

Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 20th September, 2010.

Present:- Councillors Anderson (Chair), S Chaudhry, A S Dhaliwal, Matloob, Pantelic, Parmar, Small and Swindlehurst (from 6.40 p.m.)

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors MacIsaac and Munkley

PART I

35. Declarations of Interest

None.

36. Minutes - 12th July 2010

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 12th July, 2010 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

37. Performance and Financial Monitoring 2010/11

The Cabinet considered the Council's performance between 1st April – 30th June, 2010 against the following key areas:

- Performance Monitoring against the corporate balanced score card and the LAA balanced score card
- Projects Management monitoring
- Staff Appraisals update
- Safeguarding training update
- Customer Services review
- Revenue and Capital monitoring position to July 2010.

The Director of Improvement and Development outlined the key issues for Members arising out of the Performance Monitoring and Project Management update. Members were advised of the actions being undertaken to increase the number of appraisals completed and to carry out a qualitative audit of appraised reports. The report set out the action being taken to review current Customer Service performance and made recommendations for an operating model for the future with the aim of improving service delivery for residents and service users.

The Director of Resources outlined the Council's revenue budget position as at 31 July 2010. Month on Month variances for each Directorate were set out in the report along with emergency issues/risks and opportunities and progress against agreed savings. The Director of Resources gave an assurance in answer to a question that the Spanish economy would be kept under close scrutiny but in order to safeguard the Council's investment new deposits with Santander had been suspended.

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The capital programme was currently under review and the outcome of any changes and the impact on the current year would be reported to members.

Members of the Cabinet welcomed the report and the level of detail it provided on the Council's performance and finances for the 1st Quarter. Members present under rule 30 asked a number of questions with regard to proposed reductions in social workers. The Leader advised that very careful consideration had been given to the savings that had been proposed. The ratio of Social Workers/case loads had improved and CMT received a regular update report. The posts that had been deleted were temporary posts funded by one-off money allocated to fund the particular pressure. The Council was faced with making very difficult choices and the service could continue to be provided at a safe level.

Resolved - That the following aspects of the report be noted:

- i. Performance and Project management
- ii. Staff Appraisals management
- iii. Safeguarding Training management
- iv. Customer Services - Duty Desk Review
- v. Financial performance – revenue and capital.

38. Medium Term Financial Plan 2011/12 to 2014/15

The Cabinet considered a report setting out the latest projections of the council's revenue and capital budget for the period 2011/12 to 2014/15 following the Policy and Review Group (PPRG) on 13th July 2010. The report set out the main assumptions driving the Council's medium term financial plan and provided further detail concerning service areas contributions to the 2011/12 savings target as agreed as part of the revenue and capital budget process at the full Council meeting in February 2010.

Members were advised that the council's PPRG had considered future growth and savings priorities. At this meeting £4.423m of 2011/12 savings proposals, initially agreed in February 2010 as part of the Council's ongoing revenue and capital budget planning were reviewed. At the time of the PPRG meeting several savings amounts attributed to service areas were "to be identified". £910K of agreed savings for Childrens Schools and Families as at February 2010 had now been identified and were included in the report for consideration by Members.

The Cabinet was asked to agree the £4.423m of savings listed at Appendix A to the report on the grounds of urgency as they impacted on the current year's budget and in order that full year's savings would be generated from the 1st April, 2011.

Members were advised that as part of the Council's ongoing budget strategy the Council was seeking to minimise the immediate impact on frontline services by focusing contributions to new savings targets for 2011/12 on cross cutting corporate issues and reducing the cost of overheads management and

support services. A further £6.9m savings may be required to balance the revenue budget in 2011/12 based on the latest available information. The report set out the areas of activity that would be progressed in order to identify savings within support services and members were advised that officers were currently developing options with the intention of presenting the options and making recommendations to Cabinet before the end of the calendar year.

