

Obesity Task & Finish Group

Findings of Task and Finish Group commissioned by Overview and Scrutiny Committee

October 2017 – February 2018



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Preface

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the recommendations of the Obesity Task and Finish Group. The review was commissioned by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee after a debate on 14th September 2017; the points raised in this discussion were addressed in the terms of reference which can be found at the start of the report.

In order to provide recommendations based on the widest possible evidence base, our Group has conducted a series of meetings and events to shape its views. These have included staff at Slough Borough Council, a series of departments whose work has an impact on the area and also external bodies from whom we could learn about the most effective policies available. Given this, we hope that our findings have a significant amount of weight behind them and are worth serious consideration by all parties. It is also our intention that the work will have a long term impact which can be measured; the survey has been designed to be repeated in the future so we can demonstrate the degree to which Slough Borough Council has changed as a workplace.

The Members of the Task and Finish Group would like to thank the officers and organisations who have provided information to the Group. I would also like to thank Councillor Wal Chahal, Councillor Nora Holledge, Councillor Atiq Sandhu, Councillor Suniya Sarfraz and Councillor Anna Wright for all their work and support in completing this project, as well as the stakeholders listed at the end of this report.

Councillor Satpal Parmar Chair of the Obesity Task and Finish Group



Terms of reference

The following terms of reference were proposed by the Task & Finish Group following a meeting on 31st October 2017.

- 1. To investigate and make recommendations on the following matters:
 - 1.1 The current food offer available at Slough Borough Council (SBC) workplaces and potential improvements.
 - 1.2 The activity options provided for SBC staff and potential expansion.
 - 1.3 The level of staff involvement in the activities provided by SBC and the barriers to greater participation.
 - 1.4 The experience of staff at SBC in terms of being active during their working day.
 - 1.5 The extent to which SBC policies support or incentivise active lifestyles (including outsourced services).
 - 1.6 Conducting research into other workplaces with policies which support active lifestyles and how these examples could be replicated at SBC.

Summary of Recommendations

The Task and Finish Group would like to propose the following recommendations based on its investigations:

- 1) that the current food offer at Slough Borough Council be reviewed, to include canteen provision (e.g. traffic light labelling of food) and vending machines;
- 2) that methods for increasing levels of physical activity and reducing levels of sedentary behaviour within work and outside work be implemented through behaviour change;
- 3) that the incentivising of activity through outsourced services be supported (e.g. reduced cost for use of the Montem Leisure Centre); and
- 4) that engagement with senior leadership and Councillors be undertaken to establish a wellbeing ethos across the Council, which will include team / departmental 'Health Champions'.



1 Background to the Review

1.1 Introduction

The issue was first raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13th June 2017. This was in response to concerns regarding the levels of childhood obesity being reported against the actions being taken under Slough Borough Council's (SBC) Five Year Plan. However, given the relatively recent review into childhood obesity (2014), it was felt that the focus of any Task & Finish Group should be different. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will continue to monitor progress made with children, but did not wish to conduct work which had already been undertaken.

Instead, the focus of this report will be on making SBC an 'exemplar Council'. This is one of three strands in the new obesity strategy, to be launched in 2018, and therefore it is intended that the work of this review should have a long term impact as the strategy is embedded. The remit also means that the members involved in the Task & Finish Group can take an active and direct role in promoting the aims of the obesity strategy. The overall remit of the Task & Finish Group was agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14th September 2017, and the terms of reference adopted on 31st October 2017 (as included at the start of this report).

The Task and Finish Group was chaired by Councillor Satpal Parmar and membership comprised Councillor Wal Chahal, Councillor Nora Holledge, Councillor Satpal Parmar, Councillor Atiq Sandhu, Councillor Suniya Sarfraz and Councillor Anna Wright.

1.2 The Approach

Once the terms of reference had been agreed, the Group arranged a series of meetings and events. Prior to any face-to-face events, a workplace survey was designed by the Public Health Team on the basis of the areas raised by members at their meeting on 31st October 2017. This ran from 20th November – 4th December; the results of this were circulated to members and are included in the report. In terms of events, the first of these was a visit to the canteen in St Martin's Place on 4th December 2017. After this, a meeting with the Leisure Strategy Team was held on 11th December 2017.

