

Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 17th October, 2011.

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

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Coad, Dale-Gough, Long, P K Mann, Plimmer and Smith

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Matloob

PART 1

47. Declarations of Interest

None.

48. Minutes of the Meeting held on 19th September 2011

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19th September 2011 be approved as a correct record.

49. Order of Business

The Chair advised that he intended to alter the order of business, taking items 7, Looked after Children Review and 6, Employment Support for People with Disabilities, before the remaining items.

50. Looked After Children Review

The Cabinet was presented with a report seeking to address the residual effects of the rise in the numbers of looked after children. There had been an increase in the number of looked after children and the cost per placement had also risen, the cumulative effect of which had resulted in significant increased spending. Additional expenditure had been covered from other areas within the department's budget and consequently, no significant overspend was expected.

The report concentrated on the offering of permanent solutions for children who would never be able to return to their families. Members were advised that since January 2011, twelve additional children had been placed with adoptive parents and 24 with special guardians. In addition, 13 new foster parents had come forward within the last year.

The Cabinet was informed of two projects which would be carried out, for which a budget of £826k would be allocated. The first focused upon reducing the number of children who were looked after per head of child population, which included increasing the active recruitment of adopters and implementing a special recruitment project for children five years of age and above. The second project was to focus on ensuring sufficiency of placement

supply and reduction of the individual and collective placement costs for looked after children, which would be aimed at reducing the cost per head of placements by improving effective commissioning arrangements.

It was noted that these projects were very much worthy of investment however it would be critical that the investment be tracked to ensure its efficient use. The Cabinet was informed that this would become a Gold Project for the Council and would be monitored regularly and monthly progress reports would be provided to Cabinet.

Resolved:

- a) That the one-off revenue funding allocated in the current financial year is incorporated into the base budget for future years.
- b) That a separate one-off “invest to improve” project based budget (£826k) is set aside in the current year to resolve the legacy of the placement costs for looked after children and is separated from the operational costs of the Children and Families budget to enable accurate monitoring.
- c) That the projects identified above are funded on an “invest to save” basis over a two year period to decrease the number of children who are looked after per head of population; and to decrease placement costs.
- d) That these projects, alongside those covered by the safeguarding improvement plan, are included in the SBC “Gold” Projects to enable effective management, monitoring and monthly reporting to members.

51. Employment Support for People with Disabilities

The Cabinet was presented with a report which detailed the proposed new strategy and future approach for the provision of employment support for disabled people. A number of objectives were highlighted to the Cabinet, including; increasing the number of disabled people eligible for Adult Social Care services, providing flexible and tailored support to meet the individual’s need and ensuring that services were effectively targeted to ensure value for money. Amendments to the strategy were intended to reflect national guidance, which recommended that future support be tailored to individual need and focus on open employment settings.

The Cabinet was informed that relatively small numbers of people were benefitting from the service in its current form and it was intended that the scope of the service would be increased to ensure that more people would benefit. The new model would be based upon a Work Opportunities model and would be expanded to cover all areas of disabilities.

The Assistant Director of Personalisation, Commissioning and Partnerships advised the Cabinet that all affected staff working at the Speedwell Enterprise Service, would initially be offered redeployment within the Council where possible. All workshop operatives would be offered additional support between November 2011 and March 2012 to find alternative employment or other suitable activity. It was agreed that the Council would actively promote such opportunities to local businesses via Officers, Members and through the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), in addition to engaging with the Chamber of Commerce. It was also noted that the Shaw Trust and the Job Centre Plus had agreed to provide additional specialist support.

Liam Toner, Chairman of the SBC Employee's Disability Forum, asked the Cabinet to consider all issues carefully before making their decision with regard to the closure of the Speedwell Service. He stated that in addition to supporting Employees, Speedwell also supported pupils from local schools and colleges. The Cabinet was informed that there was concern that outside employers would not provide adequate opportunities for people with disabilities once Speedwell had been closed. The Chair thanked Members of Speedwell for attending the Meeting and for the constructive manner in which they had put their argument forward.

The Chair of the Health Scrutiny Panel advised the Cabinet that following a site visit to Speedwell and a special meeting on 13th October 2011, the Panel had resolved to make the following recommendations:

- 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.

Cabinet agreed to note the recommendations made by the Health Scrutiny Panel.