Members were advised of the workforce planning exercise that had been undertaken in an effort to reduce the need for compulsory redundancies. All staff had received a letter seeking expressions of interest in a range of alternative future employment options including early retirement, voluntary redundancy and reduced hours. To maximise savings and facilitate swift change, the Cabinet was asked to agree that the Chief Executive as Head of Paid Service and the Strategic Director of Resources as the S 151 Officer in consultation with CMT and appropriate Commissioners be authorised to approve changes to the Council's structure under the workforce planning exercise subject to a viable business case to meet the organisational changes required in the light of the constraints going forward.

The Leader thanked the Director of Resources for the report and emphasised that the Council had secured a balanced budget for 2010/11 and that it was only finding itself in the position of making additional reductions due to the coalition government's announcements. In answer to a question the Director of Resources confirmed that the £6.9m was a realistic figure to be planning for but that there were no guarantees that the Council would not be asked for more.

Commissioners agreed that impact on front line services should be limited insofar as possible and supported the protection of these services by not requiring them to contribute to the new savings target for 2011/12 and focusing the savings requirement on support services.

The Leader made it clear that he intended to deliver the Labour Group's manifesto regardless of funding reductions by the government. The Council would continue to make decisions which, whilst meeting the necessary reductions, protected services that it classed as priority.

A Member present under rule 30 raised a number of detailed questions which were answered.

Members noted that one of the proposed savings for Children Schools and Families involved a reduction in the fees paid to foster carers. The proposal was to reduce the current £400 allowance to £200. This proposal had been considered by the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 7th September 2010. The Panel had recommended that the proposal put forward by representatives of Slough's foster carers that the allowance paid for the first looked after child for each carer be set at £300 (a reduction of £100 from the current allowance) be approved and that all other allowances paid to foster carers should remain at the current rate.

A letter from the Chief Executive of the Fostering Network was tabled at the meeting.

Two representatives were invited to address the Cabinet on behalf of Slough's Foster Carers (Eugene Travers and Zareen Keeton). The meeting was asked to consider the fees in the light of the difficult and 24/7 nature of the role of a Foster Carer. Reference was made to the Foster Care Scheme that was adopted in 2005 when the allowances were increased and the requirement that foster carers resign from jobs that they had outside the home was introduced. It was argued that the proposed reduction in allowances was unreasonable under the Employment Rights Act and Children's Act and foster carers asked whether adequate consultation had been undertaken. Existing foster carers were concerned that children would be put at risk if the proposed reduction in allowances was implemented.

Commissioners considered the arguments that had been put forward and the recommendation of the Scrutiny Panel that the fee be reduced to £300. Whilst noting and understanding the points made by existing Foster Carers Members were concerned that the proposal put forward would not realise the necessary savings and would still leave the Council paying a foster carer allowance in excess of neighbouring authorities. It was noted that even with the proposed reduction to £200 the payment levels remained above other local authorities in the area.

In answer to a question Members were advised that the Foster Carers were not formally engaged under an employment contract. The fee paid was an allowance and the provisions of the Employment Rights Act did not therefore apply.

Members acknowledged that the increased allowance and restriction on work outside the home had been introduced in 2005 to increase the standard of care and reduce reliance on Independent Fostering Agencies. The Director advised that there had been a significant increase in the number of foster carers in 2006 however since then there had been no further marked increase. Members argued that it was questionable whether the policy had worked.

The Director confirmed that some potential foster carers had come forward on the proposed new reduced allowance. However, whilst the authority was keen to recruit new foster carers it wanted to retain existing foster carers as continuity was important for the children involved.

The Director explained how foster care allowances were taxed and, in answer to a question, confirmed that the authority had consulted with foster carers however children and parents had not been consulted.

Commissioners considered that the reduced allowance was fair when compared with neighbouring authorities. The concern over the drop in family income that would result was acknowledged and members considered that this could be mitigated by the removal of the restriction on taking jobs outside

the home. Members asked how quickly this restriction could be freed up and the Director advised that new foster care contracts would need to be issued in any event setting out the authority's expectations and the restriction could be removed very quickly.