On 15th January 2018, two meetings were held; a follow-up session with the Canteen Manager, and a discussion with Human Resources and Facilities. The last element of the information gathering took place on 23rd January 2018, as members visited Mars Confectionary to discuss the workplace environment and its emphasis on health and wellbeing.

The information on these events is included in section 2 of this report, and was used to formulate the recommendations at the start of this document. These recommendations were compiled by the Task & Finish Group at its meeting on 20th February 2018.

2 Information gathered

2.1 Workplace Survey – Autumn 2017

- 2.1.1 The survey ran from 16th November 4th December 2017 and attracted 238 responses. This amounts to nearly ½ of Slough Borough Council's workforce and thus offers some meaningful insight into issues regarding obesity at the workplace.
- 2.1.2 The most frequent barrier to being physically active is lack of time. This is demonstrated nationally also. Cost comes in 3rd at 28% Open question responses are attached to this email
- 2.1.3 The majority of staff have no fruit or veg during the day in work, and the majority don't outside of work either (*or don't meet the 5 a day recommendation)
- 2.1.4 Over 79% of staff drive to work (189 people) 7 people or 3.7% of those that drive, drive less than 1 mile and 74 people or 39% of those that drive, drive 1-5miles. 75% of staff use the stairs, but more concerning is the 25% of staff that use the lift.
- 2.1.5 The majority of staff (60%) spend more than 60 minutes sat at their desk without moving. Only 6% sit for 20 minutes or less at a time (the recommended amount based on health outcomes). The majority of staff feel that SBC doesn't encourage healthy eating or physical activity
- 2.1.6 Only 14% of staff meet the recommendation of water consumption. A worrying 19% of staff have 1 or no cups of water a day.
- 2.1.7 In terms of comments from respondents, the following ideas or views were commonplace:
 - Free fruit to be provided 24 staff
 - Free or additionally reduced gym use 31 staff
 - More time provided to be physically active/break from work 29 staff
 - Healthier eating options/better canteen food etc.. 31 staff
 - Standing desks/reduce sitting 15 staff

2.2 Canteen Visit - 4th December 2017

- 2.2.1 Food was provided by a company which had taken over the contract in the last year. The food on offer was now more varied, although questions remain as to the healthiness of the catering.
- 2.2.2 Unfortunately, the menu on the day of the visit was the Christmas lunch, making the experience rather atypical. However, members could see the physical facilities used by the caterers and the layout of the kitchen (which was largely similar to that used by the previous service providers).
- 2.2.3 There was a salad bar however, it lacked prominence and also offered a fairly limited selection. Whilst there were no sandwiches on offer during the visit, they were normally a substantial element of the food provided. The 'RAG' ratings for these are often in the amber or red region.
- 2.2.4 Members felt that the current layout of the food could be improved. At present, the first items they passed were bags of crisps; this could be altered to fresh fruit or similar healthy options. In addition, the salad option could be expanded, made more appetising and be given more visibility. In addition, after the fridge hosting sandwiches there was an extensive selection of sweets and popcorn; this area could be redesigned to promote healthy eating. Coffee and tea were also promoted more than fruit juices.

