

Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 15th June, 2020.

Present:- Councillors Swindlehurst (Chair), Akram (Vice-Chair), Anderson, Bains, Carter, Mann, Nazir and Pantelic

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillor Hulme

PART 1

1. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made, however, Councillor Mann did not vote on items 12 and 20 – Heart of Slough North West Quadrant Masterplan, because she was a member of the Planning Committee which was likely to determine a future planning application for the site.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 18th May 2020

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 18th May 2020 be approved as a correct record.

3. Cabinet portfolios and Lead Member responsibilities 2020/21

The Cabinet formally noted the portfolios and responsible Lead Members appointed by the Leader of the Council, as detailed in Appendix A to the report. It was also noted that the Leader had appointed Councillor Sabia Akram as Deputy Leader of the Council in accordance with Part 2 Article 7 (10) of the Constitution.

The Leader stated during the current coronavirus pandemic the Council had sought to minimise changes to Cabinet, committee and outside body appointments to provide continuity in the local response. It was confirmed that there were no changes to the Lead Members or their portfolios. The report was noted.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Cabinet note the portfolios and responsible Lead Members as appointed by the Leader of the Council.
- (b) That the appointment of Councillor Sabia Akram as Deputy Leader of the Council be noted.

4. Six Months Rule under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972

The Service Lead Governance introduced a report that reminded Cabinet of the provisions relating to councillors ceasing to be Members of the Council for failure to attend any meetings during a six-month period.

A number of meetings had been cancelled since March due to Covid-19 restrictions and whilst regulations had been introduced to permit virtual meetings, Members were reminded that the six month rule for attendance remained. It was also highlighted that the regulations meant that no elections or by-elections could be held until May 2021. A similar report had been noted by Council at the Annual Meeting held on 21st May 2020 to ensure all Members were aware of the position.

Lead Members noted the report, however they commented that councillors attendance at meetings was very good and that Members had remained very active during this period in fulfilling their role as councillors within the Council and wider community. The programme of meetings had restarted and Members would continue to attend by remote access until restrictions were relaxed.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

5. COVID-19 Decisions Update

The Lead Member for Governance & Customer Services introduced a follow up report to that received by the Cabinet on 18th May 2020 which set out the significant decisions taken by Officers in the ongoing response to the Covid-19 pandemic since the last meeting. The appendix to the report summarised the decisions taken since 29th April 2020.

The Gold and Silver command structure had continue to operate with meetings twice a week and was supported by a range of Task Groups. Relevant Lead Members were consulted on decisions where appropriate. After due consideration the executive decisions set out in Appendix A were ratified where they related to Executive functions.

Resolved – That the report be noted and that the significant decisions taken by officers since 18 May 2020, set out in the Schedule appended to the report be ratified.

6. Revenue Budget Monitoring Report: 2019-20 Provisional (Year End) Position

The Lead Member for Governance & Customer Services and the Service Lead Finance introduced a report that set out the provisional financial position of the Council's revenue account for the 2019/20 financial year.

The provisional total net expenditure in 2019/20 was £108.731m which was a provisional surplus of £0.050. This was a significant improvement on the position at the end of the third quarter at which time a forecast overspend of £2.304m had been reported. Directorates had taken measures to reduce the overspend which had resulted in the small net surplus by year end. The main budget variances by directorate were summarised, as was the current financial position of Slough Children's Services Trust.

The Cabinet noted the impact on Council reserves and it was stated that there were currently £8.123m of general reserves and £8.147m of earmarked reserves available to protect the Council from the current financial pressures arising from Covid-19. Lead Members recognised that there was significant financial uncertainty in the 2020/21 financial year due to the significant increased costs of the Covid-19 response and potential future demand for services. Achieving a small budget surplus in 2019/20 put the Council in a strong position relative to many other local authorities but significant challenges were expected as the full impacts became evident.

A report set out a number of requests for budget virements and write-offs and these were approved. At the conclusion of the discussion the report was noted.

