

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Meeting held on Thursday, 12th November, 2015.

Present:- Councillors Nazir (Chair), Strutton (Vice-Chair), Ajaib, Bains, Bal, Malik, Rana and Usmani

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillor Morris.

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor N Holledge

PART I

28. Declaration of Interest

Councillor Bal declared that his daughter worked for the Council.

Agenda Item 5, Financial and Performance Report Quarter 2: Councillor Malik declared that she resided in a Council property.

29. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 10th September 2015

Resolved – That the minutes of the last meeting held on 10th September 2015 be approved as a correct record

30. Member Questions

None received.

31. Children's Services Trust: Governance Arrangements

Details of the governance arrangements that had been put in place to support the transition of children's social care and special education needs (SEN) services to the Slough Children's Services Trust (SCST or The Trust) were outlined. Members were reminded that the process to establish the SCST was completed on 30th September 2015 and services were transferred to the new organisation on 1 October 2015.

Members were informed that the Local Authority contract with the Trust included agreed standards and monitoring arrangements. In addition to informal liaison the following formal governance arrangements would be established:

- *Strategic Monitoring Board.* Enabling the Trust to report to the Council on its performance of the services and allow the Council to monitor the delivery of its statutory functions, in accordance with the Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) agreed within the contract. Although additional individuals could be invited to attend these meetings, should an issue requiring specific knowledge be required; these individuals would not be permanent members of the Board.

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- *Partnership Board.* The Board would provide a forum in which the 'shared enterprise' between the Council and Trust would be periodically reviewed and considered. The primary purpose of such a Board would be to promote liaison between the Council and Trust to ensure that there was positive exchange of information that may impact upon children's social care services.
- *Participation in the Council's Democratic Processes.* It was noted that the contract confirmed the Trust's participation in the Council's democratic processes through representative attendance at committee meetings. It was brought to the Committee's attention that the Trust was required to attend four Council meetings in the municipal year. It was outlined that this would include two meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and one meeting of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel and Cabinet respectively. Within the current municipal year (30 April 2016) the Trust would participate in up to three council meetings.

Members raised a number of issues in the ensuing discussion, including whether the KPI's were considered sufficient to ensure effective monitoring of the SCST. It was explained that the KPI's were subject to a baselining exercise, by external advisers, which were due to be completed within three months of the commencement of the Trust. Targets would then be agreed for the start of Year 2 (May 2016).

Clarification was sought regarding attendance at meetings and the likelihood of the Trust attending meetings in addition to those scheduled for the municipal year. It was noted that the Trust's attendance at council meetings would be in support of the Council's Director of Children's Services, given that statutory responsibility for the delivery of services remained with the Council. Although invitations could be issued to the Trust, requesting attendance at meetings in addition to the four scheduled for the municipal year, it would be within the Trust's discretion in deciding whether to attend such meetings. It was confirmed that in addition to Cabinet and Scrutiny meetings, the Trust would be in attendance at the Corporate Parenting Panel and Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

Queries relating to staffing, SCST budget and whistleblowing procedures were raised. Members were informed that these matters were now within the remit of the Trust and therefore would need to be discussed when SCST representatives were in attendance at future meetings.

The Committee noted the contract monitoring arrangements, which would allow the Trust the independence to undertake the necessary measures to improve services whilst ensuring that the Council was able to assure itself that its statutory duties were being met and services improving.

Resolved – That the Children's Services Trust Governance Arrangements be noted.

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32. Financial and Performance Report Quarter 2

The Committee were provided with the latest financial information for the financial year 2015/16. The Council was forecasting an overspend of £2.046m at month 6, which was a worse position in comparison to month 5, when the Council had reported a potential £2.491m overspend. The main service areas showing variation from budget were Children and Families, Adult Social Care and Health Partnerships, Public Health and Housing and Environment. These had been offset by other service and some corporate under spends. Service action plans had reduced the underlying overspend. Whilst no additional savings were expected from the Children and Families service the Adult Social Care Service remained committed to ensuring measures were taken to get as close to break even as possible.

An update summary of the Gold Projects was provided and of the seven gold projects, one was assessed as 'green', one at 'green/amber', three at 'amber' and two at 'red'. Members attention was drawn to the Slough Children's Services Transition Project and the fact that this project was now closed, given that the services had transferred on 1 October 2015. The two red projects were noted as School Places Programme and The Curve.

Committee Members' expressed concern regarding the current financial position and overspend and asked about the implications if the recovery plans, as detailed in the report, did not materialise. It was explained that most service areas had managed to achieve an underspend to help mitigate the overspend in budget in Children's Services. Additional income sources would also contribute to the overall budget position, including the Slough Regeneration Partnership Project .

