

Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 12th July, 2010.

Present:- Councillors Anderson (Chair), S Chaudhry, A S Dhaliwal, Matloob, Pantelic, Parmar, Small and Swindlehurst

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Bains (part), Basharat (part) and Maclsaac

PART I

18. Declarations of Interest

None.

19. Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th June 2010

The Part I and II Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 14th June, 2010 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

20. Part II Agenda

The Chair reminded Cabinet members that there were a number of reports included in the agenda that evening that had a Part II element. To avoid entering into Part II proceedings and the need to exclude the press and public Members were asked to confine themselves as far as possible to comments and questions that could be handled in Part I. The meeting would move into Part II if necessary.

21. Major Ric Howick

The Chair welcomed Major Ric Howick to the meeting. Major Howick was on secondment to assist the Borough in a community cohesion initiative.

22. In-Year Budget Reductions 2010/11

The Cabinet considered a report outlining the revenue and capital financial impact on the Council of the Departmental, Communities and Local Government (DCLG) announcement on 10th June 2010 of cross government savings to be found in-year in 2010/11. The Chair also drew attention to a Part II Paper that had been tabled on the future of the Connexions Service.

The Strategic Director of Resources outlined the overall financial impact of the national reductions for the Council. The Council had been in a sound financial position with a balanced 2010/11 budget but was now in a position of having a £3.3m deficit. The Council had looked at grant funded streams as well as core budgets to meet the required reductions target. Appendix A to the report outlined detailed proposals and a summary of reduction proposals from Directorates which totalled £3.320m.

The Director advised that although the overall in-year reduction proposals met the target this excluded redundancies and the permanent nature of the reductions had not been fully achieved.

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The Leader advised that the Government reduction in funding was unprecedented and that neighbouring authorities had had a much smaller saving target imposed. Whilst the Council had no choice but to implement the Government reductions it was able to decide on its own priorities and how to align budgets to local priorities and manifesto commitments. The Leader advised that the Council had been negotiating with Slough Community Leisure and would now jointly be funding the Free Swimming Scheme for the rest of the year at a cost of around £100,000. The Scheme was not only a manifesto commitment but had untold health benefits and contributed towards occupying young people in positive activities.

Commissioners were saddened by the extent of the cuts that had been handed down to the Council and acknowledged that it would limit the Council's ability particularly to help schools and vulnerable young people.

In answer to a question on likely redundancy costs the Director advised that some at risk posts were shared with other Councils and that there would therefore be scope for costs to be shared. The potential for redeployment would also be increased as the redeployment pool would be wider. The Council had a reserve it had set up for funding redundancy costs which could be used as a last resort.

A Member present under rule 30 asked whether the implications and risks of the proposed budget reductions on social work training had been fully considered. Members were advised that work had been undertaken to ensure that essential training was protected through the training grant. The department would be reviewing other elements of the training offered and would be able to realise a number of efficiencies in the training provision.

Commissioners discussed the Connexions service which was subject to a part II paper. Members were advised that work on the future of Connexions was progressing and steps were being taken to assess the financial and legal liabilities of the six authorities who were party to Connexions Berkshire contract. Members endorsed the recommendations contained in the part II report.

In recommending the proposals to the Cabinet the Leader stressed that the key consideration for the Council was the impact of the proposed reductions. He was proud of the work that the Council undertaken to get to this stage as it had had to move from an agreed budget position where it was performing well into a very difficult deficit position. He stressed that the Council would continue to make decisions which, whilst meeting the necessary reductions, protected services that it classed as priority.

Resolved -

- (a) That the reductions proposed in full including those where staffing implications are involved be agreed subject to the appropriate staffing consultation process (to include the recommendations in the Part II report on the future of the Berkshire Connexions Service).
- (b) That in support of section 8 of the report (Suppliers of Commissioned Services) the Council write to recipients of grants across the voluntary sector, private sector, health sector and schools (across those non

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Dedicated Schools Grant areas) requesting that they make efficiency savings at 4%.

- (c) That the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive write to all staff of the Council to invite them to give an indication of what preference they have in terms of future employment so as to limit the adverse impact on the workforce as the Council looks to meet the Government reduction targets of between 25% to 40% over the next 4 years.
- (d) That correspondence to significant Third Party suppliers (revenue contractors and capital projects) inviting discussions regarding reductions in planned expenditure be approved.

23. Performance and Financial Monitoring 2010/11

The Cabinet considered a report detailing the Revenue and Capital Monitoring position to May 2010 and the Treasury Management position as at May 2010. The report also covered the performance information to year end of 31st March 2010 where available.

The Strategic Director of Improvement and Development outlined the changes that had been made to simplify and update the performance appraisal system. The report also set out the status of the Council's identified "gold" projects and performance against the LAA. All Indicators that had a red rag status had action plans attached to them to address the performance issues.

