

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Meeting held on Thursday, 14th July, 2016.

Present:- Councillors Nazir (Chair), Strutton (Vice-Chair), Bedi, Coad, N Holledge, Sadiq, A Sandhu and R Sandhu

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Anderson, Arvind Dhaliwal, Matloob and Swindlehurst

Apologies for Absence:- None.

PART I

7. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Strutton declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item 5, update report on Burnham Station Experimental Scheme in that he had previously been involved in a petition relating to this matter.

8. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 14th June 2016

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 14th June, 2016 be approved as a correct record.

9. Member Questions

A number of Member Questions and Responses were tabled and supplementary questions were submitted to the Officer.

Update on work in-progress for the waste recycling plant next to the railway lines and information regarding arvato's site off Farnham Road, where the Health & Safety and Trading Standards teams enforced a closure

Roger Parkin, Director of Customer and Community Services, advised that the Green world site had been cleared under the guidelines of Environmental Agency (EA) intervention and further health and safety assessments on the empty structure had been carried out and the appropriate actions taken. The site was now closed and secured and SBC was undertaking a review of all waste and scrap sites in the borough to check whether there were any risks similar to those at Greener World or the Birmingham site. The Council was also in discussion with the EA in light of the Green World problems to discuss how the powers of the EA, councils or others could be enhanced to enable a swifter and more certain outcome.

A Member questioned whether action had been taken quickly enough to deal with the issue. The Officer advised that immediately the problem was identified, legal action was taken to resolve the matter.

The Officer was asked what costs were incurred in dealing with the problem and advised that these were paid by the EA. However costs had resulted

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which related to the security gates and building inspections. It was agreed that the Officer would report the actual cost to the Committee.

As requested at the meeting of the Committee held on 3rd March, 2016, could estimated additional costs (by department) be provided regarding the knock on costs the Curve?

Roger Parkin, Director of Customer and Community Services advised that the capital cost of the creation of the Registrar's office at The Curve had a global figure of £688,795. This was brought to the Capital Strategy board in July 2016 and approved.

A Member advised the Officer that the costs requested related to those which resulted in the delay of the completion of the Curve, for example the continuation of rents and rates which would not have been payable had the scheme been delivered on time. The Officer advised that he would provide these costs for the Committee.

How many residents were affected by the communications issues between arvato and its contracted bailiff / debt collection agents as described in a recent letter by a resident of Little Brook Avenue, where residents were incorrectly told initially resulted from a computer glitch? How many residents were wrongly issued with a summons and what were the unnecessary resulting court costs? What actions had been taken to avoid this happening again?

Roger Parkin, Director of Customer and Community Services, advised that regarding the letter in question, this was not caused by a communication glitch between arvato and the Enforcement Agent. The Agent had a liability order for 2015/16, collected the money for 2015/16 and then passed the matter to arvato / Council Tax. The customer had paid some council tax, which they wanted to go to their 2016/17 but did not pay the instalment exactly and made the payment late. Therefore the payment received was allocated to the earliest debt (the system or arvato would not know the customers intention and at this stage did not know the Enforcement Agent had collected). As there were no payments showing in 2016/17 the customer received a summons and they had already had a reminder. Once the customer raised this via their Councillor, the money was transferred to 2016/17 and the summons removed.

The cost of the Court summons was £3.00. Arvato had an ongoing project to review credits on all the accounts to ensure that they were allocated to the correct payment year.

A Member advised that he had heard of similar incidents and was concerned that this was not an isolated incident. The Officer reassured him that arvato looked at accounts before proceeding to obtain a summons.

Resolved- That the responses to Member questions be noted.

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10. Leisure Capital Programme - The Refurbishment of Slough Ice Arena and the Provision of a Temporary Ice Provision

Roger Parkin, Strategic Director of Customer and Community Services outlined a report requesting that the Committee consider and comment on proposals to enable works to facilitate the provision of a temporary ice rink in the Borough for the duration of the refurbishment of the Slough Ice arena. A number of Members addressed the Committee under Rule 30. The following groups also addressed the Committee and a summary of their presentation follows:

Slough Community Leisure (SCL)

James King, Operational Director, discussed a proposal in which SCL would utilise half of the Montem Leisure Centre Sports Hall to provide a temporary ice rink, the cost of which would be borne by SCL. The Charity would in conjunction with other stakeholders also provide a 10 year diabetes intervention at a minimum cost to the charity of £500k.

