

MINUTES OF COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

At an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council for the Borough of Slough held at the Council Chamber - Observatory House, 25 Windsor Road, SL1 2EL on Thursday, 10th March, 2022 at 7.00 pm

Present:- The Worshipful the Mayor (Councillor Nazir), in the chair; Councillors Ajaib, Akram, Anderson, Bal, Bains, Bedi (until 7.30pm), Begum, Brooker, Carter, A Cheema, H Cheema, Gahir, Gill, Grewal, Hulme, Kaur, Kelly, Malik, Mann, Matloob, Minhas, Mohammad, Pantelic, D Parmar, S Parmar, Qaseem, Sabah, Sharif, Smith, Strutton, Swindlehurst and Wright

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Ali, Basra, J Davis, R Davis, Dar, Dhaliwal, Hussain and Muvvala

61. Mayor's Statement on Ukraine

Referring to recent events in Ukraine, the Mayor expressed that the Council's thoughts were with the Ukrainian people, their family, and friends. Slough had a long and proud history of welcoming people from across the world and supported all the efforts at home and abroad to help those affected by the situation in Ukraine.

The Leader of the Council informed the meeting that following discussions with the Leader of the Conservative Group, it was agreed that the Council would formally concur with the Council of European Municipalities and Regions Statement on Ukraine, as tabled at the meeting.

The Council held a minute's applause in a show of support and solidarity with Ukraine and all other communities affected and displaced by war.

62. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Anderson declared he was a member of Britwell Parish Council

Councillor Bal declared that his daughters worked for the Council.

Councillor Brooker declared that he was Vice-Chair of Britwell Parish Council.

Councillor Avtar Cheema declared she was a member of Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council and Council appointed representative on Berkshire Fire Authority.

Councillor Hulme declared she was a Council appointed representative on Slough Children First Board.

Councillor Kaur declared she was a member of Wexham Court Parish Council.

Councillor Kelly declared he was a member of Buckinghamshire CC and that they had provided SBC with a loan.

Councillor Mann declared she was Chair of Britwell Parish Council.

Councillor Minhas declared she was a Council appointed representative on Berkshire Fire Authority.

Councillor Smith declared he was a member of Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council and a Council appointed representative on Berkshire Fire Authority.

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63. Recommendation of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee from its meeting held on 9th December 2021

It was moved by Councillor Sabah,
Seconded by Councillor Swindlehurst,

“That the Council accepts the Public Sector Audit Appointments’ (PSAA) invitation to opt into the sector-led option for the appointment of external auditors for the five-year period from 2023/24.”

The recommendation was put to the vote and agreed unanimously.

Resolved - That the Council accepts the Public Sector Audit Appointments’ (PSAA) invitation to opt into the sector-led option for the appointment of external auditors for the five-year period from 2023/24.

64. Recommendation of the Employment and Appeals Committee from its meeting held on 16th February 2022

It was moved by Councillor Brooker,
Seconded by Councillor Swindlehurst,

“That the Pay Policy Statement 2022/23, as attached at Appendix A to the report, be approved.”

The recommendation was put to the vote and agreed unanimously.

Resolved – That the Pay Policy Statement 2022/23, as attached at Appendix A to the report, be approved.

65. Meeting Procedure

A suggested procedure for the budget debate had been circulated to Members in the supplementary agenda.

It was moved by Councillor Swindlehurst,
Seconded by Councillor Mann,

“That in accordance with procedure rule 27.1, Rule 16.5 on rules of debate be suspended insofar as is necessary to enable the procedure as circulated to be adopted and that the Council consent to:

- Members of the Leadership speaking for up to 45 minutes in total on the budget agenda items;
- Members of the Opposition speaking for up to 20 minutes in total on the same items;
- Independent Member speaking for up to 5 minutes in total, and
- To vary the agenda items, to enable consideration of the Capital Programme first, followed by the Treasury Management Strategy and then the Revenue Budget.”

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The procedural motion, including variation of order of agenda items, was put and carried.

Resolved – That the proposed procedure for the budget debate and variation of order of agenda items be approved and adopted.

The Leader of the Council and Lead Members for Transport, Planning & Place; Leisure, Culture & Communities; Financial Oversight, Council Assets & Performance; Regulation and Public Protection; Housing & Environment; Children's Services, Lifelong Learning & Skills and Social Care and Public Health; provided details on the budget overview, savings, growth and pressures relating to each of their portfolios.

(Councillor Bedi left the meeting)

Members of the Conservative Group spoke on the budget agenda items, highlighting the seriousness of the financial challenge facing the Council.