In discussing the performance information Members sought clarification on preparations for the 2011 Census. The Chief Executive advised that the Government was looking at the resources available for the 2011 Census which may well affect Slough because of the Town's particular community needs. Clarification was being sought from the Government.

The Strategic Director of Resources outlined the revenue and capital monitoring and treasury management positions as at May 2010. The report had not taken into account the financial impact of information received from central government with regard to reductions.

In answer to a question the Director advised that it was not clear how the agreed reductions would be presented within the budget but that formal changes to cash limits and the true position needed to be reported.

A member present under rule 30 expressed his concern with regard to the foster carers savings that were being proposed. Commissioners stressed that the Council needed to review all of its services.

The Leader stressed that all partner authorities were seeking to work together to avoid unnecessary cost shunting whilst still providing quality services. The Director of Resources added that the current pressures were being managed in-year on top of the additional government reductions.

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Resolved -

- (a) That the following aspects of the report be noted:
 - i. Performance and Project Management
 - ii. Financial performance – revenue and capital
 - iii. Treasury management position as at May 2010
- (b) The fees and charges variations included in the report be approved.

24. Upton Court Park - Land Quality Issues

The Cabinet considered a report setting out information with regard to historical land contamination in two areas of Upton Court Park and seeking guidance on the preferred approach to be employed to deal with the remediation of the effective areas of the park.

The Assistant Director, Environmental Services and Quality advised that high levels of lead and other contaminants had been identified in two areas of Upton Court Park and these levels significantly exceeded Government's soil guideline values. The high levels of lead were a legacy dating back to the 1940 or 1950s. The Council had a duty to deal with this issue as a land owner and under the Environment Act 1995. Risk Assessments had been carried out and, whilst there was no immediate or acute hazard, the assessments did indicate that the Council should take steps to deal with the elevated levels of contaminants.

The report set out a number of costed options for the Commissioners to consider. Members noted that the costs associated with remediation were likely to be considerable, however, grant aid was sometimes available from Central Government for Councils' finding themselves in this type of position. In addition to potential grant aid it was possible to explore partnership working with commercial providers of artificially surfaced sport facilities to allow some parts of the affected north western area to be used for sport and recreational activities. Grant funding would not be available for the north east area as it had already been through the planning process. Option 1 – Planting of the bunds was the recommended option to remediate the north east area and the cost of the work was estimated to be £294,000. Grant aid may be available for the north west area but the full cost may not be awarded for remediation work depending on the scheme proposed.

Commissioners considered the options available and sought clarification with regard to the health risks. The Assistant Director advised that there were no immediate or acute risks to human health and that ingestion of the lead and contaminants was the only route into the system and the risk of this was slight. In answer to a question the Assistant Director advised that a preliminary discussion had been held with a private company that would take private or public land on long leases and provide sport facilities and multi use sports buildings. Further discussion was needed to assess whether this was a viable option in the long run. A member present under rule 30 asked whether there was any risk of the water supply being contaminated and whether the Castlevue land sale would be affected. The Assistant Director confirmed that there was no risk to the water supply. The land owners of Castlevue would be informed of the findings but contaminants did not preclude the land being used as a road.

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Given the cost of the options the Cabinet members favoured Option 1 – Planting of dense shrubbery or vegetation across the affected area but that negotiations continue with private providers of artificially surfaced sports facilities as long as any initiative was self funding.

Resolved -

- (a) Taking into account the potential costs and the impacts on the future usage patterns of the park, that remediation option 1 (Planting of dense shrubbery or vegetation across the affected area) be pursued;
- (b) That officers pursue future opportunities with private providers of artificially surfaced sports facilities that may later help mitigate the impacts of some of the dense planting or remediation work on the amenity value of the park (subject to any proposal being self funded/grant funded);
- (c) That officers pursue an application for grant aid to help fund the remediation of the north western area of the park;
- (d) That separate funding bids for any works that are not eligible for grant aid be made to the Capital Assets Management Group;
- (e) That the continuation of community events where possible be approved, but that any activities that might cause high levels of disturbance to the affected ground be relocated.

25. Chalvey Regeneration - Tenders for Early Years Centre

The Cabinet considered a report detailing the outcome of the presentations for tender for the provision of the new Chalvey Early Years Centre.

Members were reminded that the Cabinet had its meeting on 8th March 2010 had resolved that the necessary work to provide a Chalvey Early Years Centre should be progressed as a priority. As a result of the tendering process four tenders were received, two of which were disregarded because they were too weak. The two remaining tenders were from Mansell Construction Services Limited and Paragon Interiors Group Plc and Head of Property and Contracts confirmed that both tenders had been scored and were considered acceptable. These tenders were considered at a presentation on the 1st July 2010 and, despite the protracted discussion, the Panel could not reach a decision on the successful bid. Both companies had produced brochures to support their presentations which had been circulated to Cabinet members.

