

## **Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 20th January, 2014.**

**Present:-** Councillors Anderson, P K Mann, Munawar, Pantelic, Parmar (from 6.40pm), Sharif (from 6.36pm), Swindlehurst and Walsh

**Apologies for Absence:-** None.

### **PART 1**

#### **69. Declarations of Interest**

None were declared.

#### **70. Minutes of the Meeting held on 16th December 2013**

**Resolved –** That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2013 be approved as a correct record.

#### **71. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014-18 and Revenue Budget 2014-15 - Proposed Savings Update**

The Assistant Director Finance & Audit introduced a report which updated the Cabinet on the current position on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and requested approval for the second tranche of savings proposals that would support the 2014-15 Revenue Budget.

*(Councillor Sharif joined the meeting)*

The Cabinet were advised of the likely impacts of the Local Government Finance Settlement on the Council's financial position and noted a number of other significant changes to assumptions in the MTFS model since the last report to Cabinet in November 2013. These included an increase in the Council Tax base, Revenue Support Grant (assumption increased by £0.2m since the previous report) and a greater potential surplus on the Collection Fund. However, the figure for retained Business Rates had decreased by circa £1m and this figure was volatile and would be monitored closely. Members commented on Table 1.1 on page 10 of the agenda which highlighted that the Revenue Support Grant would fall from £39.76m in 2013-14 to £23.20m in 2015-16 with further significant reductions anticipated in future years which had been built into the MTFS model. The Cabinet discussed the challenges this would pose in terms of continuing to protect frontline services as far as possible, and Members commented that the bulk of savings agreed in recent years had been via 'efficiency and transformation', however these would become harder to find in the future. Members also requested a comparator figure of the level of Revenue Support Grant funding since 2010.

*(Councillor Parmar joined the meeting)*

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The Cabinet discussed the increased Directorate pressure in the Children's social care budget. The service had reviewed its financial pressures for the year ahead and resulted in a revised figure of £3.4m of additional cost for core budgets with an additional £2.4m to be made available, if required, from one-off funds. Members were informed that the two elements of the growth item were Looked After Children (LAC) cost pressures and additional staffing costs. The Council had seen an increase in LAC in recent years and this was expected to continue as Slough's population was projected to rise. The staffing cost growth aimed to reduce social workers case loads to an average of 16 and to improve the recruitment and retention of skilled staff. The Cabinet welcomed the work that had been done to fully understand the growing pressures in Children's services and recognised the importance of ensuring the appropriate resources were available to manage the increasing pressures on the service in a planned way.

The net impact of the growth pressures and changing MTFS assumptions was to increase the total savings requirement for 2014-15 by £1.2m to a total of £13.4m of which £9.1m had been approved by the Cabinet in November for recommendation to the Council. Proposals for a second tranche of savings totalling £3m were included in Appendix A to the report. Members discussed the detail of a number of specific savings proposals including the anticipated increased investment returns of £800k, subject to agreement of the Treasury Management Strategy, and withholding the inflation uplift for libraries. In view of the growth pressures in Children's Services arising from the anticipated demographic change in the borough, the Cabinet also considered the potential impact on other service areas such as Special Educational Needs provision. Following due consideration, the Cabinet agreed to include the second tranche of proposed savings in the Revenue Budget 2014-15 that would be recommended to Council in February 2014.

**Resolved –** That the savings set out in Appendix A of the report be included in the Revenue Budget 2014-15 to be approved by Council in February, subject to any further adjustments.

### **72. Thames Valley Berkshire City Deal**

The Head of Strategic Policy and Communications introduced a report which updated the Cabinet on the Berkshire City Deal and sought agreement to the formation of a joint committee to oversee implementation of the City Deal.

Members were informed that the City Deal had been accepted by the Government and signed by all six local authorities in Berkshire and Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) in October 2013. The City Deal focused on increasing the participation of 16-24 year olds in education, training and work. Members discussed the impact the targeted 50% reduction in youth unemployment would have if implemented in Slough over the next three years. It was noted that this target was Berkshire wide and there was not a specific target for Slough. The Deal would involve the establishment of an Employment and Skills Gateway to create skills and

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employment opportunities and would be delivered by a 'hub and spoke' model. The 'spoke' in Slough would be Slough Aspire.