A number of Rule 30 Members addressed the Cabinet and asked a number of questions which were responded to. In response to a question, it was stated that the Policy was not being revised for cost saving purposes nor was it as a result of the Council's intention to develop or sell the land that the service was provided from. It was agreed that the anticipated savings of £100,000 in year one be ring fenced and used to support those people currently employed at Speedwell Enterprise Service to find alternative employment where possible or other suitable daytime activities.

After significant discussions, it was agreed that the proposal would be supported as it was intended that the new model of employment support for disabled people would benefit increased numbers. The Cabinet appreciated concerns raised, however aimed to mitigate these concerns as far as possible, via the commitment to proactively promote the employment of disabled people within local businesses, in addition to the agreement that £100,000 in year one be ring fenced for the benefit of those people currently employed at Speedwell Enterprise Service.

Resolved:

- That the review findings and the options and recommendations for the future be noted.

and:

- a) That the Council implement the policy outlined in this report and the new model of employment support for disabled people.
- b) That future provision focuses on supporting people eligible for Adult Social Care services into employment in mainstream settings.
- c) That an extended Work Opportunities service for all disabled people of working age eligible for Adult Social Care services be implemented during 2012.
- d) That the current Work Opportunities Scheme continue to be provided directly by the Council beyond April 2012 prior to implementation of the new service model.
- e) That the proposed future service model is commissioned in line with procurement guidelines and legislation alongside other day opportunities services following consultation and market testing.

- f) That the Strategic Director of Community and Wellbeing after consultation with the lead Commissioner be authorised to agree the provider of the new service following the tender process.
- g) That the current supported business is determined on 31st March 2012.
- h) That the Council facilitate the termination of the Work Choice contract with Shaw Trust to provide supported employment, with effect from 31st March 2012.
- i) That formal 30 day consultation with affected support staff and workshop operatives and their trade union representatives be undertaken from the end of October to the end of November.
- j) That comprehensive support be offered to displaced workshop operatives to assist them in finding alternative employment where possible or other suitable day time activities.
- k) That support staff and other Council employees affected will follow existing procedures and processes concerning redeployment and redundancy.
- l) That the recommendations from the Health Scrutiny Panel from its meeting on 13th October 2011 be noted.
- m) That the predicted savings of £100,000 in year one be ring fenced and used to support those people currently employed at Speedwell Enterprise Service to find alternative employment where possible or other suitable daytime activities, and to provide opportunities for maintaining social contact and support.
- n) That the Council proactively seek to promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities within the local business community.

The meeting adjourned at 8.35pm and recommenced at 8.45pm

52. Play Strategy 2011 - 2014

The Cabinet considered a report detailing the proposal for the Council's Play Strategy for 2011-2014, which set out plans to make further improvements to the network in order to ensure that high quality play provision would be sustainable. The Cabinet was informed that there were 75 play areas within the borough which were maintained by the Council. Audits had shown that play areas were well distributed across the Borough however differed greatly in condition and quality. It was noted that it should be a priority to introduce more frequent inspections and maintenance visits in order to help maintain all parks to a good standard. The Cabinet was informed that a one off sum of £50,000 was required for four parks to be improved up to standard, in addition

to a further £150,000 for 16 sites which would be redesigned to improve the quality of play, in consultation with local communities.

In response to a question, the Cabinet was advised that the proposed consultation would be likely to mirror that carried out for previous play areas, which included leaflet drops and displaying the proposed design at a manned marquee.

Resolved:

- a) That the future strategic direction for play as set out in the strategy be agreed.
- b) That the Assistant Director for Culture and Skills be authorised, following consultation with the Commissioner for Education and Children, to implement proposals to redesign play spaces as set out in section 6.7 of the report, subject to the outcome of consultation with the local community and Ward Councillors in the areas affected.
- c) That implementation of the Council's planning policy will reflect the principles and aspirations of the play strategy.
- d) That delivery of the strategy be dependent on additional revenue and capital funding as set out in section 4.1ff of the report, which will be considered as part of the Council's annual Medium Term Financial Strategy process.

53. Project Performance and Financial Reporting for 2010/11

The Cabinet was presented with a report highlighting the Council's overall performance from delivery of service to financial management covering the period, up to and including August 2011. The report covered the Council's key areas, which included the Gold Projects covering the period to 31 August 2011 and the Revenue and Capital Monitoring position to 31st August 2011.

The Cabinet was provided with supplementary information with regard to the Treasury Management Policy – Counter party List. It was recommended that the threshold credit criteria be lowered to accommodate the important UK banks affected by the recent credit downgrades. It was proposed that the Director of Resources and Regeneration, after consultation with the Leader of the Council, and with advice taken from advisors, should have the ability to modify the parameters, as an interim measure.