The Commissioner for Neighbourhoods and Renewal advised that both bids had been very impressive. The bid from Mansell Construction Services Limited had been a robust building solution and was the closer to the requirement of the nursery standard of the two bids. The Paragon Interiors Group Plc bid was considerably cheaper but would need further work to ensure that it met the requirements of an Early Years Centre. Commissioners were conscious that the budget for the project had been set and that one of the bids was significantly higher than the other and well above the agreed budget. Whilst acknowledging that further work would be required to ensure the Scheme met all the necessary requirements for an Early Years Centre, Commissioners favoured the bid from Paragon Interiors Group Plc as it was closest to the available budget and would

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therefore be best value for money in design terms. It was proposed and agreed that the tender from Paragon Interiors Group Plc be accepted.

Resolved - That the tender from Paragon Interiors Group Plc be accepted for the Chalvey Early Years Centre and that officers commence negotiations with Paragon Interiors Group Plc to ensure that the scheme meets all the necessary requirements/standards for an early years centre.

26. Adoption of New Governance Model - Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

The Cabinet considered a report detailing provisions in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Public Health Act 2007 that obliged the Council to change its executive governance arrangements to one of two models permitted by the Act. The two models were a Mayor and Cabinet Executive or a Leader and Cabinet Executive. Whichever model was chosen by the Council a resolution to adopt it had to be passed at a special Council meeting before 31st December, 2010. The new arrangements would then take effect from the following Council elections in May 2011. In addition the Council had the choice of moving from elections by thirds to 4 yearly elections. Members were advised that if they wished to pursue this option the same arrangements for a special council meeting and consultation applied.

A letter from the Right Honourable Grant Shapps MP, Minister for Housing and Local Government dated 7th July, 2010 was tabled advising the Council that it should not incur any significant expenditure on the requirements of the Act as they would be repealed by fresh primary legislation. Commissioners noted the requirement to adopt a new governance model from May 2011.

Resolved –

- (a) That a small group of Officers and Members, in consultation with the Chief Executive as Returning Officer, be appointed to look at the issue(s) (New executive arrangements (& elections), and to carry out the consultation exercise. Such group to comprise:
 - Group leaders or Deputy Group leaders
 - The (Acting) Borough Secretary and Solicitor
 - The Deputy Borough Secretary
 - A Member of the Communications Team – to provide support.
- (b) That a Report on the outcome of the Consultation exercise(s) be submitted to a special Council Meeting to be held for this purpose before 31st December 2010.

27. Heart of Slough Update on Scheme Progress

The Cabinet considered a report updating Members on the progress of the Heart of Slough project and the current financial position.

Members were advised that the project was now at a stage when the bus station was in the process of being delivered. The tenders for the infrastructure works

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were at an advanced stage and the new library and civic/cultural centre was currently at the planning and design stage.

A substantive review of the financial elements of the project since inception had been undertaken. This had taken into account the inevitable changes in the detail of the project as it had moved from the planning to delivery stages and Members were advised that these changes may place an additional financial demand on the project.

The Project Team had been seeking to minimise additional costs through the management of the project generally and there were potential capital receipts which would help to mitigate possible demands. It was recommended that the capital receipts from these sites be earmarked to meet the project costs and any contingencies that may be approved by the Cabinet in the future. Members were advised of the contingencies that had been assessed in relation to the project and these were detailed in the report.

The financial appraisal outlined that the budget requirement had increased by £1,142,972 from the figures reported to Cabinet in December 2009. These costs included revised land assembly costs, additional costs associated with development, demolition costs relating to the TVU site and some additional professional fees.

The Director of Resources advised that in the light of the current economic climate Commissioners needed to consider whether to increase the Heart of Slough budget as referred to in the report and make any consequential changes to the Council's capital programme. Commissioners discussed the proposals and the progress made on the scheme. Commissioners stressed the need to keep within the agreed budget and the cash envelope that had agreed. The Leader reiterated the Council's commitment to the Heart of Slough project but that given the current economic climate it was even more important that the project was brought in within budget.

Resolved –

- (a) That the progress made on the Scheme and the timetable and phasing of works be noted.
- (b) That the capital receipts generated by the Project be allocated towards the overall Project costs if required.
- (c) That the Strategic Director of Resources be authorised to pursue the making of compulsory purchase orders under section 226 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) where land required for implementation of the Heart of Slough Project cannot be acquired by agreement with the landowner(s).
- (d) That the Project Risk Register set out at Appendix B be noted.
- (e) That the contingency requirements set out in the report be noted. Any request for a contingency sum to be called on to be referred to Cabinet.
- (f) That, in light of the current economic climate, not to increase the Heart of Slough Budget.