Resolved –

- (a) That the reported underlying provisional financial position of the Council for the year end 2019-20 be noted.
- (b) That the Council's provisional reserve balances for the year end 2019-20 be noted;
- (c) That budget transfer (virements) for 2019-20 as requested in Section 9 of the report be approved.
- (d) That write offs for the last financial quarter 2019-20 as requested in Section 10 of the report be approved.

7. Capital Monitoring Report as at 30th March 2020

The Lead Member for Governance & Customer Services and the Service Lead Finance introduced a report that summarised spend against capital budgets for the 2019/20 financial year and sought approval of the re-profiled budget for 2020/21.

The programme included a range of major investment projects across the town including the secondary school expansion programme, purchase of properties through James Elliman Homes, the strategic acquisitions programme and a series of regeneration schemes such as the hotels and TVU developments.

The 2019/20 revised budget of £171,119 had all been spent and this represented 81% of the original budget. The report was to the end of March 2020 and the impact of Covid-19 on projects was not fully known. The Cabinet reviewed some of the schemes where funding had been re-profiled and the delays were explained, for example to the Tower & Ashbourne Houses scheme.

After due consideration, the report was noted and re-profiled budget for 2020/21 was approved.

Resolved – That the report be noted and that the revised 2020-21 budget as set out in Appendix C and D of the report be approved.

8. Community Investment Fund Update 2019/20 and 2020/21 Allocations

The Lead Member for Governance & Customer Services and the Service Lead Finance introduced a report that updated the Cabinet on the 2019/20 Community Investment Fund (CIF) and sought agreement to allocate some of the 2020/21 funds.

Each councillor had £25,000 (£20,000 capital and £5,000 revenue) allocated to them for the year to invest in projects in their ward and a summary of spend in 2019/20 was set out in Appendix A. It was noted that the revenue allocations had not been fully spent during the year as these sums had been frozen part way through 2019/20. Any unused funding could be carried forward into the new financial year.

The CIF scheme would continue with the same level of funding provided in 2020/21. This included £210,000 of capital for the Cabinet to allocate. Appendix B to the report proposed the following:

2019/20 Underspend

- Allocate £100k of 2019/20 CIF revenue underspend towards offering continued support to rough sleepers who've been involved in the 'all-in' hotel scheme beyond the end of June.
- Allocate £30k of unspent CIF Cabinet capital from 2019/20 to help enable repairs work to make 3 voids 'habitable' for their use.
- Allocate £25k of unspent CIF revenue from 2019/20 towards work of our partners (East Berks College and Slough Aspire) in measures to help the recently unemployed (jobs clubs, skills retraining etc) and to assist 'one Slough' organisations in their responses.

2020/21 Cabinet CIF capital

- Allocate £50k of capital towards measures to promote social distancing and safe behaviour as covid lockdown arrangements ease (e.g. new High Street lamp-post banners, bus shelter or other adverts/notices, paint reminder discs on busy areas of walkway/park entrance gateways etc.).
- Allocate £60k to support temporary improvements to enable safe walking and cycling routes etc, and measures to ensure our green/outdoor gyms can operate safely (including ordering additional temporary railings/barriers/route markers for busy public spaces).

Due to the ongoing concerns about the impact of Covid-19, the Cabinet would receive a mid-year update in September 2020 to enable it to respond with any further measures for potential CIF allocation.

The Leader highlighted that the package of measures proposed would help respond to the Covid-19 crisis by providing further direct support to rough sleepers to help them into longer term accommodation; help local people reskill and find new employment; and put in place temporary measures to promote social distancing and safe behaviour.

The Cabinet noted the CIF spend in 2019/20 and agreed the initial allocations for 2020/21 as set out in Appendix B to the report.

Resolved –

- (a) That the expenditure to date from the Community Investment Fund 2019/2020 be noted; and
- (b) That it be agreed that any unused funding from 2019/20 would be rolled forward into 2020/21 and allocated on the basis of Cabinet requests in line with the scheme as set out in Appendix B, with any residual sum being available to ward members from the revised fund.
- (c) That the Cabinet receive a report in September 2020 to consider any further CIF allocations to respond to emerging Covid-19 issues that were in scope of the purpose of the fund.

