

Cabinet – Meeting held on Tuesday, 14th February, 2012.

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

PART 1

92. Declarations of Interest

None.

93. Minutes of the Meeting held on 23rd January 2012

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd January 2012 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

94. Project, Performance and Financial Reporting for 2011/12

The Cabinet considered the Council's overall performance from delivery of service to financial management cover the period up to and including December 2011 against the Council's key areas of Gold projects, Performance Scorecard and revenue and capital monitoring position.

Resolved –

- (a) Project management – That the current reported status of each Gold Project be noted.
- (b) Performance Scorecard - That the performance issues identified and highlighted be noted.
- (c) Financial performance – revenue and capital
 - 1. That the current projected outturn position on the General Fund of an under spend of £2.578m be noted.
 - 2. That the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) reported a forecast under spend of £317k be noted.
 - 3. That the identified areas of risk and emerging issues be noted.

95. Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Cabinet considered the draft Budget/MTFS papers previously considered by the Cabinet on 12th December 2011 which reflected a cumulative deficit position of £2.2m across all years taking into account Cabinet decisions agreed.

Officers had obtained further clarity on complex funding arrangements and resulting service pressures and the resulting position as set out in the report showed a balanced budget across all four coming years.

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In addition to the agenda papers the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were tabled along with an updated capital programme 2012/13 to 2015/16. The Director of Resources and Regeneration made a detailed presentation on the MTFs. Cabinet members congratulated officers on the work that had been undertaken to present a balanced budget and noted that the adoption of a clear budget strategy had enabled the Cabinet to secure the successful achievement of manifesto commitments. The Director confirmed that the fire and police precepts would be confirmed at the end of the week and any detailed amendments that were required as a result of these precepts would be tabled at the Council meeting.

Members of the Cabinet asked a number of detailed questions about external and internal risks to the MTFs and measures in place to mitigate them.

Members considered the following recommendations of Overview and Scrutiny Committee which had been tabled:

- (a) That the Committee noted and endorsed the recommendations set out in the draft revenue & capital budget for 2012/13 and draft medium term financial strategy 2011/12 to 2015/16.
- (b) That Cabinet be requested to explore options regarding providing incentives / discount to individuals paying for their council tax bill by direct debit.

Cabinet members indicated that they were happy to support the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and requested that officers consider using the freedoms afforded by the Localism Act to best effect to offer discounts and maximise flexibility to individuals paying their council tax.

Resolved –

- (a) That the draft revenue & capital budget for 2012/13 and draft medium term financial strategy to 2015/16 be recommended to Council for adoption and approval on 21st February 2012.
- (b) That the HRA borrowings relating to ending of Government subsidy are noted and recommended to Council for approval on 21st February 2012.
- (c) That the senior officers pay policy is noted and recommended to Council for approval on 21st February 2012.
- (d) The revised Debt management policy be noted and recommended to Council for approval on 21st February 2012.

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- (e) That the recommendations of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee be noted and that initiatives to offer discounts and maximise flexibility to individuals paying their Council Tax be explored.
- (f) The revised Debt management policy be noted and recommended to Council for approval on 21st February 2012.
- (g) That the recommendations of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee be noted and that initiatives to offer discounts and maximise flexibility to individuals paying their Council Tax be explored.

The Chair agreed to reorder business to enable the income collection and debt recovery item to be taken as the next item.

96. Income Collection and Debt Recovery Policy/ Write Off of Irrecoverable Debt

The Cabinet considered a report seeking approval to a new Income Collection and Debt Recovery Policy for the Council and seeking approval to write-off various individual debts that have been proved to be irrecoverable.

Members welcomed Policy as it would ensure that a uniform approach was taken to the collection of sundry debts across the Council. Members noted the detail of the write offs that had been requested and that the external auditor was satisfied that the Council had acted with all due diligence in seeking to recover the debt. The Leader asked for information with regard to the percentage of debt that the council was able to recover and it was agreed that this would be provided to him and other members of the Cabinet.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Income Collection and Debt Recovery Policy be approved as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.
- (b) That the debts set out in paragraph 5.4 of the report be approved for write off.

97. Britwell Regeneration Scheme - From Concept to Reality

The Cabinet considered an update report on the progress on the delivery of Britwell Regeneration Scheme. The report also sought Cabinet approval to agree to appoint the design and build contractor as set out in the Part II report for two satellite sites.

In introducing the report the Interim Assistant Director of Environment and Regeneration requested, and it was agreed, that recommendations with regard to the contractor to be appointed for the Britwell Regeneration Housing contract be reported to the March Cabinet meeting.

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The Cabinet noted that a Part II report had been circulated on this item and agreed to take the item in Part I with no reference to the detailed Part II information being divulged.