The governance arrangements were explained and the Cabinet were advised that it was necessary to set up a joint committee of all Berkshire unitary authorities to oversee implementation of the City Deal. It was noted that Reading Borough Council would be the accountable body and Bracknell Forest Council would provide the secretariat for the joint committee with the LEP being the operational body. The Cabinet noted the signing of the City Deal, welcomed the focus on youth unemployment and agreed the proposed governance arrangements as set out in the report.

### Resolved –

- (a) That it be noted that the Thames Valley Berkshire City Deal, focused on increasing the participation of 16-24 year olds in education, training and work, to develop work-related skills and to streamline the pathway to employment for young people, was accepted by government and launched on 28 October 2013 with the signing of the deal document by all six unitary authorities and the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).
- (b) That a Joint Committee be established of the six Berkshire Unitary Authorities be appointed under Section 102 (2) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972 for the purposes of managing and delivering the agreed outcomes of the City Deal initiative, and in this regard:
  - The Leader of the Council be appointed to the Joint Committee as Slough Borough Council's representative;
  - Reading Borough Council be recognised as the Accountable Body for the purposes of the City Deal initiative;
  - Bracknell Forest Borough Council be appointed to the role of Secretariat to the Joint Committee on behalf of the six unitary authorities;
  - The Berkshire-wide officer group set up to steer the development of the City Deal Proposal continue in this role reporting to the Joint Committee, and be responsible for:
    - Updating the Joint Committee on progress with the City Deal
    - Implementation and delivery of the City Deal on agreed priorities
    - Appropriate advice and guidance to the Joint Committee on cross-boundary decisions on spending based on agreed priorities and criteria for dispersal of funding.

**73. Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership - Consultation Draft Strategic Economic Plan**

The Strategic Director Regeneration, Housing and Resources introduced a report regarding the Council's response to the consultation draft Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) 2015/16 – 2020/21 produced by Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

The Government intended to agree a Growth Deal with every LEP which meant local areas could seek freedoms, flexibilities and greater influence on Government resources in return for the agreement of a SEP. The document would be both a strategic plan for the Berkshire economy and would also support bids for resources such as the Local Growth Fund in 2015/16.

The Cabinet were asked to delegate authority to respond to the current consultation which would confirm approval for the document in principle subject to a number of comments. These included a stronger emphasis on the distinctive local economies across Berkshire which recognised that Slough's functional economic area spread well beyond Berkshire into places such as west London and Buckinghamshire. The response would also recommend that the SEP be strengthened to reflect a wider focus of research and development activity across all growth sectors, including pharmaceuticals which were particularly strong in Slough, and greater clarity on the proposals for business support such as incubation facilities which the Council were pursuing. After due consideration, the Cabinet agreed the recommendations as set out in the report.

**Resolved –**

- (a) That the Strategic Director Regeneration, Housing and Resources be delegated authority to write to Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (TVB LEP) confirming approval in principle of the draft Strategic Economic Plan but subject to:
- A stronger approach to the distinctive local economies of TVB which more clearly identifies the interdependencies between local authorities and their residents and businesses, both within and outside the LEP area, for the provisions of jobs and housing.
  - incorporating and reflecting more effectively the wider functional economic area within which Slough is situated and the connections and dependencies with surrounding LEP areas and London.
  - the SEP being strengthened to reflect a focus on research and development (R+D) activity across all growth sectors and not just the tech-based, recognising that the development of 'clusters' can be generated by any sector where there is a coming together of ideas and knowledge development
  - clarity about the proposals for business support, particularly those for incubator space where SBC is pro-actively improving its offer through good asset management (Plymouth Road)

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- (b) That it be noted that further consultation is being undertaken with groups representing local businesses and communities and that any comments received from this consultation will be passed directly to TVB LEP.

### **74. Options Appraisal: Future Use of Gurney House Site**

The Assistant Director Housing & Environment introduced a report which updated Members of the progress made on the feasibility study and site evaluation for the land formerly occupied by Gurney House following the report considered by the Cabinet in September 2013.

