

Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 16th December, 2013.

Present:- Councillors Anderson (Chair), P K Mann, Munawar, Pantelic, Parmar, Sharif (from 6.44pm), Swindlehurst and Walsh (from 6.40pm)

Apologies for Absence:- None.

PART 1

59. Declarations of Interest

None were declared.

60. Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 November 2013

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 18th November 2013 be approved as a correct record.

61. Council Taxbases for 2014-15

The Assistant Director Finance & Audit introduced a report which set out the calculations for the Council Taxbase 2014-15; requested delegation of the business rate estimates; and sought approval of the Local Council Tax Support scheme.

Members were advised that the Council was required by law to set the Council Taxbase by 31st January prior to the start of the financial year and the figures presented would be used in the budget setting process. It was noted that the collection rate was proposed to be set at 98%, which was unchanged from the previous year. The Cabinet welcomed the increase in the Council's taxbase as a result of new development in the Borough and raised a number of matters including the potential impact of the proposed boundary changes for Britwell Parish arising from the Community Governance Review. The Assistant Director confirmed that the proposals, which were being considered by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, would not have an impact on the taxbase position for Slough Borough Council.

The Assistant Director reported that the business rates estimates needed to be completed by the end of January, however, the finalised NNDR1 form had not yet been received and the Cabinet therefore agreed to delegate responsibility to the Section 151 Officer to set the Business Rates baseline following consultation with the Leader.

The Local Council Tax Support scheme was tabled and the Cabinet were informed that it remained unchanged from 2013/14 except for the uprating for all customers as detailed in paragraph 4.6 of the report. The Cabinet approved the Scheme for 2014/15.

Resolved –

- (a) That the level of council tax discount in respect of second homes remains at 0%.
- (b) That the level of discount in respect of long-term empty properties remains at 0%. With the charge of a 50% Empty Home Premium for on properties that have been empty longer than 2 years.
- (c) That the collection rate for the council tax for 2014/15 be set at 98%.
- (d) In accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012 the amount calculated by Slough Borough Council as its council taxbase for 2014/15 shall be:
 - i. Parish of Britwell 1,440.5
 - ii. Parish of Colnbrook with Poyle 1,791.0
 - iii. Parish of Wexham 1,269.8
 - iv. Slough Town 33,637.7
 - All areas 38,139.0**
- (e) That the S151 officer be delegated with responsibility to adjust the taxbase following Cabinet due to any changes in Government guidance around this subject.
- (f) That the S151 officer be delegated with responsibility to set the Business Rates baseline following consultation with the Leader.
- (g) That the current Council Tax Support scheme for 2014/15 be approved, noting that it remains unchanged apart from the uprating for all customers as detailed in section 4.6 of the report. This includes the approval for the Chief Executive and S151 Officer to make any textual amendments.

62. Economic Development Strategic Plan for Growth

The Economic Policy Development Officer introduced a report which sought approval for the Economic Development Strategic Plan for Growth 2014-18 which outlined a number of strategic activities necessary to promote economic growth in Slough.

(Councillor Walsh joined the meeting)

Members were informed that the document had undergone wide ranging consultation including with the Slough Wellbeing Board and Overview & Scrutiny Committee and their comments had been incorporated into the draft under consideration. The Cabinet welcomed the plan and emphasised that it was important to ensure effective delivery of the key priorities.

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(Councillor Sharif joined the meeting)

Members discussed a number of issues which would impact on growth such as business support; apprenticeships; supply chain benefits from Council contracts; and infrastructure improvements including Western Rail Access to Heathrow and the imminent recommendations of the Airports Commission.

After due consideration, the Cabinet agreed to approve the plan.

Resolved – That the Economic Development Strategic Plan for Growth be adopted and the implementation of activities in the town be supported.

63. **Scheme of Delegation for Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013**

The Licensing Manager introduced a report seeking approval for the proposed Scheme of Delegation for all functions under the new Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013.

Members were informed of a correction in Appendix A – Scheme of Delegation on page 58 of the agenda. On the 6th line 'Revocation of a Site Licence or Collectors Licence' the delegation should be amended to 'Officers – where the revocation is not contested'. Line 8 duplicated this delegation and was removed. The Cabinet noted this amendment.

The Licensing Manager advised the Cabinet that the drafting of the legislation for the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 had caused uncertainty in local authorities about whether the functions were Executive or Non-Executive. The Cabinet were informed that advice had been sought from the Home Office and it had been stated that the responsibilities under the Act were Executive functions, and although they may become Local Choice functions in the future, it was deemed necessary to approve a Scheme of Delegation in order for the Council to discharge its responsibilities under the Act.

The proposed Scheme of Delegation set out in Appendix A was explained and it was noted that in most cases the applications would be non-contentious whereby Licensing Officers would be given delegated powers to administer and grant such applications. It was proposed that the Licensing Manager have delegated powers for more contentious applications. Applicants had the right to appeal and all decisions would need to be properly documented and reasoned in line with the Home Office guidance set out in Appendix B.

The Cabinet considered a range of issues including the likely volume of licenses, length of licences and various enforcement issues. The Licensing Manager reported that seven site licenses and fifteen collectors' licenses had been issued to date and that the Council worked closely with Thames Valley Police and the Environment Agency in discharging their respective responsibilities under the Act. Following the discussion, the Cabinet approved the Scheme of Delegation as amended above.

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Resolved – That the Scheme of Delegation for all functions under the new Scrap Metal Dealer Act 2013 be approved as set out at paragraphs 5.4 and 5.5 of the report, subject to an amendment to Appendix A that the ‘Revocation of a Site Licence or Collectors Licence’ be delegated to Officers ‘Where the revocation is not contested’.

64. Provision of Refuges

The Strategic Director of Regeneration, Housing and Resources introduced a report which sought approval for the grant of three leases to a Refuge Service Provider to regularise their present occupation of and continued future use of three Council properties.

Details of the properties and financial terms of the proposed leases were included in Appendix A which contained exempt information and was contained in Part II of the agenda. The Cabinet agreed to consider the matters in the Part II Appendix during Part I of the meeting without disclosing any exempt information.

Members were informed that the Refuge Service Provider worked in close contact with partnership authorities across Berkshire and victims of domestic violence were accommodated to ensure the best and safest location to meet their needs. The Cabinet noted the financial implications and terms of the leases as set out in the Part II Appendix and considered the legal advice which stated that the Secretary of State would need to give consent as it was proposed that the provider be charged below market rent. Following due consideration, the Cabinet agreed to grant the leases on the terms proposed and to authorise the Director to seek any necessary consents from the Secretary of State.

Resolved –

- (a) That the granting of the leases on the terms proposed in the confidential appendix A to this report be approved; and
- (b) That the Strategic Director of Resources, Housing & Regeneration be authorised to seek such consents from the Secretary of State for the grant of such leases as the Head of Legal Services may advise are required to be obtained for this purpose.

65. References from Overview & Scrutiny

There were no references from Overview & Scrutiny.

66. Notification of Forthcoming Decisions

Resolved – That the published Notification of Decisions be endorsed.

67. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the items in Part II of the agenda as they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information relating to individuals and to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) as defined in paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part I the Schedule 12A the Local Government Act 1972.

Below is a summary of the decisions of the Cabinet taken during Part II of the agenda.

68. Provision of Refuges - Appendix A

The Part II Appendix, which contained exempt information, was noted and the proposed terms of the leases for three properties were agreed.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 6.57 pm)