66. Section 25 Report

It was moved by Councillor Anderson,
Seconded by Councillor Swindlehurst,

“On the basis of the risks and issues raised in paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 and the rest of the report, in the opinion of the Director of Finance, Council approved the budget on the basis that:

- a) the proposed level of Council reserves are adequate to support the budget for 2022/23 having regard to an assessment of current financial and other risks set out extensively in this report and assuming these risks do not increase beyond those that can be contained by the Council. It should also be noted that matters will continue to be identified and will change throughout the coming financial year and beyond
- b) the estimates are robust for the calculation of the budget within the confines of the many risks noted throughout this report. Particular attention is drawn to the following specific conditions and risks:
 - (i) the recommended level of general balances, for 2022/23 is £20m, although this is the bare minimum as a percentage of Net Revenue Expenditure, and places the Council in the lowest quartile in comparison to similar authorities
 - (ii) the budget which has levels of contingency and conditions built in to reflect the considerable risks the Council is facing and is predicated on continuing support from DLUHC ;
 - (iii) agreement of the Capitalisation Directive for 2022/23 and future years as proposed to DLUHC in February 2022 at estimated figures of £223m to 31/3/22 and £84m for 2022/23

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- (iv) agreement by DLUHC that they will agree to capitalisation directions or other support to equal the actual figures for the outstanding, current and forthcoming years as the accounts for the years are closed
- (v) agreement by DLUHC that they will agree to capitalisation directions or other support to equal the estimated figures for future years as the budgets are prepared for these future years
- (vi) agreement by DLUHC that they will agree to capitalisation directions or other support or agreed mechanisms to supplement the level of revenue budget savings that the Council can achieve as discussed and as will be reviewed. Further that they will agree to finance/support on a recurrent basis any recurrent gap that would arise if the £20m annual level of savings was not achieved in a sustainable manner
- (vii) the current level of Council general reserves outside of the support from DLUHC relating to specific risks and specific initiatives is currently nil. These reserves will be established and built up over time once a more stable finance base has been created.
- (viii) as at the end of December 2021, the Council has a small amount of earmarked reserves of £14m. The majority of these funds were accumulated during 2020/21 and 2021/22 as part of the Government's covid response measures to be used for specific purposes such as helping local business and managing the outbreak of covid and cannot be used for general purposes

	£m
Better Care Fund	1.3
Grants for closed businesses	5.3
Business Support Grant	4.3
Outbreak Management Fund	1.4
Other	2.1
Total	14.4

- (ix) as the Council has no complete and fully accurate accounts since 2015/16 and will not have these complete up to 31/3/22 until well into the financial year 2022/23 the financial position is subject to considerable potential change which may impact on the robustness of the budget
- (x) the Council embeds the good practise now being designed but notes that this will take time to fully develop and thus as with the accounts the various estimates will be subject to change
- (xi) the Council has a major dependency on asset sales which will significantly impact on the budget for 2022/23 and beyond and which will thus again affect the level of robustness of the budget"

The recommendations were put to the vote and carried with 27 votes for and 6 abstentions.

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Resolved – On the basis of the risks and issues raised in paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 and the rest of the report, in the opinion of the Director of Finance, Council approved the budget on the basis that:

- a) the proposed level of Council reserves are adequate to support the budget for 2022/23 having regard to an assessment of current financial and other risks set out extensively in this report and assuming these risks do not increase beyond those that can be contained by the Council. It should also be noted that matters will continue to be identified and will change throughout the coming financial year and beyond
- b) the estimates are robust for the calculation of the budget within the confines of the many risks noted throughout this report. Particular attention is drawn to the following specific conditions and risks:
 - (i) the recommended level of general balances, for 2022/23 is £20m, although this is the bare minimum as a percentage of Net Revenue Expenditure, and places the Council in the lowest quartile in comparison to similar authorities
 - (ii) the budget which has levels of contingency and conditions built in to reflect the considerable risks the Council is facing and is predicated on continuing support from DLUHC ;
 - (iii) agreement of the Capitalisation Directive for 2022/23 and future years as proposed to DLUHC in February 2022 at estimated figures of £223m to 31/3/22 and £84m for 2022/23
 - (iv) agreement by DLUHC that they will agree to capitalisation directions or other support to equal the actual figures for the outstanding, current and forthcoming years as the accounts for the years are closed
 - (v) agreement by DLUHC that they will agree to capitalisation directions or other support to equal the estimated figures for future years as the budgets are prepared for these future years
 - (vi) agreement by DLUHC that they will agree to capitalisation directions or other support or agreed mechanisms to supplement the level of revenue budget savings that the Council can achieve as discussed and as will be reviewed. Further that they will agree to finance/support on a recurrent basis any recurrent gap that would arise if the £20m annual level of savings was not achieved in a sustainable manner
 - (vii) the current level of Council general reserves outside of the support from DLUHC relating to specific risks and specific initiatives is currently nil. These reserves will be established and built up over time once a more stable finance base has been created.
 - (viii) as at the end of December 2021, the Council has a small amount of earmarked reserves of £14m. The majority of these funds were