2.2.5 The event was attended by Cllrs Parmar, A Sandhu and Wright.

2.3 Leisure Strategy – 11th December 2017

- 2.3.1 The local community in Slough is particularly inactive; it currently rates as the 10th least active in England. However, there had been significant efforts made on the matter; SBC was rated as the most improved local authority since 2006.
- 2.2.6 These rates were based on activity rates amongst over 16s. Sports England was also working to improve participation amongst children and young people.
- 2.2.7 Childhood obesity remained an issue, with approximately 1 in 4 local children being obese. In some areas (e.g. Wexham) this was particularly pronounced, with 2 primary schools in Slough having obesity rates of over 50%. The severity of this situation was recognised by SBC.
- 2.2.8 As well as the physical benefits of increased activity, it was important to stress the other gains made in terms of social interaction, mental health and emotional wellbeing. As one example, children exercising for 60 minutes a day experienced a 28% rise in numeracy rates compared to their inactive peers.
- 2.2.9 SBC had in place a 5 year Leisure Strategy. In particular, the issue of reaching communities which had previously not taken part in activity and developing coaches and trainers as part of this were vital elements.
- 2.2.10 The Strategy was comprehensive, and would have elements aimed at all ages (from 8th January 2018, the Active Minis service would be in operation). At the other end of the age range, there were 6 healthy walk routes for the elderly, with 2 more to be launched in 2018. For more active adults, the Run With Active Slough sessions had proved very popular, attracting 50 or more people to some sessions.
- 2.2.11 Funding was also available for those seeking qualifications in coaching. Activator courses were looking to encourage under 18s to make the preparations to become trainers later in life. However, resources were tight; as a result, resources were being used imaginatively to get the best use out of what was available (e.g. communities encouraged to take ownership of session delivery, staff at The Curve being trained to deliver seated sessions for elderly or disabled visitors).
- 2.2.12 To boost take up, most sessions (approximately 60%) were free; most others were charged at a nominal cost to cover expenditure (£2 £3 per session on average).
- 2.2.13 The Strategy was also committed to boosting SBC staff's participation (both during work hours and outside). Part of this would be identifying staff whose background made them ideal to take leadership roles on the matter (even as coaches in some cases) and working with Sports England to support this.
- 2.2.14 To this end, the Get Active programme was open to all SBC staff; yoga and Pilates were particularly popular. More strenuous options were also provided (e.g. Fire Fit at the Three Tuns Fire Station). However, whilst the feedback from participants was positive, the take up of incentives such as reduced gym membership rates at Montem was limited.
- 2.2.15 A change in management culture may be a vital element of shifting patterns of activity on this; for example, could it be included on agendas for team meetings in future? The results of the

staff survey (completed 4th December 2017 and awaiting analysis) would also be fed into any such debate.

2.2.16 The staff survey had identified the following as the most prevalent barriers to staff participation:

•	Lack of time	69%
•	Family commitments	42%
•	Cost	28%
•	Lack of programmes that interest me	16%
•	Self conscious while participating	13%
•	I do not need to be more active	10%

- 2.2.17 One area which had proved to have fallen below expectations was children's play areas. The stated aim had been that all children in Slough would be no further than a 10 minute walk from a suitable facility. This had taken place with the initial £3 million investment in developing areas in local neighbourhoods; however, the maintenance regime for the play areas across the borough has been very poor and subsequently many areas are in a very bad state of repair.
- 2.2.18 On a more positive note, the outdoor Green Gyms were proving very popular. 6 more of these would be installed in Slough by the end of March 2018.
- 2.2.19 The leisure facilities in Slough would also be dramatically improved over the next 2 years. The Ice Arena is due to open in April 2018, whilst the Salt Hill Activity Centre was highly innovative; it stressed family activity and options for those not involved in competitive sport. With facilities to include soft play, caving, trampolining and 10 pin bowling, this would offer alternatives to more traditional routes. It would also expand provision for the disabled using lights and similar facilities. In all, this would amount to £60 million of investment as other centres opened, whilst the Arbour Park Community Sports Stadium was running at nearly full capacity in the evenings.
- 2.2.20 One major future issue which required mitigating was the end of funding from Sport England for the Get Active sessions. At present, 70 such sessions were running per week and were subsidised; however, this funding would end in September 2018. This amounted to £150,000 £180,000 of external funding per year being lost. SBC was hoping to justify any replacement expenditure by stating that ill health was estimated to cost SBC £26 million per year.
- 2.2.21 Partnership work with schools was also increasing; this was to try and resolve the problem area of growing childhood obesity rates, with cases of Type II diabetes being diagnosed in childhood (something that was previously not being observed in this age group).
- 2.2.22 The event was attended by Cllrs Parmar and Wright.