Resolved -

- (a) That the progress reported at Appendix B be noted.
- (b) That the appointment of Thomas Sinden Ltd to construct the Britwell Community Hub and that work is due to commence by the end of February 2012 be noted.
- (c) That the interim Assistant Director Environment and Regeneration report back to Cabinet in March 2012 to seek the appointment of the preferred Developer for sites 2A and 2B of the Britwell Regeneration Scheme contract.
- (d) That the house building contractor for the Jolly Londoner and Old Britwell Library / Car Sales Satellite Housing Sites be appointed as recommended in the report in Part II of the Agenda.
- (e) That the interim Assistant Director Environment & Regeneration be authorised to appoint the house building contractor for the Newbeech Satellite Housing Site following consultation with the Commissioner for Neighbourhoods & Renewal.
- (f) That the progress being made with relocating shops from beneath Wentworth Flats and to relocate the Scouts & Guides on Kennedy Park be noted.
- (g) That a further progress report be made to the next meeting.

98. Adult Learning - Future Models

The Cabinet considered a report setting out proposals for a shared service with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to provide adult learning services. The report summarised the findings of the outline business case for the proposal.

The Commissioner for Opportunity and Skills introduced the report and Assistant Director Culture and Skills advised that economies of scale, flexibility, and the reduced management and administration costs that were associated with the shared service would enable the Council's to deliver the efficiency saving for adult learning in 2012/13 to 2013/14 with no loss of service. The Assistant Director set out the details of the costs that would fall to the council and the potential risks. Commissioners welcomed the proposal for the two authorities to work together in a more efficient manner and that Slough would be the lead authority.

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- (a) That the Assistant Director for Culture and Skills, following consultation with the Commissioner for Opportunity and Skills, be authorised to implement the shared service with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead with Slough as the lead authority, subject to there being no major changes to circumstances that significantly change the business case.
- (b) That the Assistant Director for Culture and Skills be authorised to notify the Skills Funding Agency of the intention to proceed with a shared service and seek their agreement to implementation.

99. Housing Revenue Account Setting 2012 - 2013

The Cabinet considered a report setting out the proposed 2012/13 annual rent in service charge rise to tenants which had been calculated in accordance with the Government's Housing subsidy determination released to local authorities on 1st February 2012. The report also detailed the proposals for other rents and ancillary charges used for specific elements of the Council's housing stock.

Resolved –

- (a) That the rent increase for 2012/13 be set according to the national rent restructuring formula, equivalent to an average increase of 7.64%. Para 5.1 to 5.10 refer.
- (b) That heating, utility and ancillary charges be increased by 5.6%, based on the September RPI figure used in rent setting. Para 5.13 refers.
- (c) That service charges be increased by 6.1%, being the RPI+0.5% uplift used for rent setting. Para 5.14 refers.
- (d) That garage rents be increased by RPI (5.6%). Para 5.12 refers.
- (e) That 'other committee' property rents be increased by 7.64% in line with the average increase of all housing properties. Para 5.11 refers.

100. National Health Service and Public Health Reforms

The Cabinet considered a report detailing the NHS and public health service changes which formed part of the Health and Social Care Bill, currently being considered by Parliament. The report sought agreement to a Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board and its terms of reference.

The Commissioner introduced the report and outlined the implications of the Bill for the local health system and the relationship between the system and local government. The Bill in particular provided for:

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- Abolition of PCTs and the establishment of Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), led by GPs, to commission health services locally;
- Transfer of responsibility for public health to local government;
- Councils to establish Health and Wellbeing Boards.

The Director for Community and Wellbeing advised that £8.7m was being allocated to East Berkshire for public health and that this was an invaluable opportunity for the council to play a major part in influencing long term health outcomes for the community. Members noted that some health professionals were opposed to various aspects of the proposals. How the new system operated between partners and the Health and Wellbeing Board would have a significant impact on the strategic provision of services. A holistic approach was needed between agencies and members noted that there was widespread commitment to making proposals work effectively and mitigating risks.

Resolved –

- (a) Noted the reforms so far and their implications for Slough.
- (b) That the Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board's terms of reference be agreed.
- (c) That officers provide a further report when guidance is received from the government on the relationship between the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Council's Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny.

101. Executive Forward Plan

Resolved - That the Executive Forward Plan be approved.

102. Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved - That the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the item in Part II of the Agenda as it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

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

103. ASSET DISPOSALS: 279 Long Furlong Drive & 1 Egerton Road; 27 and 29 Church Street and Langley Community Hall

The Cabinet considered a report which set out the terms negotiated for two proposed property disposals and a third where bids had been received following an informal tender exercise. The Cabinet agreed the terms of the disposal that had been negotiated on 279 Long Furlong Drive and 1 Egerton road as set out in the report subject to conditions with regard to maintenance of the property being incorporated into the disposal agreement. The Cabinet

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also agreed the terms of disposal by grant of lease negotiated on 27 & 29 Church Street as set out in the report and resolved which of the offers received for Langley Community Hall be accepted.

104. Britwell Regeneration Scheme - From Concept to Reality

Decisions reported in Minute 97.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.00 pm)