it had implemented a three year budget. The monitoring report would be brought to the Scrutiny Committee.
- A Member asked what implications the next census would have on the Council's funding in view of past concerns regarding the inaccuracy of population statistics. The Director advised that the formula for assessing the grant remained linked to population. It was therefore

Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 07.06.10

important to ensure full public participation in the census. The Committee was also advised that there was no guarantee that the new grant allocation would be set over a three year period.

- In relation to 'earmarked reserves', a Member noted that £285,000 was set against "Berkshire liabilities" and he asked what this was used for. The Deputy Director of Finance advised that this was a historic obligation arising from the demise of the Berkshire County Council, where each of the unitary authorities contributed an amount for outstanding risks.
- A Member asked how the Council would be able to predict spending if the Government's aim was to half the UK deficit over a 5 year period. The Director advised that the Council's financial strategy would be extended from 3 to 5 years but this would very much be a moving feast and Officers would be required to make proposals for changes when necessary.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

5. **Adult Participation in Sport and Physical Activity - National Indicator 8**

Andrew Stevens, Assistant Director, Learning and Cultural Engagement, outlined a report to update the Committee on the progress of work done to increase participation in sport and physical activity (NI 8) and seek its views on plans to address underperformance in this area.

The Committee noted that NI 8 measured the number of people who took part in 30 minutes of sport and moderate physical activity for 30 minutes three times a week, and that the measure of activity was collected through a national telephone survey involving 500 individuals in each authority. The Assistant Director highlighted that SBC would not be able to draw down allocated reward money through the Local Area Agreement if the agreed targets for NI 8 were not met.

Slough's performance in NI 8 was recorded at 16.1% in December 2009, having dropped from the previous base line of 19.4% and the Committee noted the detail of several initiatives which had been delivered to improve performance, including the provision of free swimming for targeted groups and the creation of an improvement action plan. New initiatives that would be delivered during 2010/11 included a healthy workforce initiative for SBC staff, a Slough Community Leisure Open Weekend and a GP Healthy Walks Scheme. The Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) had worked with the Culture and Sports Team earlier in the year to develop and take forward its improvement action plan. The IDeA had cited the plan as one of the best examples they had seen.

The Officer concluded that much remained to be done to refine and strengthen the actions and local measures needed to meet targets and that the Council would continue to work with the key partners to encourage and develop further opportunities for access to sports and physical activity programmes that would impact on the whole community.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 07.06.10

In the ensuing discussion Members raised a number of questions/comments as follows:-

- A Member asked whether the Council had considered operating a health/ fitness scheme such as that operated by Nissan, whereby staff undertook a series of exercises at the beginning of their working day. The Head of Culture and Sports Delivery advised that whilst the Council had not considered carrying out an exercise scheme on this scale, consideration had been given, for example, to holding yoga classes in the Council Chamber at lunch times.
- A Member asked whether the Council was providing cheaper rates and subsidies for swimming and football clubs etc, and felt that the Council should be focusing on communities where individuals undertook little physical activity, often due to cultural barriers. The Assistant Director advised that subsidies were not proposed at this stage but there were plans to encourage activity through marketing and the promotion of sporting activities. Slough Community Leisure would be considering the provision of taster sessions to show residents what was available. A benchmarking exercise had shown that local prices for sporting activities were fair compared to other authorities. The Head of Culture and Sports Delivery commented that many sports clubs were run by volunteers and recent legislation regarding the requirement for CRB checks had made it more difficult and expensive for clubs to recruit volunteers.
- In relation to sporting facilities available within schools, a Member asked whether the Council was utilising these facilities, for example, the swimming facilities available at Beechwood School. The Assistant Director advised that such facilities were used as far as possible and this would be researched further.
- A Member questioned whether local parks such as Langley Park and Black Park were being sufficiently promoted by the Council as it was felt that people could be encouraged to use the facilities and increase their physical activity. The Head of Culture and Sports Delivery advised that Salt Hill Park was a good example of this and a recent visit had shown that the park was being used well with evidence of informal cricket matches, football games and picnics taking place.
- A Member felt that the provision of separate sessions for female members of ethnic communities would encourage the use of swimming facilities.
- Several Members suggested that any advertisements or information regarding the promotion of health and physical activity should be posted at mosques and temples. In this way the communities where there was often a problem in health and physical activity would be better targeted.
- A Member referred to the closure of the Tennis Centre and was concerned that this decision would impact on the amount of physical activity. The Assistant Director advised that a Tennis Development Programme had been put in place and was open to anyone who wanted to participate. There would be eight outdoor courts which

Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 07.06.10

would be of Lawn Tennis Association standard. The tennis courts would be funded through the Ten Pin bowling activities on the site. It was emphasised that there was a need to reach large numbers of the community and encourage new activities wherever possible and the availability of Ten Pin Bowling would contribute to this.

- A Member was concerned that Britwell was losing 50% of its parks and there were no swimming, football or hockey facilities provided by the Council. He advised that the Britwell Parish Council arranged some football activities and it would be useful if the Officer contacted the Parish Council to explore what other activities the Parish could provide.

It was agreed that the Committee would receive a quarterly update report on NI 8-Adult Participation in Sport and Physical Activity.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

6. Forward Agenda Plan

The Forward Agenda Plan was circulated to Members. The Scrutiny Officer advised that some Members had requested that the style of the regular performance report be changed and the Committee. It was suggested, for example, that whilst the underlying report could still be produced, a one page summary should highlight the key ten positives and negatives, providing a simple overview of the main figures and itemising some possible quick fixes. It was agreed that the Scrutiny Officer would liaise with the Chair and discuss this with the relevant Officer.

The work programme was revised to include a quarterly report on NI 8 – Adult Participation in Sport and Physical Activity.

Resolved- That the report be noted.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was noted- **Thursday, 1st July, 2010.**

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.10 pm)