

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Cabinet

DATE: 17th October, 2011

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WARD(S): All

PORTFOLIO: Health & Wellbeing – Councillor Walsh

PART I **NON-KEY DECISION**

REFERENCES FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

1. **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to advise Cabinet of the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11th October, 2011 and the Health Scrutiny Panel held on 13th October, 2011.

‘A’ **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE- HOUSING BENEFIT REFORMS AND THE IMPACT ON SLOUGH**

2. **Recommendation**

The Cabinet is requested to resolve to endorse the following recommendation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

“That Cabinet be recommended to examine the current position regarding the placement by other Local Authorities of individuals into emergency private rented accommodation within Slough, and the resulting impact on services”.

3. **Community Strategy Priorities**

None directly arising from this administrative reference report.

4. **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

None directly arising from this administrative reference report.

(b) **Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications**

None directly arising from this administrative reference report.

(c) **Workforce**

None directly arising from this administrative reference report.

5. **Supporting Information**

- 5.1 At the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11th October, 2011, Members considered a report on the Government's current and proposed changes to the Housing Benefit system, and how the impact of changes were being addressed. It was noted that housing demand in Slough had increased by 30% in the past 18 months. The Government's welfare reforms would likely to lead to more unmet need and greater demand for services. The Committee was advised that this unmet need would be exacerbated by people in housing need moving into Slough where rents were predicted to remain more affordable. There was already evidence that local authorities in London were seeking to secure housing from Slough landlords.
- 5.2 It was noted that Homelessness approaches were increasing at a very fast rate, with numbers approaching levels of 10 years ago. In the last 3 years numbers had risen by 62%. This had increased demand on temporary accommodation and on the private rented sector in Slough.
- 5.3 Members were advised that letters had been sent to all other local authorities who had placed people into emergency private rented accommodation within Slough for temporary periods, reminding them of their duty to inform Slough BC and to take the necessary steps to return the applicant to their own borough. The Committee was advised that a number of Authorities repeatedly sent clients to Slough on the grounds that they were unable to provide emergency accommodation themselves. The Committee was particularly concerned to learn that on occasion, these authorities did not appear to be adhering to the regulations surrounding the placement of individuals into emergency housing. Further there were concerns that some placements were not suitable for the individual and the Committee requested that these issues be considered by Cabinet.

6. **Conclusion**

Cabinet is requested to consider the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

7. **Background Documents**

Agenda and report from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 11th October, 2011.

'B' **HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL- EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

8. **Recommendation**

The Cabinet is requested to note the following recommendations of the Health Scrutiny Panel held on 13th October, 2011:

- a) The Panel recognise the contribution that Speedwell Enterprises has made to both the town and its service users, and further recognises that Speedwell is more than a typical factory based employment service.
- b) The Panel is unanimous in its view that disabled people in Slough, and particularly those eligible for Adult Social Care services, should benefit from support into employment, work experience, skills development or volunteering.

- c) The Panel, whilst noting the contribution made by Speedwell, recognises that the current and future needs in Slough call for a revised service, one which is better able to meet and respond to both the volume of need and the specificity of individual cases. As such the Panel recommends a policy shift which sees disabled people being supported into mainstream employment rather than the current model.
- d) The Panel believe that this policy shift will help a greater number of vulnerable people in Slough by ensuring greater access to those that are eligible for Adult Social Care.
- e) The Panel however also recognise the impact that the closure of Speedwell will have, particularly on long-term users of the service, and seeks reassurance from Cabinet over how these users will be guaranteed support into alternative employment or provisions.
- f) The Panel also recognises the social importance and value that users place on Speedwell and also urge the Cabinet to look into ensuring social provisions are maintained and expanded.

9. **Community Strategy Priorities**

None directly arising from this administrative reference report.

10. **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

None directly arising from this administrative reference report.

(b) **Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications**

None directly arising from this administrative reference report.

(c) **Workforce**

None directly arising from this administrative reference report.

11. **Supporting Information**

11.1 At its meeting on 20th September, 2011, the Health Scrutiny Panel considered a report which detailed the review of employment support for disabled people, including services currently provided by the Council at Speedwell Enterprises. The report summarised the options considered for future provision of the service and made recommendations on the proposed future model for service delivery which would be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 17th October, 2011.

11.2 A number of Speedwell Operatives addressed the Panel in support of the continuation of the current service provided at Speedwell Enterprises and explained how they and many others would be adversely affected if the Council put in place plans to end the service in its current form.

11.3 Members were requested to consider a number of recommendations that would be considered by Cabinet. Following debate it was agreed that the Panel would not make

any recommendations to Cabinet until all Panel members had an opportunity to visit the Speedwell Enterprise site.

11.4 A further Special Panel meeting was convened on 13th October so that the Panel could consider any recommendations it wished to make to Cabinet. A number of recommendations (as set out under Para 8) were proposed and agreed by the Panel (by a majority of votes).

12. **Conclusion**

Cabinet is requested to consider the recommendations from the Health Scrutiny Panel.

13. **Background Documents**

Agenda, report and Minutes from the Health Scrutiny Panel held on 20th September 2011 and Agenda and report from Health Scrutiny Panel meeting held 13th October, 2011.