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accumulated during 2020/21 and 2021/22 as part of the Government's covid response measures to be used for specific purposes such as helping local business and managing the outbreak of covid and cannot be used for general purposes

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(ix) as the Council has no complete and fully accurate accounts since 2015/16 and will not have these complete up to 31/3/22 until well into the financial year 2022/23 the financial position is subject to considerable potential change which may impact on the robustness of the budget

(x) the Council embeds the good practise now being designed but notes that this will take time to fully develop and thus as with the accounts the various estimates will be subject to change

(xi) the Council has a major dependency on asset sales which will significantly impact on the budget for 2022/23 and beyond and which will thus again affect the level of robustness of the budget.

67. Capital Programme 2022/23 to 2026/27

It was moved by Councillor Anderson,
Seconded by Councillor Swindlehurst,

“That the Capital Programme, as set out in Appendix A to the report, for 2022/23 to 2026/27 be approved.”

The recommendation was put and carried and, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a record of the vote was taken as follows:-

There voted for the recommendation:-

Councillors Ajaib, Akram, Anderson, Bains, Bal, Begum, Brooker, Carter, A.Cheema, H.Cheema, Dar, Gahir, Gill, Grewal, Hulme, Kaur, Malik, Mann, Matloob, Minhas, Mohammad, Pantelic, S.Parmar, Qaseem, Sabah, Sharif and Swindlehurst 27

There abstained from voting:

Councillors Kelly, D.Parmar, Smith, Strutton, Wright and The Worshipful, The Mayor Councillor Nazir 6

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Resolved - That the Capital Programme, as set out in Appendix A to the report, for 2022/23 to 2026/27 be approved.

68. Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23

It was moved by Councillor Anderson,
Seconded by Councillor Swindlehurst,

- a. "That the Treasury Management Strategy (TMS) for 2022/23 be approved including:
 - i. the Annual Investment Strategy for 2022/23 (Appendix 2)
 - ii. Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement for 2022/23 (Appendix 1)
 - iii. the Prudential Indicators for the period 2022/23 to 2024/25 (Section 4)

- b. That the MRP policy as set out in the TMS for 2022/23 shall also apply for the financial year 2021/22."

The recommendations were put and carried and, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a record of the vote was taken as follows:-

There voted for the recommendations:-

Councillors Ajaib, Akram, Anderson, Bains, Bal, Begum, Brooker, Carter, A.Cheema, H.Cheema, Dar, Gahir, Gill, Grewal, Hulme, Kaur, Malik, Mann, Matloob, Minhas, Mohammad, Pantelic, S.Parmar, Qaseem, Sabah, Sharif and Swindlehurst 27

There abstained from voting:

Councillors Kelly, D.Parmar, Smith, Strutton, Wright and The Worshipful, The Mayor Councillor Nazir 6

Resolved -

- a) That the Treasury Management Strategy (TMS) for 2022/23 be approved including:
 - i. the Annual Investment Strategy for 2022/23 (Appendix 2)
 - ii. Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement for 2022/23 (Appendix 1)
 - iii. the Prudential Indicators for the period 2022/23 to 2024/25 (Section 4)

- b) That the MRP policy as set out in the TMS for 2022/23 shall also apply for the financial year 2021/22.

69. 2022/23 Revenue Budget

It was moved by Councillor Anderson,
Seconded by Councillor Swindlehurst,

1. "Approval of the 2022/23 budget to enable the Council Tax for 2022/23 to be set;
2. Approval of the Model Council Tax Resolution 2022/23 as set out in the revised Appendix B issued in the supplementary agenda;
3. Delegate authority to the Director of Finance, to place a notice in the local press of the amounts set under recommendation 2 within a period of 21 days following the Council's decision;
4. Approve the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as based on the estimated financial deficit in the Capitalisation Direction and to be funded by capitalisation of:
 - a. £223.1m up to 2021/22
 - b. £84.1m for 2022/23
 - c. £171.1m for beyond 2022/23
5. Approve the Capital Receipts Flexibility Strategy as agreed in 2021/22.
6. Approve the overall General Fund revenue budget of £191.7m, to include:
 - a. growth for pressures for contract inflation and pay inflation of £8.178m
 - b. proposed savings by directorate of £19.959m