Mr King acknowledged that the proposed Sports Hall rink would be too small for ice hockey but advised that 80 % of the community use could be retained. He also discussed the legal dispute with Slough BC and advised that SCL's proposal would provide £1M of targeted investment and resolve a number of current and potential issues.

SPICE (Special People on Ice)

Ricci Hodgson, Chair of SPICE, explained that the valuable voluntary organisation taught children and young adults with additional needs, to ice skate. The organisation currently had 120 Members and a waiting list. SPICE provided a lifeline to its Members and physical exercise. It had 2 ice hockey teams and would represent Great Britain in Canada. Mr Hodgson was concerned that the temporary closure of the Ice Arena would result in the redundancy of staff and the loss of professional coaches who would not return to Slough. SPICE supported the SCL proposal to create a temporary rink at the Montem Leisure Centre.

The Synchronised Skating Club

Shirley Goodgroves was unhappy at the potential of no temporary rink provision. The Club's skaters had been together for 6 years and won medals in Cardiff and Belgium. Some Members had left due to the uncertainty around future rink provision and the coaches could not afford to be out of work for 12 months or more. Ms Goodgroves was concerned that when the Slough Ice Arena re-opened, it would have no skaters or coaches.

Slough Jets

Steve English, Slough Jets, advised that the Club was formed 30 years ago and enjoyed local, national and international success. The Club had over 160 players and 90% of the junior and seniors were from the Slough locality. The programme was fortunate to have 2 of the best junior coaches in the country and Mr English was concerned that not having a suitable temporary rink would cause irreparable damage to Ice Hockey in Slough and other skating

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communities. It would also impact on the ability of young people to have things to do in the evening and at weekends, and affect their ability to exercise and have fun. Mr English suggested that the timescale for the refurbishment should be re-evaluated and a temporary solution be found that enable ice skating to be maintained.

Members noted the options set out in the report that had been explored to make provision for a temporary ice rink for the duration of the refurbishment of the current facility, commencing in November 2016, for a minimum of 9 months. It was estimated that the provision of a temporary rink would cost the Council a minimum of £632K. The Officer advised that the Council had contacted other ice rinks to identify free ice time and also to provide alternative types of activity for users.

The Committee was advised that initially a decision not to provide a temporary ice rink provision was agreed due to the cost but in view of concerns raised by users, research was conducted to provide a temporary solution. This included the installation of a small rink which would have limited use and a larger 56m x 26m rink which would cost between £750k and £1.2m, excluding enabling works (estimated at between £200 to £500k), utility costs, staffing and security.

SCL had submitted a proposal to provide a 30m x 20m rink in the Montem Leisure Centre Sports Hall. This would mean however that the Sports Hall could not be used for its usual sports and there was concern that the size of the temporary rink would not be appropriate for ice hockey activities. SCL's proposal was subject to a number of caveats which the Council believed were inimicable to the Council's long term strategy. It was considered that entering into an agreement with SCL could be met by a legal challenge from other leisure providers.

The option to delay the refurbishment works to 2017 to enable peak annual use and events to be carried out would amongst other issues result in an increased capital costs to the refurbishment works.

The Officer considered that any temporary rink must be suitable for all the users who used the current Ice Rink. He highlighted that the Council had a £38m leisure strategy. Members were asked to consider the affordability of a temporary provision, the wellbeing of the Council in that the funds would be drawn from reserves and also to consider ways in which the user groups could be kept together. He asked the Committee to be mindful of the Council's current revenue position and the huge financial pressures which affected for example, Housing and Social Care. It was acknowledged that the Clubs and Groups who used the ice rink did a wonderful job and the decision on whether to provide temporary provision would be made by the Cabinet at its meeting on 18th July.

The Committee debated the report and raised a number of comments/questions including the following:

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- What was the likely final cost for the enabling works? *This could be as high as £1.2m.*
- What was the position regarding the availability of the Ice Rink offered by Cardiff? *It was confirmed that this rink was no longer available but the company in question would support an alternative provision to match the needs of the community. The Council would need to mobilise rapidly should it be decided to follow this option.*
- A Member highlighted that if there were any delays on the start of the development on the Montem site then costs would rise rapidly and it was important that the Committee were clear on this point.
- A Member suggested that the SCL proposal was a 'red herring' and their rink would only be half size. Any new provision must be suitable for all users. SCL should be required to submit a competitive tender like all other companies and any arrangement with SCL would jeopardise the process.
- Was it likely that the refurbishment of the Ice Rink could over run like the Curve project? *The Officer was confident that the project would be completed on time and there would be a heavy penalty imposed if it did not. Should the project over run then any temporary provision would be extended.*
- A Member compared the usage of the Ice Rink to Slough Football Club. *The Officer advised that the club facilities were well used.*
- A Member questioned whether the loss of the rink usage would have an impact on future health of residents and was concerned that a 10 year health analysis had not been carried out. *The Officer commented that the Councils Wellbeing Strategy made broad provision for health in the community and the leisure strategy was only a part of this.*
- Would the outstanding litigation with SCL affect the start date of the refurbishment works. *The Officer advised that he was unable to discuss this in any detail but the works were scheduled to commence in November.*
- Which other sites had been considered for the siting of a temporary rink? *The Haymill Site, Upton Court Park and Salt Hill Park had all been considered but none were suitable.*
- The cost for the car park for the temporary rink was staggering? *The officer advised that it would be necessary to provide 110 car parking spaces on the grassed area of the Montem Car Park. This would then have to be removed.*
- What would the social impact be if a temporary rink could not be provided? *The Officer had discussed this with Youth Services and they would be happy to work up a programme of activities.*

The Committee considered the report and submissions and it was:

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Resolved- That Cabinet be recommended to explore the procurement of a full sized temporary Ice Rink to meet the needs of all users, for the duration of the refurbishment of the current Ice Rink.

11. Burnham Station Experimental Scheme

Laura Wells, Senior Transport Planner and Rudo Beremauro, Assistant Engineer, Transport, provided an update on the Burnham Station Traffic experimental scheme, setting out details of the scheme and the feedback received. It was highlighted that the full experimental scheme had concluded and the report presented the final data and results.

The Committee was reminded that Burnham station was located between Burnham Lane and Station Road and the locality was subject to considerable congestion in the morning and afternoon peaks and traffic had increased over the past decade. Traffic demand during peak hours exceeded the current road capacity around the Burnham Station area which could not be improved without a re-routing of traffic that would encourage drivers to alter their journeys to relieve congestion. Transport modelling was commissioned by Officers in 2014 to assess 12 different options which included reversing the one way on Burnham Lane, making Station Road one way northbound and then southbound and the closure of Station Road.

A working group which included Network Rail, and Segro was set up to discuss the options to improve the area and met regularly during the experimental scheme. A separate stakeholder group was also set up, comprising for example of Ward Councillors, neighbouring authorities and a local Tenants & Residents group.

Members were reminded that the Council had submitted a revised Business Case for the Burnham Station and Access Improvements Scheme to the Local Transport Body (LTB) in March 2016 and a full recommendation for approval of funding was proposed by the LTB which resulted in the provision of funding for the scheme beginning in the 2016/17 financial year. In relation to the experimental traffic scheme, members agreed to initially proceed with the option to fully close Station Road and this was endorsed by Scrutiny, Cabinet and Full Council.

The Officer discussed the experimental scheme which began on Friday 16th October, 2015, when Station Road was fully closed at the railway bridge. The scheme also involved a number of measures detailed in the report which included the reversal of the one way system on Burnham Lane, between Buckingham Avenue and the south side of the railway bridge, from northbound to southbound the introduction of a mini-roundabout at this junction. It was noted that when the trial had concluded, the Council decided to trial a second experimental phase for the scheme, involving the northbound operation of Station Road as opposed to a full closure. The second phase commenced on 25th February and included the opening of Station Road at the railway bridge, to northbound traffic only, from Stanhope Road to Burnham Lane. Also Station Road was narrowed near the bridge to deter vehicles

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attempting to travel southbound under the bridge and to assist pedestrians crossing the road.

Cabinet had approved the proposed permanent scheme for consultation and approved the funding arrangements on 27th June, 2016. The consultation for the permanent scheme continued until 23rd July and the offer of the LTB to provide £2m towards the cost of the Burnham Station improvements was formally approved.

The Committee noted the detail of the consultation process and that in total 885 responses were received with regard to both consultation exercises - 762 responses for the closure and 123 responses for the northbound option. It was found that the full closure of Station Road provided improvements on the road network specifically around Burnham Lane and Station Road and the area directly outside the station became more pedestrian/cyclist friendly with fewer cars travelling through. However, on the road network on the A4 and Cippenham, local roads were adversely affected. The northbound option had resulted in fewer issues on the A4 and in Cippenham with traffic on Burnham Lane still flowing well. A number of changes would need to be implemented to improve safety around the station, including a 20mph zone, and pedestrian crossing points.

The Officer advised that the experimental scheme had made a positive change to the area with traffic moving across the network in a more efficient way and had enabled improved access to the station, a reduction in congestion and future economic growth.