Resolved:

- a) That the following aspects of the report be noted:
 - i. Project management
 - ii. Financial performance – revenue and capital

- Note the current projected outturn position on the General Fund of an overspend of £17K.
 - Note that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) reported a forecast Deficit of £70K.
 - Note the identified areas of risk and emerging issues.
- b) That the updated position regarding down grading of Counter Party lists be noted.
- c) That the Strategic Director of Resources & Regeneration be authorised, after consultation with the Leader of the Council, to act on the advice of the retained advisors and modify the parameters of the approved counter party lists to enable continued investment where appropriate. (Taken as an urgent decision).

54. Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Cabinet considered a report detailing the latest projections of the Council's Revenue and Capital Budgets for the period 2012/2013 to 2015/2016. The paper proposed a strategy for securing saving requirements whilst maintaining the focus on protection for front line services wherever possible. The Cabinet was informed that all employees had received their 'Planning for the Future' letters which provided Officers with the opportunity of sharing their plans and aspirations with regard to their potential career progression.

It was agreed that recommendations (d) and (e) of the report be taken on the grounds of urgency to enable necessary consultation processes to begin.

Resolved:

- a) That the Council's current projected Revenue Budget for 2012/13 to 2015/16 be noted.
- b) That the assumptions underlying the Medium Term Financial Plan be noted.
- c) That the overarching savings strategy and targets as set out on Appendix A be approved and request further development of additional proposals to meet remaining budget deficit.
- d) That the areas of Directorate based savings proposals for as summarised in para 5.7 be agreed, and request officers, to implement them with immediate effect where possible. and agree the specific proposals set out in section 5.15 requesting officers, to implement them with immediate effect where possible.(Taken as an urgent decision)
- e) That any in year under-spends **arising as a result of early implementation of savings**, be allocated as a 50/50 split

between; further improving the protection afforded by the general fund balances and agreed directorate based invest to save initiatives.(Taken as an urgent decision)

- f) The Chief Executive as Head of Paid Service and the Strategic Director of Resources as the S 151 Officer following consultation with Commissioners be authorised to approve changes to the Council's establishment as a result of delivery of the savings as at appendices A.

55. Sustainable Community Strategy Refresh

The Committee considered a report detailing the amended Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS). The SCS set out the strategic objectives and priorities for the Borough for the period of 2008 - 2028. These were reflected in the Strategic Plan 2009 – 2011, which was to be revised in 2012. The Committee was informed that the LSP had adopted the SCS in its current form.

It was noted that point 4 of page 108 of the SCS required amendment to state that "Improve Slough's retail offer so that it is consistently in the top twenty five UK towns..."

Resolved: That the refreshed Slough Sustainable Community Strategy be approved.

56. Britwell Regeneration Scheme - from Concept to Reality

The Cabinet was provided with an update on the progress for the delivery of the Britwell Regeneration Scheme. Mansell Construction Services Limited had failed to deliver in terms of price at the second stage of the tendering process. Consequently a retendering process was to take place, which would set the Scheme back by approximately six to eight weeks.

The Cabinet was informed that good progress had been made and the demolition of various sites was underway as planned.

Resolved:

- a) That the report be noted.
- b) That a further update report be made to the Cabinet meeting on 21st November 2011.

57. References from Overview and Scrutiny

The Cabinet was presented with a report advising of recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11th October 2011 and the Health Scrutiny Panel held on 13th October 2011.

Housing Benefit Reforms and the Impact on Slough

The Cabinet was advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered a report on the Government's current and proposed changes to the Housing Benefit system, and how the impact of the changes were being addressed. It was noted that in last 18 months the housing demand in Slough had increased by 30% and that the reforms proposed by the Government's welfare reforms were likely to lead to an increase in unmet need and greater demand for services. The Cabinet was advised that a number of local authorities repeatedly sent clients to Slough on the grounds that they were unable to provide emergency services themselves.

Resolved:

That 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 be examined.

Employment Support for People with Disabilities

Resolved: That the recommendations of the Health Scrutiny Panel from its meeting on 13th October 2011, as detailed at minute 51, be noted.

58. Executive Forward Plan

Resolved: That the Executive Forward Plan be approved.

PART II

59. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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 that information).

60. Part II Minutes of the Meeting held on 19th September 2011

Resolved:

That the Part II minutes of the meeting held on 19th September 2011 be approved as a correct record.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.30 pm)

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