

Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 15th October, 2018.

Present:- Councillors Swindlehurst (Chair), Anderson, Carter (until 7.21pm), Mann, Nazir, Pantelic and Sadiq (from 6.37pm)

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillor Ali

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Hussain

PART 1

51. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

52. Minutes of the Meeting held on 17th September 2018

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 17th September 2018 be approved as a correct record.

53. Medium Term Financial Strategy Update

The Service Lead Finance introduced a report that updated on changes to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2018-2022 since the previous report to Cabinet in July 2018.

The MTFS set out the Council's updated financial plans and the context for the 2019/20 revenue budget, incorporating the guiding principles that had been agreed including seeking to increase financial reserves to the unitary average of circa £30m over the next four years and using Slough Urban Renewal profits firstly to increase reserves and then to fund one off growth initiatives.

The key changes since the July report were summarised which included an increase to the Council taxbase following a review of households deemed 'long term empty'; an increase in costs due to the new local government pay spine regulations; and a review of the directorate growth and pressures for 2019/20. A initial series of Star Chambers for each directorate had being held to identify further growth and savings which would impact on the MTFS. The current funding gap for the 2019/20 revenue budget was £3.2m and further work was being undertaken with proposals due to come back to Cabinet in December 2018.

The Leader commented on the scale of budget pressures given the ongoing financial challenges facing local authorities and welcomed the detailed ongoing work to close the financial gap in a balanced and well managed way. At the conclusion of the discussion, the report was noted.

Resolved – That the latest position on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2018-2022 as set out in the report be noted.

54. Treasury Management Annual Report

The Service Lead Finance introduced a report that summarised treasury activity in 2017-18 and the first part of 2018-19 since the approval of the Treasury Management Strategy by Council in February 2018.

(Councillor Sadiq joined the meeting)

The total external debt of the Council had risen by £84m to a total of £366m at the end of March 2018, due to additional short term borrowing to meet cashflow obligations and fund the capital programme. It was noted that these loans had been with other local authorities and due to the very low rates between 0.38% and 0.95% they were more cost effective than long term borrowing. However, it was recognised that the use of significant short term borrowing was not sustainable, particularly as a further £128m borrowing for capital purposes was agreed by full Council in June 2018, and the options for future borrowing would be considered carefully in conjunction with the treasury advisors, Arlingclose. Any adjustments to the treasury management strategy would be considered by Members in February 2019.

The Cabinet discussed a number of issues, including the fact that the increased borrowing was to fund strategic asset purchases which were expected to generate strong yields which supported the Council's revenue position. The Council remained one of the best performing authorities in the country in terms of treasury management performance and it was confirmed that it remained compliant with its Prudential Indicators for 2018/19.

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

Resolved – That the Treasury Management activities for 2017/18 and Quarter 1 of 2018/19, as set out in the body of the report, be noted.

55. Community Investment Fund Annual Report 2017-18 and 2018-19 Update

The Service Lead Finance introduced a report that updated the Cabinet on the Community Investment Fund (CIF) outturn for 2017-18 and the latest position for 2018-19.

The CIF budget in 2017-18 was all for capital schemes identified by ward Members across the borough and £0.12m of the £1.05m budget had been spent with a further £0.77m committed and carried forward to fund a wide range of schemes as detailed in Appendix A to the report. The Cabinet had previously agreed that the unspent £0.165m would be allocated to schemes to improve the primary shopping areas in Slough in High Street, Farnham Road and Langley. This would be used for new signs, replacement benches and public realm improvements.

Cabinet - 15.10.18

The 2018-19 CIF included some revenue funding for the first time and a pot available for the Cabinet to allocate. Approval was sought for the £210k capital and revenue for the Cabinet designated schemes which included walking tracks, a pop-up stage in the town centre, replacement shrubs and trees, publication of Citizen magazine and Disabled Go. Lead Members welcomed the proposals and agreed the allocation as set out in paragraph 5.3.3 of the report.

A sum of £0.67m was currently unallocated from the revised 2018-19 CIF budget and it was highlighted that the Deputy Leader was working with ward Members to bring forward their proposals. The Cabinet noted the update and welcomed the wide range of excellent local schemes that had been delivered or planned.

Resolved –

- (a) That the expenditure made to date from the Community Investment Fund during 2017/18 be noted;
- (b) That the expenditure made to date from the Community Investment Fund during 2018/19 be noted;
- (c) That the Cabinet expenditure items, for 2018/19, outlined at paragraph 5.3.3 of the report be agreed.

56. HQ Town Centre Relocation Update

The Director of Regeneration introduced a report that updated the Cabinet on the progress of the HQ relocation to 25 Windsor Road. Significant progress had been made in a number of areas and the project was being led by an Accommodation & Assets Board with several workstreams leading work on key aspects of the programme.

