

**Overview & Scrutiny Committee – Meeting held on Thursday, 10th September, 2020.**

**Present:-** Councillors Dhaliwal (Chair), Mohammad (Vice-Chair), Basra, Gahir, Hulme, Matloob, D Parmar, S Parmar and R Sandhu

**PART I**

**25. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Gahir declared that he was a Hackney Carriage driver and private operator. He remained logged in throughout the meeting.

**26. Minutes of the Meeting held on 9th July 2020**

In relation to Minute No.15 Slough Violence Task Force - it was noted that the Committee had not yet received the additional information requested from the Group Manager, Community Safety.

In relation to the Overview and Scrutiny meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2019, it was noted that information regarding unspent Section 106 money had not yet been received by the Committee.

**Resolved –**

- (a) That the minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2020 be approved as a correct record.
- (b) That the Policy Insight Manager be requested to contact the relevant officers to request the outstanding information, as detailed above.

**27. Member Questions**

None had been received.

**28. Revenue Financial Budget Monitoring - Quarter 1 2020/21**

The Interim Service Lead, Finance introduced a report that provided an update on the financial position of the Council's Revenue Account for Quarter 1 of the 2020-21 financial year.

It was reported that the 2020-21 approved net budget for the Council was £124.412 million. At Quarter 1, the forecasted year end position for all Council run services was an overspend of £1.943 million; the overspend took into account the Covid grant of £12.708 million.

The Council was currently operating in a period of financial difficulty, primarily due to Covid-19 pressures and increased demand for services. The position would continue to be monitored closely, acknowledging that the current

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estimates remained provisional as the full impacts of Covid continued to emerge.

The Chair invited Members to comment and ask questions.

During the course of the discussion, the following points were raised:

- It was queried if the entire Covid-19 grant had been received. It was explained that the Covid grant would be £12.708 million in total ; £9.070 million had been confirmed and £3.631million was provisional.
- Further information was sought in relation to the Slough Children's Services Trust forecast overspend of £1.692 million. It was explained that the overspend related to Covid-19 pressures and the increased number of Children Looked After. A dedicated officer had been assigned to work with the Trust to reduce the overspend.
- It was noted that the Parking directorate was showing a forecast £0.468 million year end variance position. This was due to the reduced income received from car parking charges. A review of charges was due to be undertaken imminently.
- In relation to the Council's savings, it was noted that due to the impact of Covid a large proportion of the identified savings were now deemed unachievable.
- It was noted that there were pressures on the Dedicated Schools Grant, particularly in relation to high need provision. It was explained that nationally, local authorities were facing similar pressures and this area would continue to be reviewed. .
- Additional details relating to Slough Children's Services Trust, Inclusion budget forecasted overspend of £0.018 million were requested. It was agreed that this information would be circulated to the Committee following the meeting.

### **Resolved –**

(a) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted:

- I. the reported underlying financial position of the Council for the year end 2020-21;
- II. the Councils provisional reserve balances for the year end 2020-21;
- III. the proposed budget transfer (virements) for 2020-21 as detailed in section 9 of the report; and
- IV. the proposed write-offs for the first quarter of 2020-21 as detailed in section 10 of the report.

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- (b) That the Interim Service Lead, Finance be requested to circulate further details of the Slough Children's Trust Inclusion Service forecasted overspend to the Committee.

### **29. Capital Monitoring Report - Quarter 1 2020/21**

The Interim Service Lead, Finance introduced a report that provided a summary of spend against capital budget for the 2020-21 financial year, as at the end of June 2019.

The Chair invited Members to comment and ask questions.

During the course of the discussion, the following points were raised:

- Further information regarding the Allotments Improvement Project was requested. It was agreed that the relevant Service Lead would be asked to provide this information to the Committee.
- In relation to service underspends, it was explained that programme spending could be rolled over, however any roll over required Council approval.

#### **Resolved –**

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the Interim Service Lead, Finance be requested to contact the Service Lead Communities & Leisure for additional information regarding the capital scheme P198 – Allotment Improvement Project.

### **30. Centre of Slough Regeneration Framework Masterplan**

The Principal Asset Manager introduced a report that asked the Committee to consider the final Slough Regeneration Framework Masterplan.