Members present under rule 30 raised a number of concerns including whether the Council would lose foster carers as a result of reducing the allowance with more reliance on more costly external placements and the fact that the contribution that foster carers made could not be underestimated.

The Leader summed up the debate emphasising that it was essential that the savings were achieved, there were no easy decisions to be taken and every service in the Council would need to make a reduction. This was the start of a process which the authority intended to manage in a rational and targeted way. The authority could not continue with a scheme that provided allowances that were more generous than neighbouring authorities.

Members discussed whether there needed to be any further consultation undertaken and the Director confirmed that any delay in implementing the decision would have an impact on savings. It was proposed and agreed that the allowance to new Foster Carers be reduced to £200 with immediate effect. The current restriction on outside work would be lifted as soon as possible and that an "in principle decision" be taken to reduce the allowance to existing Foster Carers to £200 subject to appropriate consultation and a report back to the Cabinet on 9th November 2010 with a suggested implementation date.

Resolved -

- (a) That the current Council's projected Revenue Budget for 2011/12 to 2014/15 be noted.
- (b) That the assumptions underlying the Medium Term Financial Plan be noted.
- (c) On the grounds of urgency, that the savings items agreed at the PPRG meeting on 13 July 2010 be confirmed and that they be implemented with immediate effect where possible (with the exception of reduction in foster care fees to **existing** carers which is subject to appropriate consultation and report back to Cabinet on 9th November 2010 as detailed in above minute).
- (d) That the Chief Executive as Head of Paid Service and the Strategic Director of Resources as the S 151 Officer in consultation with Commissioners be authorised to approve changes under the workforce planning exercise as described in the report.

39. Strategy for the Implementation of 'Putting Me First' - Personalised Adult Social Care Services in Slough

The Cabinet considered a report seeking support for and approval to the strategy for the implementation of "Putting Me First" - Personalised Adult Social Care Services in Slough. Members were advised that this programme of work would deliver significant changes to the way Adult Social Care Services were provided in Slough in line with national policy objectives.

The Strategy identified the benefits to be delivered for vulnerable and disabled people in Slough and improvements to services. Members were advised that the Strategy had been presented to the Health Scrutiny Panel in September 2010 and there had been extensive consultation and engagement with service users, carers, provider organisations and other stakeholders over the last two years which had raised awareness for the personalisation agenda and helped to inform the Strategy. The Scrutiny Panel had recognised that reform and improvement to the operation of the customer service interface including My Council would be essential to the successful implementation of "Putting Me First" and requested that the Cabinet closely monitor the ongoing business case for Customer Services and that the relevant Commissioner take a leading role in any recommendations for change to the service.

Resolved -

- (a) That the overarching strategy be approved.
- (b) That the outline model for the redesign of care management and approve moving to formal staff consultation when appropriate as determined by the Strategic Director of Community and Wellbeing in consultation with the lead Commissioner.
- (c) That the development of universal advice and information based on a 'one council' approach be approved.
- (d) That the wider roll-out of personal budgets in October 2010 or when readiness is approved by the Strategic Director of Community and Wellbeing in consultation with the lead Commissioner be endorsed.
- (e) That the need to revise the charging policy be noted and that a more detailed specific report be submitted on proposals prior to extensive public consultation on a new policy to be implemented in April 2011.
- (f) That the workforce development implications be noted.
- (g) That the market development implications be noted and that a more detailed report be submitted in October 2010 setting out adult social care commissioning priorities and intentions for future years.

40. Berkshire Integrated Community Equipment Services (BCES)

The Cabinet considered a report seeking approval to renew the Section 75 Agreement for the Berkshire Integrated Community Equipment Service.

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Members were asked to approve a tender process for a new Berkshire wide service to fit with future requirements of partners.