2.4 Discussion with Canteen Management - 15th January 2018

- 2.4.1 The canteen has been under new management for 6 months. A major part of the change of management involved providing a more varied selection of food. New lines of food were introduced every couple of weeks, and catered for the 1,100 staff who occupied St Martin's Place.
- 2.4.2 Sandwiches were now made on a daily basis, and were receiving better feedback than the previous supplier. They were labelled as Halal or containing allergens, but only some had nutritional statistics. These statistics, where provided, were not rated on a 'red amber green' basis.
- 2.4.3 The salad that was provided by the Canteen was also made fresh every day; its sales peaked in the summer, and would also be refreshed for a second time at 1.30pm. Fruit, yoghurts and

- fruit juice were also on offer. However, whilst some of these were light or low fat there were also more sugary options available.
- 2.4.4 In terms of breakfast, cereal and porridge were provided as well as cooked breakfasts. However, these had proven extremely unpopular compared to the hot options; these involved 7 items (including several types of sausage). For lunches, there would be 3 options for main meal (1 meat, 1 vegetarian and 1 Halal). In addition, there were paninis and sometimes soup available; the canteen would soon be piloting a toasted sandwich and soup offer. Jacket potatoes were also always on offer. The demand for these increased in the winter months.
- 2.4.5 In terms of the popular option, spicy chicken dishes, grilled meats and grilled chicken were popular. At present, less healthy options such as pastries, slices and wraps such as burritos were also regular features and good sellers. Demand was a key determinant in creating menus given the need for the canteen to be economically viable. No food on offer at the kitchen was fried.
- 2.4.6 The canteen nominated rice, chips and vegetables as the accompaniment to specific items but was flexible in practice if customers requested variations from the menu.
- 2.4.7 The afternoon saw snacks sell a large number of units. By this stage, the salad and fruit alternatives were less available whilst the lunch menu had ended. Sugary drinks did sell; however, on average, diet Coke would outsell its traditional alternative by approximately 2 units to 1. There had not been a trial to see if the remaining customers buying Coke would transfer to diet Coke if choice was restricted, although anecdotal evidence suggested not.
- 2.4.8 The noodle bar had cooked to order in the early stages of the new canteen management. However, this had caused severe problems with queuing and now noodles were offered in line with other items (i.e. pre cooked and kept on a hot plate).
- 2.4.9 The food display was as inherited; there were questions as to whether this meant that salads were not as prominent as they could have been but any movement of this could prove hazardous.

2.5 Human Resources and Facilities – 15th January 2018

- 2.5.1 The Employee Wellbeing Board was involved in assessing the matter of creating an active and healthy workplace. However, at present it had no dedicated budget and had to request financial support from Public Health or money used by 'Get Active'.
- 2.5.2 In addition, the Canteen received no subsidy and had to be financially self-sustaining. Whilst the preponderance of food with high levels of carbohydrates was acknowledged, it was also recognised that it stocked fruit but that some of this was going to waste due to it failing to sell in sufficient units. Unfortunately, such fruit could not be given away as it could be judged to be a 'gift in kind' and thus counter to policy on conflicts of interest.
- 2.5.3 Vending machines currently stocked a very limited number of healthier options. The trolley service offering snacks to staff at desks had recently been terminated, but this was due to it receiving little custom rather than any health considerations.
- 2.5.4 A series of healthy eating workshops had been arranged, as had massages. However, these had received limited attendance from staff; health checks which involved calculating BMI or taking measurements on blood pressure and similar metrics (e.g. the Health Kiosk) proved more popular.