The Cabinet noted the progress that had been made including:

- That major contractors had been engaged including Bouygues who were providing overall project support and fit out.
- Kier would be rectifying some defects, under warranties, identified by due diligence.
- Arvato would be carrying out IT work and Ameresco on energy efficiency measures.
- The relocation had provided an opportunity to review the use of the town centre assets at 25 Windsor Road, The Curve, Cornwall House, Landmark Place and St Martins Place.
- Work was ongoing on the options for the travel strategy, staff car parking and Fleet Challenge.
- The Council had also begun work on a new customer experience strategy and the appropriate flexibility would be put in place in terms of the asset strategy to ensure they were aligned.

Cabinet - 15.10.18

The Cabinet welcomed the progress that had been made and discussed a number of matters including the importance of making sure the fit out was well designed to ensure it was inclusive and accessible, including to those with disabilities. The travel strategy was raised and Members highlighted the importance of engaging staff to maximise the opportunity to promote sustainable travel given the central location of the building. The relocation also provided an opportunity to make a step change in the energy efficiency of Council buildings which Lead Members agreed was a priority. The Cabinet also discussed the links to the customer strategy and the project timetable. As the Customer Service Strategy was at an earlier stage it was agreed to move ahead with the HQ relocation project whilst ensuring there was flexibility to respond to the customer strategy. The target date to occupy 25 Windsor Road was therefore May 2019.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the recommendations were agreed and a further report on progress would be considered in February 2019.

Resolved –

- (a) That it be noted that the Accommodation & Assets Board had been established and was responsible for the delivery of the HQ move.
- (b) That it be noted that the following major contracts and contractors required for the office move had been appointed and engaged:
 - Bouygues
 - Kier
 - Arvato
 - Ameresco
- (c) That it be noted that Bouygues had already commenced preparatory works in 25 Windsor Road and were working towards a target of providing occupation of the building commencing in May 2019.
- (d) That the assets now in scope of the town centre campus project included:
 - 25 Windsor Road;
 - The Curve;
 - Cornwall House;
 - Landmark Place (until May 2020); and
 - St Martins Place
- (e) That it be noted that Arvato had instructed Virgin Media to supply the required fibre optic connectivity to 25 Windsor Road and that the installation of this crucial infrastructure was currently ahead of programme.
- (f) That additional resources had been identified and engaged to enable the delivery of the required ICT infrastructure.

Cabinet - 15.10.18

- (g) That solar panels would be installed on the roof of the building as a result of the energy efficiency surveys that had been conducted.
- (h) That a further report on progress of the workstreams be presented to Cabinet in February 2019.

57. Cashier's Service

The Director of Finance & Resources introduced a report on the Council's ambition to be "cashless" by December 2019 and to approve the next steps via an options appraisal to be considered by a further report in January 2019.

The Council currently provided a front line Cashier's Service for residents to pay for services, currently with MyCouncil in Landmark Place. The town centre relocation project provided an opportunity to review the arrangements as part of the wider transformation programme and development of a new customer strategy. Many other Councils had already moved to cashless transactions and evidence suggested this was the right way forward for the authority with an increasing number of cashless payments. A total of only 6.35% of all payments made to the Council were made by cash.

The Cabinet recognised that there were significant issues to consider to ensure payment methods remained inclusive to Slough residents and that strong IT and communications plans were in place. It was proposed and agreed that the ambition to become cashless be agreed and that further investigative work take place with an options appraisal presented to Cabinet in January 2019.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Council's ambition to be "cashless" by December 2019 be agreed.
- (b) That the commencement of further investigative work be approved which would incorporate detailed consultation, appropriate impact assessments, and appropriate subsequent support for vulnerable residents who are currently making cash transactions; to ensure a smooth transition to Slough becoming a 'cashless Authority' by December 2019.
- (c) That a more detailed report providing informed recommendations be presented to Cabinet in January 2019.

58. Proposed Disposal Assets

The Project Manager, Regeneration, introduced a report regarding the disposal of assets to offset the Council's future borrowing requirement following the decision to increase borrowing to invest in the town centre HQ and other strategic assets.

Cabinet - 15.10.18

The information contained in the Part II appendices 1, 2, 3 and 10 was noted without disclosing any of the exempt information.

The report recommended the disposal of the sites deemed surplus as set out in paragraph 5.5 of the report which included a range of property transactions between the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account. In addition to generating a capital receipt for the General Fund, the disposals would release the land for the development of new social housing.

