

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Overview and Scrutiny Committee **DATE:** 9th July 2015

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PART I **FOR INFORMATION & COMMENT**

THEAMES VALLEY TRANSACTIONAL SERVICES - APRIL 2014 TO MARCH 2015

1. **Purpose of Report**

This report follows on from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2015 to conclude the Annual report of the Thames Valley Transactional Service Centre for the period April 2014 to March 2015. It realigns the reporting periods to allow the Committee full sight of the reporting year.

2. **Recommendation**

That the Committee is requested to scrutinise and comment on the performance for this reporting period.

3. **The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

The outsourcing of the council's transactional services to arvato aims to secure sustained improvement across all services whilst ensuring the well being of our most vulnerable members of the communities.

3a. **Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

The principle matters covering this period are reported in appendix A.

The services in scope of the partnership link to the overall effectiveness and efficient running of the council. By streamlining processes, implementing service improvements and securing a step change in performance across all services in scope, the service supports the Council's medium term financial strategy through optimising collection of revenues whilst ensuring that benefits continue to reach our most vulnerable members of the community in an efficient and timely manner. The overarching aim of the partnership continues to support all of the Council's priorities.

Civic responsibility

arvato remains committed to its Civic responsibilities and regularly participate in local initiatives to help support the borough. Some key activities have included Slough Smart Commute and raising money for charity. Under the umbrella of the partnership, arvato have invested resources in facilitating workshops in schools relating to poverty awareness. These focussed on how to avoid key problems, where to seek help and how the Council supports those in need.

Improving the image of the town

arvato continue to be engaged with Slough Aspire and have senior level representation on the board. More recently arvato sponsored the Slough Business Awards 2015 and remain keen to explore in partnership with the Council how to support the marketing of Slough as a business destination.

arvato has continued to grow the business in Slough with approximately half of the 50 temporary staff taken on over Christmas retained. Further bids for new business are already underway and which will hopefully see further new jobs brought to the borough of Slough.

3b. **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)**

Please refer to the appendix for detailed information relating to performance.

4. **Other Implications**

(a) Financial

Increases to Council Tax and Business Rates collection in year, compared to previous years, will likely boost the Council's overall collection rates and drive more money into the Council

(b) Risk Management

Risk	Mitigating action	Opportunities
Legal	The contract has built in flexibility which enables changes to be appropriately considered using the change control mechanism	Allows for flexibility as the council's corporate and service priorities change.
Property	With the relocation of arvato's head office to Slough all risks associated with property have now been mitigated	The re-location has enabled Slough Borough Council to make use of the training and meeting room facilities at Phoenix 1 – Farnham Road. The site is also much closer located than previously when Airways House was leased.
Human Rights	Not applicable	
Health and Safety	arvato have access to their own corporate Health and Safety services	There are always opportunities to draw on arvato corporate resources to assist the council as required.
Employment Issues	All staff delivering Transactional services were successfully TUPE'd over to arvato.	There is a requirement within the contract deliverables for arvato to offer employment opportunities to the people

		of Slough and actively encourage this through their recruitment processes.
Equalities Issues	Not applicable - Council policies apply as part of the Staff transfer	
Community Support	arvato UK headquarters based in Slough	arvato continue to support community projects, working with Slough mobility, board member of ASPIRE, development of the arvato apprenticeship academy - strengthening employment opportunities for local residents.
Communications	There is a joint partnership arrangement in place to share information and manage communication	Access to a wider communications network allows the authority to benefit from more positive exposure, marketing and promotion
Community Safety	The employment of Neighbourhood benefit officers provide a more locally accessible and tailored service to local residents	Improved access to services and opportunities to work with our most vulnerable residents to maximise benefits.
Financial	Agreed pricing model , KPI framework and Payment mechanism which can be reviewed annually as the councils priorities change	Allows the partnership the flexibility to focus on emerging priorities faced by the council and the services it delivers.
Timetable for delivery	The contract is in place for a period of 10 years from April 1 st 2012 – March 2022.	Timescales allow for services to be embedded and focus on service improvements
Project Capacity	Not applicable - this is not a project	

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human rights implications

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

Equality Impact Assessments are completed as changes are made to policy

(e) Workforce

Approximately 100 staff were TUPE'd successfully as part of the initial procurement process on existing terms and conditions as part of Phase 1. A further 98 staff were successfully TUPE'd as part of Phase 2. All staff continue to be fully engaged in service improvements and training opportunities to further improve their skills, which will ultimately deliver more efficient and effective services to the residents of Slough.

5. **Supporting Information**

Key information is provided in Appendix A.

6. **Conclusion**

The annual results for the 2014/2015 financial have seen best-ever collections performance for both Council Tax and Business Rates. This has put Council an additional £2.19m back into Slough Council's budget compared to last year. Breaking that figure down, it included over £1.8 million for Council Tax and £395,000 for Business Rates, with an on collections rates of 96% for Council Tax and 96.8% for Business Rates (target: 96.4%). Looking forward, the targets for 2015/16 include a 96.6% collection rate for Council Taxes and a 96.7% target for Business Rates.

After introducing revenues and benefits self-service options for citizens via Slough Council's website in March, the current position is over 1,300 residents have signed up to use these services online, including 800 registering for direct debit payments. The self-service kiosks implemented in Landmark Place have helped to collect £120,000 from 1,200 customers in the first six weeks alone.

We look forward to further improvements in service for residents over the course of the coming year.

7. **Appendices Attached**

'A' - Slough Annual Strategic Dashboard

8. **Background Papers**

None