

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Meeting held on Thursday, 12th April, 2018.

Present:- Councillors Chohan (Chair), Chahal (Vice-Chair), N Holledge, S Parmar, A Sandhu, R Sandhu and Sarfraz (from 6.36pm)

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Nazir, Pantelic, Sadiq and Strutton

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Chaudhry and Rana

PART I

80. Declarations of Interest

None were declared.

81. Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 15th March 2018

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th March 2018 be approved as a correct record.

82. Action Progress Report

Details on the current status of actions agreed were outlined for Members consideration.

Resolved – That details of the Action Progress Report be noted.

83. Member Questions

None received.

84. Five Year Plan - Outcome 5 Update

The Committee considered a report that updated on the progress being made in delivering against Outcome 5 of the Council's Five Year Plan: 'Slough will attract, retain and grow businesses and investment to provide jobs and opportunities for our residents.' The update was focused on key actions 1, 3, 5 and 6 relating to promoting inward investment, skills, the town centre and opportunities from Heathrow expansion. The Outcome included a wide range of activities across Council departments and the role of the newly established Regeneration Directorate was noted.

(Councillor Sarfraz joined the meeting)

Members had a detailed discussion about the work the Council was doing to maximise the opportunities for Slough arising from the expansion of Heathrow airport, and the steps being taken to mitigate some of the negative impacts. The Director of Regeneration commented that the Cabinet had recently agreed the Council's response to a consultation Heathrow was conducting

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and that had emphasised the importance of retaining a 'green envelope' around Colnbrook and ensuring the road and rail links to the airport were improved. The Council was working proactively through the Heathrow Strategic Planning Group to try to secure the best possible package of measures for Slough and was also working with partners on skills and employability issues to help local residents access job opportunities. A Member asked whether the Council's public support for expansion had reduced its influence in securing the best deal. In response, it was noted that a range of specific local benefits had been secured through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and Heathrow airport, which was being reviewed again to secure the best possible package. The Committee was assured that the Council was being ambitious in its 'asks' of Heathrow and was also working to maximise the wider investment and employment opportunities that an expanded airport would provide.

The Committee discussed the measures being taken to increase the vibrancy of the town centre following the concerns raised by Members about the loss of several key retailers in recent years. The redevelopment of the former Thames Valley University site and major investment plans of Catalyst Capital was part of the long term regeneration of the town centre and the Council was also taking more immediate measures such as the proposal for a Business Improvement District and a programme of events to attract people into the town centre. Members emphasised the importance of having a clear plan and timescales to coordinate this interim activity and it was noted that the Town Centre Partnership was leading this plan.

In view of the major investment and economic development likely to take place in and around Slough in the coming years, the Committee agreed the importance of ensuring that the Council and partners had the investment, training and skills programme in place so that local people could benefit. It was agreed that the Committee would receive a report on how the investment and skills opportunities could be secured in the new municipal year after the expected House of Commons vote on Heathrow expansion.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the report was noted.

Resolved –

- (a) That details of the report be noted.
- (b) That the Committee receive a report on the detailed plans to maximise the skills and investment opportunities arising from Heathrow expansion and other major economic development schemes at a future meeting.

85. Votes at 16

The Committee discussed a report on the current national proposals to reduce the age of the national franchise to sixteen. The devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales had or would consider lowering the voting age for some

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electoral events and this had reopened a similar debate in England. It was noted that the Council had passed a motion on 21st April 2015 that supported the principle of votes for 16 and 17 year olds.

Councillors Strutton, Pantelic and Sadiq addressed the Committee under Rule 30 and Members had a wide ranging discussion during which a number of different points of view were expressed. There was strong support from most Members for a reduction to the voting age in principle, however, some Members also felt the changes should be part of a wider package of reform which included the use of voter identification and measures to improve engagement in the democratic process. The excellent work of the Slough Youth Parliament was highlighted and Members specifically noted the very high levels of turnout in their elections which was evidence of a high level of engagement and interest of young people. It was recognised that the voting age could only be lowered if there was a change in legislation and it was noted that there were campaigns to this end and a Private Member's Bill currently in the House of Commons.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Committee agreed to make a recommendation that full Council debate the matter on 24th April 2018. The Committee would recommend that the principle of lowering the national voting age be supported with the Council taking a proactive role in supporting appropriate campaigns on this matter. It was also proposed and agreed that a scrutiny task and finish group be established to take forward the practical measures associated and that this would also examine and make proposals on the practical steps that could be taken to increase the security of the electoral process, which would potentially include the use of voter identification at polling stations. The task and finish group would also be asked to consider what could be done to promote youth participation in any campaign, local consultation and/or the democratic process more widely if the voting age was lowered.

Recommended – That the Council resolve to support the principle of reducing the national voting age to 16; take an active leadership role in any appropriate campaign(s) to further this objective; and request scrutiny to establish a task and finish group to examine and propose practical measures to improve the security of the ballot, including potentially voter identification, and promote youth participation.

86. Annual Scrutiny Report 2017/18

The Scrutiny Officer outlined details of the Annual Scrutiny Report 2017/18 for Members consideration. The annual report included a review of the scrutiny work programme for the past year and assessed the impact scrutiny had had on influencing policy and holding the Executive to account. In particular, the work the Committee and panels had done to scrutinise the Council's Five Year Plan and the ongoing review of a range of housing issues were noted.

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The Chair thanked the Vice-Chair of the Committee and all Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the panels for their support and leadership throughout the year. Officers were also thanked for their contributions to the Overview and Scrutiny function. At the conclusion of the discussion it was agreed to request that full Council endorse the Annual Scrutiny Report at its meeting on 24th April 2018.

Recommended – That the Annual Scrutiny Report 2017/18 be endorsed.

87. Annual Petitions Report 2017/18

The Committee received the Annual Petitions Report 2017/18. A total of 27 petitions had been received for the period April 2017 to March 2018, which was an increase from the 23 in the previous year. A summary of the subject matter and response to the petitions was noted.

Resolved – That details of the Annual Petitions Report 2017/18 be noted.

88. Members' Attendance Record 2017/18

Resolved – That the Members' Attendance Record be noted.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.49 pm)