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28. Social Services Emergency Duty Team - Contract Renewal and Review Arrangements

The Cabinet considered a report setting out the current arrangements for the Emergency Duty Team service (EDT) and requesting approval for renewal of a contract for the current year and that a review of the contract be undertaken to look at potential future costs and the way in which the service needed to be managed to meet need, provide an effective, value for money service within the budget constraints that the authority faced.

Resolved –

- (a) That the current contract be renewed until 1st April 2011.
- (b) That a review of the contract be undertaken with report back to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

29. Surplus Land Adjoining Penn Wood School Penn Road Slough

The Cabinet considered a report detailing the tender bids received in relation to surplus land adjoining Penn Wood School, Penn Road, Slough. Members were advised that the site had been offered to the market by way of informal tender with a guide price of £850,000. Details had been sent to all the councils registered social landlord partners together with all parties requesting details from the marketing in the local and national property papers.

A part II appendix to the report set out details of the bids that had been received. Members were advised that in terms of capital receipts there was a difference between the offer received from the Abbey Developments and the offers received from RSLs. The difference was partly covered by the housing subsidy being offered and the loss of a capital receipt was made up for by the provision of 12 social housing units.

In considering which offer represented best value to the Council in both monetary and added community value terms Commissioners noted that the bid from Abbey Developments Limited was slightly higher than the highest bid from an RSL but favoured accepting a bid from a housing partner. Commissioners asked for and received an assurance that the Council's position would be protected with regard to selling the site on at a profit.

Resolved -

- (a) That the successful bids be agreed in priority order as Catalyst Housing Group, Abbey Developments Limited, and Paradigm Housing Group Limited.
- (b) That the Borough Secretary and Solicitor, in consultation with the Strategic Director of Resources be authorised to dispose of the subject property to the preferred bidder.

30. Proposed Consultation on Revised Berkshire Minerals and Waste Core Strategy and Proposed Abolition of the South East Plan

The Cabinet considered a report on the Minerals and Waste Core Strategy. Members were in receipt of additional information that had been circulated advising that the Coalition Government had revoked Regional Spatial Strategies. Members were advised of the details of the Government's announcement and its impact on Slough's Local Plan. The Government announcement had gone on to suggest that those authorities that intended to review their housing targets should notify the CLG quickly. It was proposed that the Council should delegate the decision whether to notify the CLG or the outcome of the Cabinet decision to adopt the 6,300 housing figure to the Head of Planning Policy if following investigation this was considered prudent.

The Cabinet was asked to ignore the resolution it had been asked to pass with regard to agreeing the draft Berkshire Minerals and Waste Core Strategy Development Plan for public consultation and it was -

Resolved -

- (a) That the resolution in the main report to approve the Draft Berkshire Minerals and Waste Core Strategy Development Plan Document for public consultation be ignored.
- (b) To note that the South East Plan no longer forms part of the Development Plan for Slough.
- (c) That the Head of Planning Policy be authorised to determine, in consultation with the Commissioner for Neighbourhoods and Renewal, whether to notify the CLG of Slough's intent to retain its 6,300 housing target.
- (d) That the housing allocation and environmental targets in the South East Regional Plan be adopted for development control purposes so that they remain as material considerations in determining planning applications and producing local policies in Slough.

31. Fees for Childcare at Slough's Children's Centres

The Cabinet considered a report seeking approval for an increase to the fees charged for Childcare at Slough's Children's Centres. The increases were to take effect from 1st October 2010. A revised Appendix A to the report had been circulated to all members. Members were advised that the proposed increases were necessary to maintain the drive towards sustainability for the childcare provided at Slough's Children's Centres. The increases were in line with market rates and were not expected to have a long term negative effect on the demand for places. Commissioners noted that many parents did not use the full five days of childcare and most families could claim tax credit so the impact on family budgets would be diminished. Commissioners also noted that the Children's Centres were still one of the cheaper places for parents to leave the children in the town.

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Resolved - That the fees charged for childcare at Slough's Children's Centres are changed, in line with market rates set out in the report.

32. References from Overview and Scrutiny

The Cabinet considered the recommendations of the Education and Children Services Scrutiny Panel with regard to the New Arrivals Project and the Statement of Purpose of the Council's Fostering Services.

Resolved -

- (a) That the Council recognises the importance of the New Arrivals project which is funded through Slough Schools.
- (b) That the Council investigates the possibility of obtaining additional EU funding to support the continuation and expansion of the New Arrivals Project.
- (c) That the current Statement of Purpose of the Council's Fostering Services be approved.

33. Executive Forward Plan

The Cabinet considered the published Forward Plan.

Resolved - That the Forward Plan be approved.

PART II

(The following is a summary of the matter considered in Part II of the meeting).

34. In-Year Budget Reductions 2010/11

The Cabinet considered and resolved the process by which a decision about the future of the Berkshire Connexions Services would be made.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.35 pm)