- 2.5.5 One potential method of improving the Employee Wellbeing Board's impact and profile could be to include a Councillor in its membership. The Board recognised the recent survey's finding that behaviour change was the greatest problem facing an improvement in staff wellbeing. In addition, it had found that the most engaged staff also tended to be the most active, meaning that those most in need of change were not receiving the relevant messages.
- 2.5.6 At present, SBC staff are offered a 10% discount (£3 per month) on local gyms. This was offered through 'Get Active', although take up was limited (under 50 people). Some of this may be caused by staff retaining a previous deal offered by SCL, but other options (e.g. offering staff discounted access at lunchtimes only, when gym usage tended to be far lower amongst the general population) may be one route to enquire about.
- 2.5.7 Sedentary behaviour was a significant health issue; even those with healthy BMIs could expose themselves to increased risk of Type II diabetes and similar issues if insufficiently active. At present, over 80% of staff were not moving at least once every 30 minutes. It may be that managers should be mandated to ensure that staff were moving, and innovations such as standing desks could also help reduce this problem.
- 2.5.8 In addition, at present activities were planned for either out of office hours or lunchtime. The former meant that those with family commitment struggled to attend, whilst the latter were susceptible to workplace pressure. As a result, could activities during core hours provide sufficient benefits in terms of productivity and reduced absenteeism to gain approval? Another matter to consider here was ensuring that it was not only staff at St Martins Place who benefitted from such initiatives.
- 2.5.9 Revolution was not required just 20 minutes of activity a day provided measurable positive impact. Campaigns such as 'Get On Your Feet For Britain' had also provided a short term change in the environment although often were isolated occasions rather than integrated into standard procedure. The more enjoyable activities were, the higher the take up rate.
- 2.5.10 Methods for ending usage of lifts for all staff (bar those who required it for physical reasons) could also be investigated.
- 2.5.11 One issue of concern was the culture of cakes and similar food being placed at the end of rows of desks. However, a solution based on a change of culture would be preferable to one based on an absolutist policy.
- 2.5.12 Leisure centres run by SBC were also working on their food offer. At present, they provided burgers, chips and similar food but argued that they were healthier than the same meals provided by fast food outlets.
- 2.5.13 Driving to work was a major part of SBC culture, with 3.7% of staff driving less than 1 mile to attend work. However, the traditional barriers to changing this were school runs / care responsibilities. Could staff be encouraged to complete these, park at home then walk? In addition, the use of electric cars and bicycles could provide positive outcomes, as could providing incentives for staff to walk or cycle to work. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that some staff on low wages (e.g. carers) needed cars to work; therefore, punitive measures could impact on such staff.

- 2.5.14 The Employee Wellbeing Board and the Employee Engagement Forum were linked; however, their communications could improve.
- 2.5.15 SBC would be providing ZTE boxes across the borough, and these could help with the initiatives mentioned above.

2.6 Site Visit to Mars – 23rd January 2018

- 2.6.1 In order to have the best impact, it was imperative to avoid labelling the campaign as dealing with obesity, or to try and revolutionise the culture at too great a pace. Instead, 'nudge theory' (the idea that long term behavioural change was best achieved through incremental alterations over time) would help imbed organisational change and avoid a short term solution, whilst also helping keep the staff most in need of new habits on board during the process. It is important to be clear on purpose when communicating to employees (e.g. 'Help you to live longer, healthier, happier lives' or 'improve health, wellbeing and productivity of our employees').
- 2.6.2 It was also important to retain choices for staff rather than using prohibition. Staff should be involved in a dialogue, rather than dictated to, and campaigns should include a social aspect to build team co-operation and engagement.
- 2.6.3 Mars is establishing a Five Year Health and Wellbeing Strategy. This document takes a holistic approach to workplace health, and is applied as a global policy across all parts of the company (including outside the UK). This Strategy was based on research of health patterns across the countries with Mars sites; in particular, it highlighted issues regarding varying levels of health in different countries and the prevalence of depression amongst young workers in modern societies.
- 2.6.4 Mars has 12 sites across the UK, producing a range of goods (e.g. confectionary, pet supplies, horse care) and Wrigleys Chewing Gum. The company was committed to ensuring that all workers had access to the same benefits, regardless of managerial level or type of work.
- 2.6.5 The culture of a healthy workplace had been embedded at the Slough site since its inception in the 1930s. This resulted from the founder's need to encourage improved levels of health in a local workforce with wellbeing needs.
- 2.6.6 The company was able to continue to justify its prioritisation of wellbeing through statistics. At present, it was estimated that £1 of targeted expenditure was giving a £5 return on investment, with energy, fulfilment and happiness all improving in its workforce. In addition, the reputation it had established for this was proving a significant incentive in attracting new staff.
- 2.6.7 As well as investment, other cost neutral measures had been instigated. "Health Champions" helped promote events and messages, with those in these positions having the role included in their personal development plans. They also used high profile events promoted by campaigns such as Sports Relief to garner momentum for their efforts.
- 2.6.8 Meanwhile, wellbeing had been embedded in leadership practices and delivered improved outcomes. Part of this had been establishing a component on health and wellbeing in leadership training. Leadership is the keystone in creating a healthy workplace culture. They need to visibly participate, provide permission and advocate.
- 2.6.9 The Health and Wellbeing Strategy was also used to design an annual programme, designed around quarterly themes. These used existing public health programmes to improve their impact.