9. Q4 Performance & Projects Report

The Service Lead Strategy & Performance introduced a report that provided Cabinet with the latest performance information for the fourth quarter of 2019/20 which included the corporate balanced scorecard, project updates and progress in delivering manifesto commitments.

Key improvements reported during the quarter included reductions in the levels of physical inactivity, overall crime rate and the number of householders in temporary accommodation. Lead Members welcomed the increase in levels of physical activity, however, it was recognised that the Covid-19 'lockdown' was likely to have a negative impact on such indicators and more work was ongoing to promote exercise and activity through the Active Slough programme and by keeping parks open over recent months. Areas of performance concerns included the number of people managing their care through direct payments, uptake of healthchecks and the overall recycling rate which had fallen since the previous quarter. It was noted that cumulatively over the last year there had been a 1.5% increase in overall recycling and Officers provided assurance that overall performance was stable and improving.

In relation to the Council's portfolio of major projects it was noted that 53% were rated 'green' and 43% 'amber'. Only one project was rated 'red' during the quarter – Capita One Housing – Education Modules. It was noted that the Arvato project had been closed after being successfully delivered. The vast majority of manifesto commitments were rated 'green'.

The Cabinet discussed various specific indicators and projects and then noted the report.

Resolved – That the Council's current performance as measured by the performance indicators within the balanced scorecard, the progress status of the gold projects and the manifesto commitments be noted.

10. Slough Children's Services Trust Annual Report

The Cabinet welcomed the Chair, Chief Executive and Director of Finance & Resources from Slough Children's Services Trust who summarised their Annual Report for 2019/20 to the Cabinet. The Annual Report would usually be presented to the Education & Children's Services Scrutiny Panel, however, the scheduled meeting in April 2020 had been cancelled due to Covid-19 and this was the most timely meeting in the calendar for Members to receive the report.

The report set out the further progress that had been made in the past year since the Ofsted report in January 2019 which concluded that the services had improved from 'inadequate' to 'required improvement to be good'. The Trust had developed a plan following the inspection and significant progress had been made to drive forward further improvement. However, it was recognised that it had been a challenging year for the Trust as a combination of increased demand for services in the Autumn and significant financial challenges had impacted on key performance indicators.

A wide range of issues were discussed including the factors behind the rising demand for services; the work being done to reduce high caseloads; fostering recruitment; the importance of delivering the Trust's transformation programme which had been suspended during the year; and the financial stability of the trust. The Chief Executive of the Trust responded to the points raised by Lead Members. There had been higher levels of child protection cases and it often took longer to work through cases where families required more support. One of the major challenges to reduce caseloads was recruitment, and further work was being developed on the workforce strategy. Fostering recruitment was a challenge, and the process took some time, but some of the transformation funding provided by the Council had helped and the recruitment of 12 foster families was currently underway. The Trust's transformation programme was important in the its future plan and it had restarted.

Assurance was also provided that key services had been maintained throughout the Covid-19 lockdown with visits continuing, where necessary, following risk assessments.

The Cabinet recognised the progress that had been made in improving service provision in a number of areas and restated its commitment to continue to work with the Trust to sustain the improvements. It was recognised that there were challenges to work through, including financial

stability and rising demand, and the Council and Trust would work closely to meet the needs of children.

At the conclusion of the discussion the report was noted.

Resolved – That the report be noted for information as part of the contractual arrangements between the Trust and the Council.

11. Shaping Slough Town Centre: Regeneration Update

The Cabinet considered a report and received a presentation on the Regeneration Framework Masterplan (RFM) for the Centre of Slough. The Cabinet considered the Part II appendices without disclosing any of the exempt information.

The purpose of the framework was to set out a clear vision and spatial plan for the development and regeneration of Slough town centre. Work on the RFM had started in early 2020 and was scheduled for approval by Cabinet in September. The document would establish a regeneration vision for key sites included in the “Square Mile” area approved by Cabinet in November 2019. There were ten objectives and these were summarised. They included delivering a “21st century town centre that was accessible to everybody and enhanced health and wellbeing”; to develop a new central business district to the south of the railway station; to revitalise the shopping and leisure offer in the town centre; and deliver a step change in the quality of design and architecture.