In March 2020 the Council had commissioned Urban Initiatives Studio to prepare a Regeneration Framework for Slough's Square Mile. This would set the vision and spatial framework for development in the town over the next 15 years.

Mr Hugo Newell, Director of Urban Initiatives Studio, was invited to address the Committee.

Members were provided with a presentation that explained that the role and purpose of the Regeneration Framework was to:

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- Set out a clear vision and spatial framework for development and regeneration of Slough's Square Mile.
- Identify the opportunities for growth and transformation on a site specific and area wide basis.
- Identify linkages and opportunities for improved movement, transport and access in particular for people travelling by foot, bicycle and public transport.
- Establish design principles and development parameters and potential development quantum contributing to housing growth targets and employment generation.
- Provide a strategic delivery plan setting out project phasing, priorities, timescales, and delivery approaches.

The Framework aimed to transform the centre of Slough into an attractive and vibrant urban centre, with economic opportunities and a new transport infrastructure that would attract business and promote sustainable modes of travel.

Following the conclusion of the presentation, the Chair invited Members to comment and ask questions.

During the course of the discussion, the following points were raised:

- Concerns were raised that there was insufficient information provided in the Masterplan in relation to transport, traffic management and the impact of regeneration on the town's infrastructure. It was highlighted that the development of residential dwellings would need to be accompanied by the creation of additional health care and education provision. It was explained that the Framework Masterplan set the overarching vision and design principles, rather than identifying the detailed arrangements. It was recognised that there would be a range of issues to address in the implementation stages of the Masterplan.
- A Member requested that the height of new buildings should be in-keeping with existing buildings within a locality. In particular, the height of new buildings in the Grand Union Canal area should be restricted to three/four storeys. It was explained that approval of future developments would be managed through the planning process and individual schemes would be determined by the Council's Planning Committee on a site by site basis.

Discussion took place in relation to transport and some Members felt that in order for the Framework to be viable, and to ensure the town attracted business investment, Slough's current transport network issues needed to be resolved as a priority.

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During the discussion it was highlighted that the Masterplan aimed to encourage a shift from motorised travel to public transport, cycling and walking to reduce carbon emissions and address air quality issues. In addition, improving public transport provision and pedestrian access would promote the local economy and increased the vitality and viability of the town centre.

The following recommendation was proposed:

- (a) That Cabinet be recommended to approve that as part of making public transport the dominant mode of travel, provision be made to allow Hackney and Private Hire vehicles to use the A4 bus lane immediately along with the rest of Slough regeneration framework as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report.
- (b) The Committee noted that the Slough Regeneration Framework is a corporate vision statement rather than a statutory planning document.
- (c) The Committee noted that the Slough Regeneration Framework would be used to inform the emerging Local Plan Spatial Strategy and policies for the Centre of Slough and at this stage it would enter the public consultation process.
- (d) That Cabinet be recommended to consider that in taking the safety of residents into consideration during the lockdown to come into force on Monday 14th September and to encourage the use of sustainable transport for commuters travelling between Slough and Heathrow Airport, the bus lane along the A4 should only be operational during peak hours.

The proposal was seconded and put to the vote. The proposal was subsequently agreed by the Committee.

In addition, it was proposed that the concerns raised in relation to traffic congestion, building heights, and the impact of regeneration on the town's infrastructure be referred to Cabinet for consideration. The proposal was seconded and supported by the Committee.

### **Resolved –**

- (a) That Cabinet be recommended to approve that as part of making public transport the dominant mode of travel, provision be made to allow Hackney and Private Hire vehicles to use the A4 bus lane immediately along with the rest of Slough regeneration framework as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report.

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- (b) The Committee noted that the Slough Regeneration Framework is a corporate vision statement rather than a statutory planning document.
- (c) The Committee noted that the Slough Regeneration Framework would be used to inform the emerging Local Plan Spatial Strategy and policies for the Centre of Slough and at this stage it would enter the public consultation process.
- (d) That Cabinet be recommended to consider that in taking the safety of residents into consideration during the lockdown to come into force on Monday 14th September and to encourage the use of sustainable transport for commuters travelling between Slough and Heathrow Airport, the bus lane along the A4 should only be operational during peak hours.
- (e) That the concerns of the Committee regarding the following, be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration:
  - Lack of information provided in the Slough Regeneration Framework Masterplan in relation to transport, traffic congestion, and the impacts of regeneration on infrastructure, such as the provision of housing and health care.
  - The height of new buildings should be in-keeping with existing buildings within a locality. In particular, the height of new buildings in Grand Union Canal area should be restricted to three/four storeys.