After due consideration, the recommended disposals were agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That it be reaffirmed that all properties and land detailed in section 5.5 of the report are declared surplus.
- (b) That it be noted that the financial implications and estimated sales prices detailed in confidential Appendix One.
- (c) That it be agreed to dispose of land at Alpha Street, land at 150-160 Bath Road, a wedge of former public space Mercian Way, the site of the former Maria Cowland centre and land at Belfast Avenue (see sections 5.4 – 5.6) as shown in Appendix Four to Appendix Eight to the Housing Revenue Account (“HRA”) for full market value to assemble land to develop a pipeline of up to 152 social and/or affordable housing properties within 4 years.
- (d) That subject to (c) above, agree that the total price should be reduced by the value of land at Trelawney Avenue (see sections 5.7 – 5.8), which will be transferred to the General Fund to develop the proposed health-led hub.
- (e) That delegated authority be given to the Director of Regeneration, following consultation with the Director of Finance & Audit and the Leader of the Council to agree final valuations in relation to the proposed disposals described in (c) above and the proposed land swap in section 2.4.
- (f) That delegated authority be given to the Director of Regeneration, following consultation with the Director of Finance & Audit and the Leader of the Council to approve any non-financial terms for the proposed disposals.
- (g) That in the event that the HRA decides that it would not purchase some or all of the sites, delegate authority to the Director of Regeneration, following consultation with the Director of Finance & Audit and the Leader of the Council, to take all appropriate action to dispose of the assets listed above for the best consideration reasonably available.

- (h) That delegated authority be given to the Director of Regeneration following consultation with the Council's section 151 Officer to seek the determination of the current SUR option agreement over land at Weekes Drive and Alpha Street. This delegated approval will include authority to agree all terms, including (but not limited to) the removal of SUR's charge over the sites and (where appropriate), agree and pay SUR's abortive costs and approve the final disposal.
- (i) That approval be provided for Asset Management to liaise with and agree draft terms with the third parties who are likely to have a special interest in the various assets referred to in Confidential Appendix Two.
- (j) That it be noted that Asset Management will present an update report on the Asset Disposal Programme to Cabinet by February 2019 regarding sites with a third party interest and/or regenerative benefit.

59. Fees for the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018

The Lead Member for Regulation & Consumer Protection and the Licensing Manager introduced a report that sought approval of the proposed fees for new licenses under the Animal Welfare Licensing Regulations.

The new legislation came into effect on 1st October 2018 and the fees had been calculated in line with national guidance. The fees needed to be approved in order for existing operators to submit their application with the new fee before 31st December 2018. Members discussed the fee structure and it was noted that the level of fees had been set to recover the anticipated costs and would be reviewed in the future. The new fees were approved.

Resolved – That the new animal licensing fees as set out at Appendix A to the report be approved.

(Councillor Carter left the meeting)

60. Purchase of Talent Management System

The Director of Finance & Resources introduced a report that sought approval to commence tendering for a talent management system for the Council to support the implementation of the Slough Academy. It was noted that an updated report and recommendation had been published in a Supplementary Agenda which superseded the report circulated in the main agenda pack.

The Slough Academy aimed to grow and develop staff, including Modern Apprenticeships and the system was an important element of managing the process. In the first year the set up cost of the system would be £47,500 and the annual licence fee was £52,500. The ongoing service contract meant that the total contract would exceed £250,000 which required Cabinet approval prior to the commencement of tendering.

Cabinet - 15.10.18

After due consideration, the Cabinet agreed that competitive tendering could begin.

Resolved – That competitive tendering be commenced to purchase a talent management system, the cost of which would exceed £250,000 after 3 years.

61. References from Overview & Scrutiny

The Cabinet considered the following recommendation from the Health Scrutiny Panel made on 11th September 2018:

“That Cabinet encourages members and representatives from Public Health, and other Council departments, to work closely with Solutions4Health in developing future integrated models for prevention and behaviour change that will continue to benefit and improve the health of Slough residents beyond 2020.”

The Cabinet agreed with the Panel that the Council funded public health programmes played an important role in tackling issues such as obesity and promoting healthy lifestyles. It was noted that Solutions4Health currently delivered a range of public health campaigns. The Cabinet agreed to endorse the good work being undertaken and supported the development of future integrated models, noting that all public health contracts would be kept under review.

Resolved – That members and representatives from Public Health, and other Council departments, be encouraged to work closely with Solutions4Health in developing future integrated models for prevention and behaviour change that would continue to benefit and improve the health of Slough residents beyond 2020.

62. Notification of Forthcoming Decisions

The Cabinet considered and endorsed the Notification of Key Decisions published on 13th September 2018 which set out the key decisions expected to be taken by the Cabinet over the next three months.

Resolved – That the published Notification of Key Decisions for the period between October to December 2018 be endorsed.

63. Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the item in Part II of the agenda as it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 the Schedule 12A the Local Government Act 1972.

Cabinet - 15.10.18

Below is a summary of the matters considered during Part II of the agenda.

64. Proposed Disposal Assets - Appendices 1, 2, 3 and 10

Resolved – That Appendices 1, 2, 3 and 10 be noted.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.29 pm)