Lead Members commented that the RFM was being developed following a significant amount of work in recent months and reflected the priority to bring coherence and co-ordination to major regeneration schemes. The framework also linked in with the Council’s strategy of response, recovery and renewal emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic. The Cabinet welcomed the fact that work was continuing on the exciting projects which would transform the town centre and provide many opportunities for residents.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Cabinet welcomed the work that had been undertaken so far and looked forward to further progress being made prior to seeking approval of the RFM in September. The recommendations were agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Regeneration Framework Masterplan vision, objectives and principles as set out in section, 5.2 and the confidential Appendix one be agreed;
- (b) That the timetable and progress of the Regeneration Framework Masterplan, and proposed next steps, as set out in sections 5.4-5.9 of the report be noted;

- (c) That the background and proposed next steps for the Slough Central scheme in confidential Appendix two be noted.

12. Heart of Slough NWQ Masterplan

The Cabinet considered a report and received a presentation on the masterplan for the Heart of Slough North West Quadrant site. The Part II appendices to the report were considered during Part I without disclosing any of the exempt information.

The Council had been working with Slough Urban Renewal on the masterplan that sought to maximise the social, economic and financial value of the key site for Slough. Despite the current challenges, it was anticipated that the redevelopment of the site would progress as planned with Phase 1 due to be completed by 2024. The scheme was a major part of the recovery and renewal of Slough.

The Masterplan Scheme currently envisaged 1,300 homes, 304,000 sq.ft. of commercial office space with two Grade A office buildings, 26,000 sq.ft. of ancillary retail and leisure space, and car parking. The design proposals were at an early stage and were not fixed. Discussions regarding building heights continued and the Cabinet commented that it was prepared to support the volume of development in principle, but further consideration would need to be given to the design in specific locations.

The aim was to create a new destination on the former Thames Valley University site which the Council had acquired in 2017. In 2019 the Cabinet had agreed to give an option to Slough Urban Renewal through North West Quadrant LLP, a subsidiary managed and governed by SBC and Muse. Given the scale and complexity of the projects amendments of the governance were required including changes to the Partnership Agreement as set out in Appendix Two.

The Cabinet welcomed the positive progress that continued to be made on the scheme and the recommendations were agreed. Councillor Mann did not vote on the matter as she was a member of the Planning Committee and would be expected to make a determination on a future application.

Resolved –

- (a) That the masterplan set out in the Vision Document at Appendix One be agreed and North West Quadrant LLP's ("the developer" or "NWQ LLP") intention to proceed to prepare a hybrid planning application for the entire NWQ site, which was targeted to be submitted in Q1 2021 be noted;
- (b) That it be noted that the split hybrid planning application, explained in Section 5 of the report, would include outline proposals for the community site, with the intention that NWQ LLP would seek a flexible use approach to this part of the site on a parameters basis (subject to

Local Planning Authority approval), in recognition that the intended use(s) would be informed by further business planning,

- (c) That a £50,000 budget be agreed to progress an options review and further business planning associated with the cultural/educational site. The output to be a costed business case assessing the preferred option for the mix, quantum and location of cultural uses in alignment with the evolving Regeneration Framework,
- (d) That delegated authority be given to the Council's Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader, to agree the Business Plan for the NWQ project and agree and execute amendments to existing documents or supplemental documents which are required as a result of the proposed change of ownership of North West Quadrant LLP; and
- (e) That officers present an update to Cabinet in September 2020 on the outcome of the options review and business planning for the site noted as the "community" site, in the Masterplan.

13. Adoption of Slough Inclusive Growth Strategy 2020-2025

The Lead Member for Inclusive Growth & Skills and the Service Lead Economic Development introduced a report that sought approval of the new Slough Inclusive Growth Strategy 2020-25.

The strategy reflected the need to deliver growth that all Slough residents could benefit from and set out the priorities and actions to deliver growth. The plan included six strategic priorities including creating secure and productive jobs; a skills system working for all; regeneration and infrastructure to unlock growth; and inclusive and sustainable neighbourhoods. The strategy would be closely aligned to the recovery and renewal from Covid-19. A new board would be established to oversee delivery and it was proposed that the Cabinet receive a progress update in December 2020.