The Officer concluded that the results from both consultations had indicated that residents and stakeholders favoured the northbound option to the closure and whilst this limited some of the regeneration options it afforded the Council opportunities for later consideration which would be addressed as part of the local plan review. The process had proved successful and would further enhance the locality and improve customer experience for station users.

Members raised a number of comments in the ensuing debate and Officers were advised that concerns remained about the disabled bay and access. It was reported that generally public feedback about the new scheme was positive but more disabled access and pick up areas were required. A Member also considered that traffic islands had hampered traffic flow creating congestion during school run periods but otherwise the revised scheme was good. The Officer was also advised that vehicles continued to attempt to go under the bridge despite height restrictions and this should be addressed as should the continued problems around bus stop areas. The Officer advised that they would consider the points put forward by Members.

The Chair thanked the Commissioner for Transport and Highways and the Transport Team for the work undertaken.

Resolved- That the feedback received following the Burnham Station experimental scheme be noted.

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12. Progress on the Thames Valley Transactional Service Centre

Roger Parkin, Strategic Director, Customer and Community Services, introduced a report to provide an overview of contractual performance for the Thames Valley Transactional Services Public Private Sector Partnership for the year ending March 2016.

John Wybrant, Key Account Director and Kevin Hales, Slough Site Director, arvato, address the Committee and discussed the Annual Scrutiny Summary set out in the report.

My Wybrant advised that he had been associated with the Slough project since 2011 when the contract was first set up. Arvato had succeeded in transferring its headquarter operations to Slough and the site was known worldwide. The arvato Farnham Road site now employed more than 600 staff (from the original 110 staff who had been tured across) and the premises would be full at the end of the year. New business had been created and there had been continued year on year improvements. It was highlighted that targets had been reached without any compromise on efficiency and collections in Revenues had increased from the previous year. Mr Wybrant advised that there had been a significant 11% improvement in performance to cash increases to the Council, against national trends. He also discussed the adoption of customer services which continued to deliver a better service to the public and digital transformation. It was acknowledged that IT had presented challenges during the agresso transition period but the new service would ensure improved financial procedures and policies.

The Committee noted that arvato had recently added BMW to its contact centre business. In terms of provision for apprentices, it was noted that 34 had been created since Year 1 of the contract and of these 10 had secured full time employment with arvato. In addition 2 young adults had recently accepted ICT apprenticeships following a partnership with Fujitsu on behalf of the Prince's Trust.

The Committee noted that arvato continued to engage in the local community and was a member of Slough Aspire and Slough Business Community Partnership.

Going forward, actions would be agreed to ensure continued resilience and performance for the contract in Year 5.

Members asked a number of questions around historical council tax collection and the effectiveness of kiosks. The Committee was advised that the previous lower collection rate was due to the lack of a stable recovery process and this had now been rectified through more direct interaction with taxpayers. Kiosks were found to be cost effective and formed part of arvato's longer term strategy of engagement. It was highlighted that taxpayers could still pay manually as before if they wished.

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Members also raised the issue of 7 day letters being received on the day that the council tax was due which gave no time to make a payment on time. It was acknowledged that there were some issues around postal deliveries and this was being looked at.

A Member also raised the concern that where an individual held 3 payment cards for separate properties, it was difficult to identify which card should be used for each payment. He was advised that staff could assist with this and each account had a separate number. In respect of a question relating to the time it took to complete a benefit claim, a member was advised that the 20 days target included Saturdays and Sundays and Slough achieved a better result than others nationally.

Resolved- That arvato Officers be thanked for their presentation and the report be noted.

13. Forward Work Programme 2016/17

Details of the proposed work programme for 2016/17 were outlined by the Scrutiny Officer. Following discussion regarding future agenda items it was:

Resolved-

- a) That it be noted that the Housing Strategy and Housing Stock/Revenue Account would be discussed at the NCS Scrutiny Panel on 21st July, 2016.
- b) The Local Plan would be discussed at a Members' briefing on 21st July, 2016.
- c) A report on the Town Centre and Local Economy – remained un-programmed and Members could request that this be brought to a future Committee.
- d) A report on Transport would be considered by the NCS Scrutiny Panel on 21st July.
- e) Regarding the Children's Services Trust – clarification on the meetings it would hold with Councillors would be sought at the ECS Scrutiny Panel on 19th July, 2016.

14. Date of Next Meeting - 15th September 2016

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 15th September, 2016.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.40 pm)