A Member asked for details regarding the long-term future use of the former Town Hall site, which was currently operating as a primary school, given that the site could be sold to generate income to the Council. The Committee were informed that a number of alternative options were being considered to generate income.

Following the announcement that delays in the completion of The Curve had resulted in the opening being delayed until Spring 2016, a Member requested details of what the financial implications of the delay were likely to be. The Strategic Director for Regeneration, Housing and Resources confirmed that issues in relation to sub-contractors had resulted in the delay of the completion of the project. Committee Members were also informed that Morgan Sindall had agreed to reimburse the Council for any financial costs incurred as a result of the delay in opening of The Curve. It was agreed that these financial details would, when available, be circulated to Committee Members.

A Member sought clarification as to why the implementation of a Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) had been delayed until spring 2016. It was explained that one of the primary purposes of the MASH was to ensure greater co-operation between the various organisations involved and it was

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critical that any issues were resolved prior to the MASH being fully operational.

A Member queried the £439k budget pressure reported in the Public Health service. It was outlined that the impending in year reduction to the Public Health Grant (PHG) nationally, meant that the 2015/16 PHG would reduce in year by 7%, resulting in a loss of funding totalling £436k. Due to the joint arrangements that all Berkshire Unitaries had agreed to it was unlikely that a reduction in these contracts would be realised in the current financial year.

Members noted that the Major Contracts Review Saving project was currently showing as a red status. The Strategic Director for Regeneration, Housing and Resources informed the Committee that two major contracts, Interserve and Amey, were currently being reviewed and that officers were reasonably confident that the a green status would be achieved before the end of the financial year. Responding to whether consideration would be given to bringing any of the services in house; it was confirmed that, although an options appraisal would be conducted, it was likely that the services would remain contracted out. Concerns regarding the lack of effective monitoring of previous contracts was raised and it was noted that monitoring details and Key Performance Indicators would be included within any new contract.

Details regarding the Housing Revenue Account, specifically allocation of funds from this account, were requested. Councillor Morris, under Rule 30, also addressed the Committee, and queried how time was accounted for work carried out in relation to HRA matters. It was explained that the funds were ring fenced and that the Council was under a statutory duty to ensure that funds from this account were only applied to the HRA.

Resolved – That details of the Financial and Performance Report Quarter 2 be noted.

33. **Five Year Plan: Changing, Retaining and Growing**

The Committee considered a report which outlined details of activity that were being delivered for the Changing, Retaining and Growing theme of the Five Year Plan. Members were updated on the developments within the three outcomes that supported this theme - activity that attracts and retains businesses, availability of housing for the growing population and ensuring regeneration and development support the centre of town as a destination for residents, businesses and retailers. Key developments included:

- *Appointment of a PR marketing agency to deliver a Slough brand and develop a collective /collaborative unique selling point or the town.* A Member queried whether this initiative would provide 'value for money.' The Assistant Director of Strategy and Engagement informed the meeting that the Business Investment Group had met and were of the view that this would be a positive concept all partners had agreed to fund the initiative.

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- *Centre of Slough Strategy.* It was noted that Cabinet in September had approved the Strategy and attracting more business was a key element within this. A general discussion followed regarding the lack of evening/night time economy in the town centre. Whilst recognising that this was an issue, officers stated that upcoming developments and refurbishments would all contribute to sustaining an evening economy /active High Street.
- *Establish a Business Inward Investment and Retention Function.* It was clarified that software would be purchased to establish a database of all the information that was required to support and retain businesses /companies in Slough. Responding to why a target of attracting four new businesses investing in the town had not been achieved, it was explained that this was the first year that the targets had been set and that two new businesses had re-located to the town. A target of four new businesses investing in the town remained the target for 2015/16.
- *Appointment of Town Centre Manager.* The Committee were informed that the Town Centre Manager had recently started and partnership meetings were scheduled to take place.
- *Cycle Hub launched in Brunel Way.* A Member requested details regarding the business rationale for the implementation of the Cycle Hub, including consultation carried out and an options appraisal. It was agreed that this information would be forwarded to the Member concerned.
- *LED Street Lighting Scheme.* The Council had, in conjunction with two neighbouring authorities', secured £20m funds from the Department of Transport to implement a LED Street Lighting Scheme.

Resolved - That the activity that is being delivered for the changing, retaining and growing theme of the Five Year Plan, be noted.

34. Forward Work Programme

Members considered details of the Committee's work programme.

Resolved – That the current work programme for the 2015/16 municipal year be noted, subject to the following additional items:

- 3 March 2015 - i) New Benefits System: Implications on local residents.
ii) Housing revenue Account (Information Report)

35. Attendance Record

Resolved - That details of the Members Attendance Record be noted.

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36. Future Meeting Dates

- 12 January 2016 – Joint Meeting Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Education and Children’s Services Scrutiny Panel.
- 20 January 2016 – Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.15 pm)