Members were informed that the evaluation of all of the options had not been fully concluded, but that the work to date gave officers sufficient assurance that it would be in the Council's financial interests to retain the site and commission the development of family homes. An assessment of the options for the site had confirmed that a density of ten, 4 bedroom semi-detached homes would provide the most favourable scheme and an indicative plan was included in the report. The Cabinet recognised that the option of disposing of the site, as would generally have happened in the past, had been considered but that the Council's financial interests would be best served by retaining the site and developing much needed family homes in the borough. Members discussed the options and welcomed the progress to date, including the financial model and proposed configuration of the site, and believed that it would provide a desirable development whilst retaining the attractive streetscape in the locality.

Further work on developing the best tenure mix and delivery mechanism, which could include the Slough Regeneration Partnership, Capital Programme or a new subsidiary housing company, would continue and it was agreed that a further report be considered by the Cabinet in March 2014 to address these matters. Members discussed the progress of the demolition of the existing building and it was noted that this was due to take place imminently. The Cabinet also requested that consideration be given to the use of spoil from the demolition, potentially to fill rather than gate subways/underpasses where appropriate.

#### **Resolved –**

- (a) That approval be given to retain the site of the former Gurney House in order to construct high quality family homes;
- (b) That approval be given for the Strategic Director of Regeneration, Housing & Resources to complete the detailed feasibility study to develop proposals for a residential scheme determining
  - i. The size, number and layout of the new homes.
  - ii. The final tenure or mix of tenures on site and

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- iii. The delivery mechanism to be used in order to limit risk to an acceptable level while maximising the speed and rate of capital or revenue return to the council.
- (c) That the Strategic Director of Regeneration, Housing & Resources report back to Cabinet in March 2014 on the proposed tenure mix, marketing and financial modelling for the proposed scheme.

### **75. References from Overview & Scrutiny**

The Cabinet considered two reports from scrutiny in relation to the Childhood Obesity review undertaken by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and a review of Accident & Emergency Provision at Wexham Park Hospital carried out by the Health Scrutiny Panel.

Members welcomed the thorough analysis and evidence based conclusions in the report, particularly in relation to the Childhood Obesity Review, and agreed that it provided a number of clear recommendations which could now be implemented. The reports were both noted and the relevant recommendations for the Cabinet in relation to the Childhood Obesity Report as set out below were agreed.

#### **Resolved –**

- (a) That the findings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's Review of Childhood Obesity be noted and that the following recommendations be agreed:
  - a. That the Cabinet agree the prioritising of work currently underway to improve the scope of healthy offers across a range of price levels by local retailers, specifically within the vicinity of local schools.
  - c. That the council work with all schools to encourage the inclusion of cooking classes and nutritional education in the curriculum for all schools in the borough.
  - e. That the council, through the Transport Working Party, provide support to the schools for initiatives to improve the use of sustainable travel to and from schools, recognising not only the health benefits, but also the congestion and environmental benefits improved School Transport Plans can have.
  - f. That the council looks at its methods of advertising the local leisure offer, particularly the available open spaces for 'unorganised' sporting activities, and include details of how improvements can/have been made when the Overview and Scrutiny Committee review the initial effectiveness of the new Physical Activity and Sport Strategy 2013-15 in autumn 2014.

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- g. That the Cabinet commission officers to undertake a piece of work reviewing the balance of the leisure offer in the borough to ensure an appropriate mix for both boys and girls.
  - h. That a formalised process for information sharing on initiatives to tackle childhood obesity be developed between the CCG, children's centres, health visitors, SBC's Culture and Sport team and schools. This Review recommends that the CCG leads on this, to ensure their engagement as they would be able to develop an overall picture of health and refer patients to the most appropriate services or initiatives that are available.
- (b) That the findings of the Health Scrutiny Panel's Accident and Emergency Provision and Wexham Park Hospital Review be noted.

### **76. Notification of Forthcoming Decisions**

The Cabinet noted that a number of updates had been made to the published Notification of Decisions with regards to the rescheduling of decisions on the Chalvey Regeneration Plan and the Hackney Carriage Fare Tariff, which were both now expected to be considered in March 2014.

**Resolved** – That the Notification of Decisions for February to April 2014 be approved.

### **77. Exclusion of Press and Public**

**Resolved** – 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 individuals and the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding the information) as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (amended).

### **78. Part II Minutes - 16th December 2013**

**Resolved** – That the Part II minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2013 be approved.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.33 pm and closed at 7.15 pm)