The Cabinet welcomed the strategy which reflected the Council's ambitions for the town and set out a clear direction for inclusive growth. Partners had been involved in the development of the strategy and would play a key role in delivery. Lead Members agreed to adopt the strategy and receive an update in December 2020.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Slough Inclusive Growth Strategy 2020-25 be adopted.
- (b) That it be noted that the Economic Development Team were beginning to draw together an action plan to deliver the strategy's vision' which also formed part of the Recovery and Renewal Strategy.

- (c) That it be noted that the Inclusive Growth Strategy and the associated action plan would form the organising framework for the public-private Slough Regeneration, Economy and Skills Board.
- (d) That it be noted that an update report on progress in the setting up of the new Board and Action Plan would be tabled for Cabinet in December 2020.

14. Slough Innovation Space - ERDF Funding Application

The Lead Member for Inclusive Growth & Skills and the Service Lead Economic Development introduced a report on a European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) application for the Slough Innovation Space project.

An application for a £1.65m grant was being submitted for the project which would provide a high quality innovation facility to help create high growth, research and development focused technology start-ups in Slough. Slough Innovation Space would occupy the 5th Floor of Observatory House initially, and for the duration of the ERDF funding, with the long term home intended to be on the North West Quadrant site. If successful, it was anticipated that 181 high paid jobs and 54 businesses would be created with £8.3m of new economic activity being generated.

Cabinet approval was sought to underwrite £703k of the anticipated income from businesses using the space. It was noted that Thames Valley Berkshire LEP and Heathrow Airport had already agreed match funding contributions of £500k and £200k respectively.

The Cabinet welcomed the project and commented that support to innovative and high growth businesses would be even more important as part of the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. Lead Members agreed to underwrite the sum requested.

Resolved –

- (a) That it be agreed to underwrite £703,358 of expected income from SMEs using the planned new Slough Innovation Space between 2021 – 2023.
- (b) That it noted that by underwriting this amount, the Council would unlock funding of £2.35m from ERDF and other partners (subject to a successful application).
- (c) That it be noted that this project was a key initiative to help recovery and renewal for Slough SMEs and its economy by creating 181 well paid jobs and 54 fast growing tech SMEs between 2021 and 2023.

15. References from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

There were no references from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee or scrutiny panels.

16. Notification of Key Decisions

The Cabinet considered and endorsed the Notification of Key Decisions published on 15th May 2020 which set out the key decisions expected to be taken by the Cabinet over the next three months.

The Chief Executive stated that local authorities were required to produce a local outbreak management plan that set out the response to any future Covid-19 outbreaks in Slough. The plan needed to be agreed by the end of June and it was likely that an extraordinary meeting of the Cabinet would be convened for this purpose.

Resolved –

- (a) That the published Notification of Key Decisions for the period between June to August 2020 be endorsed.
- (b) That the Cabinet consider approval of the Local Outbreak Management Plan at a future meeting, possibly an extraordinary meeting at the end of June or beginning of July.

17. Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved – That the matters in Part II of the agenda be considered and resolved during Part I, without disclosing any of the exempt information, but that the Part II reports remain restricted as they 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.

18. Part II Minutes - 18th May 2020

Resolved – That the minutes of the Part II Cabinet meeting held on 18th May 2020 be approved as a correct record.

19. Shaping Slough Town Centre: Regeneration Update - Appendices

The Part II appendices, which comprised the Regeneration Framework Masterplan Vision, Objectives and Principles (Appendix One) and an update on the Queensmere and Observatory centres (Appendix Two) were considered and noted in resolving the matters in the Part I report without disclosing any exempt information.

Resolved – That the appendix be noted.

20. Heart of Slough NWQ Masterplan - Appendices

Part II appendices, comprising the Masterplan Vision Document (Appendix One) and Summary of Amendments to Standard PA (Appendix Two), were considered and noted in resolving the matters in the Part I report without disclosing any exempt information.

Resolved – That the appendices be noted.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.26 pm)