The service provided equipment on loan to help adults and children with activities of daily living and the service was operated by Southern Central Ambulance Services (SCAS). Slough had been the lead commissioner of the Service since its creation over five years ago and was one of the largest examples of Section 75 Agreement in the country comprising eight partners i.e. the six Berkshire UAs and two PCTs. In 2009 the Section Agreement came to an end and as such now required renewing. Members were advised that there was an opportunity when tendering for redevelop service to build on current Berkshire Community Equipment Store model to further focus on promoting the independence of vulnerable and disabled people to enable them to continue to live in their communities for as long as possible. The partnership model using the Section 75 Agreement provided value for money and was approximately £2m more cost effective than single contract arrangements. The Assistant Director Personalisation, Commissioning and Partnership confirmed that the Council's liability as lead commissioner for this service was protected both jointly and severally.

Resolved -

- (a) That the conclusion of a new Section 75 Agreement as the most cost efficient approach to the provision of equipment be approved.
- (b) That Slough Borough Council continues to act as lead commissioner.
- (c) That Slough Borough Council on behalf of all partners tenders for a new Berkshire wide Equipment Loan service.
- (d) That work continues to develop and implement the service design to increase efficiencies and deliver improved customer outcomes.

41. Parking Enforcement Policy

The Cabinet considered a report seeking agreement to make minor amendments to the existing Parking Enforcement Policy in line with best practice, improving the service and improving recovery of outstanding penalty charge notices. The report also sought Members' agreement for future amendments to be approved through the significant decision process.

The proposed changes and amendments to the Policy were set out in the report.

Members were advised that the report had been considered by the Neighbourhoods and Renewal Scrutiny Panel on 15th September and the proposals had been endorsed.

Members of Cabinet discussed the proposed amendments and raised issues particularly with regard to minicab parking, parking on bank holidays,

provision of receipts when fines have been paid, funeral day exemptions and footway parking.

Commissioners welcomed the revised policy as it would give clear guidelines to all members, officers and the public with regard to the standard of service to expect.

Resolved -

- (a) That the amended Parking Enforcement Policy be adopted.
- (b) That future amendments to the policy to be approved through the Significant Decision Process.
- (c) That the option to incorporate current Housing Land enforcement within this policy and deal with the challenge process thereafter be approved.

42. Housing Futures - Provision of Housing Management Services - Update Report

The Cabinet considered a report updating members on the progress to date in the return of Housing Management Services to direct provision and the winding up of People 1st (Slough) Limited. The report also outlined the next stages and draft timescales anticipated for completion of the project.

Members were advised that the report had been submitted to the Neighbourhoods and Renewal Scrutiny Panel on 15th September 2010 and the Panel had noted the report.

Resolved -

- (a) That the progress to date on the Housing Futures project and in particular the successful transfer of staff and services back to the council on the 1st July 2010 be noted.
- (b) That the proposed workstreams to be undertaken in the coming months to achieve the target reintegration date of December 2010 be noted.
- (c) That the project objectives and restructuring principles outlined within paragraphs 5.5 and 5.6 of the report be endorsed.

43. Changes to Regulation of Adult Social Care Service

The Cabinet considered a report detailing key legislative changes to the way care services were to be regulated by the Regulatory Authority, the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The report also provided assurances of the actions taken to address the new legal responsibilities of the Council.

Resolved - That the report and the actions taken by Officers to address the change in legislation effective from 1st October 2010 be noted.

44. References from Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Cabinet was advised of two references from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:-

- Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel – Foster Carer Allowances - This recommendation had been taken with the Medium Term Financial Strategy item earlier in the meeting.
- Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel - Statement of Purpose for Breakaway, Slough. The Panel had recommended that the Cabinet approve the Breakaway Slough Service for children with learning difficulties and disability short break unit statement of purpose.

Resolved –

- (a) The recommendation of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel re foster care allowances taken with agenda item 4 – not agreed.
- (b) That the recommendation of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel that the updated Statement of Purpose for Breakaway, Slough service for children with learning difficulties and disabilities short break care unit be approved.

45. Executive Forward Plan

Resolved - That the Executive Forward Plan be approved.

46. Members' Attendance Record

Noted.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.15 pm)