- 2.6.10 The office environment was also now divided to ensure that those requiring a quieter environment were separated from staff involved in making a high volume of calls.
- 2.6.11 Absenteeism was low at Mars 2.4%. The level amongst factory workers was higher, although this is due to the nature of the work. Line managers, HR and OH work together to manage and minimise absence providing rapid access to physio and psychological services and modified return to work plans.
- 2.6.12 The canteen and food environment also stressed healthy options, although the alternatives of snacks remained. However, these were placed differently (at the end of the canteen) with fruit pots at the start of the display and the salad bar placed in the middle of the layout. Vending machines also offered a chilled selection of more healthy options as well as the more traditional crisps and confectionary. Snacks also had calorie counts underneath them to reinforce the message. As with other policies, 'nudge theory' and evolution had been used rather than adopting a 'year zero' approach of eliminating less healthy options overnight.
- 2.6.13 As well as altering the options, portion size and pricing methods had also helped change eating patterns. Whilst it was accepted that SBC had more physical constraints in its canteen, some of these could be adopted or researched.
- 2.6.14 Mars also provided an onsite gym, available to staff for £2 per week plus weekly exercise classes. This had a very high take up amongst the workforce.

List of Meetings and Events

The following meetings were held by the Task & Finish Group:

31st October 2017: Formation of terms of reference

20th Nov – 4th Dec 2017: Workplace Survey

4th December 2017: Canteen Visit, St Martin's Place

11th December 2017: Leisure Strategy discussion

15th January 2018: Canteen Discussion

15th January 2018: Human Resources & Facilities discussion

23rd January 2018: Site Visit – Mars Confectionary

20th February 2018: Formation of recommendations

4 Acknowledgements

The Obesity Task & Finish Group would like to note its thanks to the following contributors and witnesses, whose input helped form its recommendations:

Slough Borough Council:

Kam Bhatti - Active Communities and Participation Manager

Sarah Cargin - Human Resources Services Officer
Charan Dhillon - Service Lead Building Management

Alison Hibbert - Leisure Strategy Manager
Rebecca Howell-Jones - Public Health Service Lead
Timothy Howells - Public Health Programme Officer
Fatima Ndanusa - Public Health Programme Officer
Alan Sinclair - Director of Adults and Communities

External Organisations:

Mohamed Nassar - Wow Fresh, St Martin's Place Canteen

Helen Wray - Mars Confectionary

The following resources were also used in background research:

Burton & Waddell (2006) Is Work Good For Your Health? Stationery Office Daniel Halpern (2016) Inside The Nudge Unit WH Allen Faculty of Public Health (2016) Better Mental Health For All Stationery Office HM Government (2011) No Health Without Mental Health Stationery Office Mental Health Foundation (2016) Added Value Stationery Office Office of National Statistics (2011) Stationery Office Census

5 Action Plan

The action plan below is based on the assumption that there will be minimal or no additional resource available for this work (outside the Public Health team). The action plan would be delivered by a working group that would be formed, made up of a variety of departments across the council (e.g. Public Health, leisure, parks). This will ensure that the work is spread across the Council to maximise its impact and mitigate any risk of programmes not being adopted.

Campaign	Date	Proposed activities
World Water Day	22 nd March 2018	Jugs of water on all work tables Water on tables of canteen Promotional literature, emails and other materials
Walk to Work Day	6 th April 2018	Walking buses Promote use of alternative s to SBC car park Promotional literature, emails and other materials
World Walking Day	5 th October 2018	Mile walk; before work, lunch hour and after work Monitors / alarms to highlight distance walked Pilot to reduce lift use Promotional literature, emails and other materials
Slough Half Marathon	14 th October 2018	Councillor and staff participation (5km also available) Promote volunteering opportunities
Apple Day	21st October 2018	Provide apples for all teams / areas Promotion of health eating (esp. fruit and veg) Variety of apples sold at canteen
Sugar Awareness Week	29 th October 2018	Reduce sugar options in canteen Close vending machines No sugar from facilities for the week SLT / staff pledges
Veg Pledge Day	1 st November 2018	Canteen promotes vegetarian options (including increased selection of such options) Possible Solutions4Health nutrition workshop Promote fruit and veg in health eating context