### **31. Slough Local Plan Consultation on Proposed Spatial Strategy**

The Planning Policy Lead Officer introduced a report that presented the proposed content of the Spatial Strategy, part of the Local Plan for Slough, that was due to go out for public consultation during November and December 2020.

The Spatial Strategy set out the pattern, scale and nature of development for Slough. It was required to make provision to meet housing, employment and other needs, whilst also ensuring the natural, built and historic environments were conserved.

The vision, objectives and guiding principles of the Spatial Strategy were to:

- Ensure development was located in the most accessible locations, which had the greatest capacity to absorb growth and deliver social and environmental benefits.
- Promote inclusive growth with more of the wealth generated in Slough being retained in the local area.
- Make Slough a place people wanted to ‘work, rest, play and stay’.

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In considering how to decide the best use of scarce land, the following factors had been taken into account:

- Based upon the Government's standard methodology, there was a need for 15,460 additional homes over the remaining 16 years of the plan period at an average of 966 a year.
- There was a significant need for affordable housing and for a range of house types including family housing.
- The Council was unable to set a target for the number of jobs required to support the Slough economy; however, the aim would be to provide an additional 15,000 jobs in order to meet the needs of the growing resident workforce.
- There was a general demand for land to use for warehousing in the Slough area.
- There continued to be a shortage of public open space in the Borough.

Following the conclusion of the presentation, the Chair invited comments and questions from Members.

During the course of the discussion, the following points were raised:

- Concerns were raised about the development of residential housing generating additional traffic congestion and pressure on the road network. It was highlighted that the Strategy aimed to promote the use of public transport and a reduced reliance on car travel.
- Referring to section 5.16 of the report it was noted that the town centre's role as a transport hub would make it the focus for the Council's Transport Strategy. It was suggested that the Transport Strategy should be presented as part of the Spatial Strategy.
- It was noted that the Council had been promoting the Northern Expansion of Slough to meet the Borough's housing needs. It was explained that nationally local authorities were under pressure from Government to build housing. There was a particular need in Slough to build family housing due to overcrowding and the Borough's young population.
- Discussion took place regarding the consultation process. It was explained that a range of methods would be used to engage with residents, including the distribution of leaflets to households, social media campaigns and questionnaire seeking residents' views on preferred development options.

### **Resolved –**

- (a) That the proposed content of the Local Plan Spatial Strategy be noted.
- (b) That the Planning Policy Lead Officer be requested to incorporate the Transport Strategy into the Spatial Strategy as part of the

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implementation process, and for this request to be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration.

### **32. Performance and Projects Report: Quarter 1 2020/21**

Consideration was given to the Council's performance during Quarter 1 of the 2020/21 financial year, as measured by the performance indicators within the balanced scorecard, the projects progress status, and the update against Manifesto Commitments.

**Resolved –** That the Council's performance during Quarter 1, 2020/21, as measured by the performance indicators within the balanced scorecard, the progress status of the gold projects, and progress against the Manifesto commitments be noted.

### **33. O&S Committee - Forward Work Programme 2020/21**

Consideration was given to the Forward Work Programme as follows:

4<sup>th</sup> November 2020

The Chair requested that the Policy Insight Manager explore the possibility of the Committee receiving an update on Bath Road bus lane at the next meeting.

The Policy Insight Manager advised that although the Carbon Management Plan had been listed as a possible item for the programme, he had since learnt that the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel had recently considered the Council's Low Emissions Strategy, and therefore Members might wish to delete this item.

**Resolved –**

- (a) That the Policy Insight Manager be requested to schedule an update report regarding Bath Road bus lanes for the next meeting.
- (b) That the Forward Work Programme, as set out in Appendix A of the report be noted.

### **34. Members' Attendance Record 2020/21**

**Resolved -** That the details of the Members' Attendance Record be noted.

### **35. Date of Next Meeting - 4th November 2020**

**Resolved –** That the date of the next meeting was confirmed as 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

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Chair

(Note: The meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.31 pm)

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