To note the following:

7. The balanced budget position for 2022/23 requiring savings of £19.959m and the projected financial deficit between 2023/24 to 2028/29
8. The inclusion within the Capitalisation Direction of £1m per year from 2022/23 onwards as a means to rebuild the General Fund and Earmarked Reserves balance
9. The intention to increase Council Tax by 1.99% in 2022/23
10. The intention to increase Council Tax by a further 1% in 2022/23 in respect of the Adult Social Care Precept
11. The assumed funding for the protection of social care 2022/23 through the Better Care Fund
12. that due regard has been had to the s.25 report by the Director of Finance at Appendix H

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To agree the following -

13. Note the Cabinet’s approval of the Fees and Charges Policy Framework, and that Council approve this for non-executive functions

14. Approval of the Members Allowances Scheme for 2022-23 at Appendix I

Acceptance of Indicative Capitalisation Directions for 2016/17 to 2022/23 -

- i. Acceptance of the capitalisation direction of £223m up to 31.03.22
- ii. Acceptance of the capitalisation direction of £84.1m for the 2022/23 financial year
- iii. Acceptance of the accompanying conditions set out in the report.

To Note -

- i. The capitalisation direction is not a grant. The Council needs to fund the revenue expenditure capitalised from disposing of assets to repay the resulting debt.
- ii. The Council is in a precarious state and will be required to request future capitalisation directions to balance future years budgets, estimated at an additional £172m, £479m in total
- iii. The minded to directions will be converted into actual directions on an annual basis as the accounts for each year are closed and audited.”

The recommendations were put and carried and, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a record of the vote was taken as follows:-

There voted for the recommendations:-

Councillors Ajaib, Akram, Anderson, Bains, Bal, Begum, Brooker, Carter, A.Cheema, H.Cheema, Dar, Gahir, Gill, Grewal, Hulme, Kaur, Malik, Mann, Matloob, Minhas, Mohammad, Pantelic, S.Parmar, Qaseem, Sabah, Sharif and Swindlehurst 27

There abstained from voting:

Councillors Kelly, D.Parmar, Smith, Strutton, Wright and The Worshipful, The Mayor Councillor Nazir 6

Resolved -

- 1. Approval of the 2022/23 budget to enable the Council Tax for 2022/23 to be set;
- 2. Approval of the Model Council Tax Resolution 2022/23 as set out in the revised Appendix B issued in the supplementary agenda;

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3. Delegate authority to the Director of Finance, to place a notice in the local press of the amounts set under recommendation 2 within a period of 21 days following the Council's decision;
4. Approve the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as based on the estimated financial deficit in the Capitalisation Direction and to be funded by capitalisation of:
 - a. £223.1m up to 2021/22
 - b. £84.1m for 2022/23
 - c. £171.1m for beyond 2022/23
5. Approve the Capital Receipts Flexibility Strategy as agreed in 2021/22.
6. Approve the overall General Fund revenue budget of £191.7m, to include:
 - a. growth for pressures for contract inflation and pay inflation of £8.178m
 - b. proposed savings by directorate of £19.959m

To note the following:

7. The balanced budget position for 2022/23 requiring savings of £19.959m and the projected financial deficit between 2023/24 to 2028/29
8. The inclusion within the Capitalisation Direction of £1m per year from 2022/23 onwards as a means to rebuild the General Fund and Earmarked Reserves balance
9. The intention to increase Council Tax by 1.99% in 2022/23
10. The intention to increase Council Tax by a further 1% in 2022/23 in respect of the Adult Social Care Precept
11. The assumed funding for the protection of social care 2022/23 through the Better Care Fund
12. That due regard has been had to the s.25 report by the Director of Finance at Appendix H

To agree the following -

13. Note the Cabinet's approval of the Fees and Charges Policy Framework, and that Council approve this for non-executive functions
14. Approval of the Members Allowances Scheme for 2022-23 at Appendix I

Acceptance of Indicative Capitalisation Directions for 2016/17 to 2022/23 -

- i. Acceptance of the capitalisation direction of £223m up to 31.03.22

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- ii. Acceptance of the capitalisation direction of £84.1m for the 2022/23 financial year
- iii. Acceptance of the accompanying conditions set out in the report.

To Note -

- i. The capitalisation direction is not a grant. The Council needs to fund the revenue expenditure capitalised from disposing of assets to repay the resulting debt.
- ii. The Council is in a precarious state and will be required to request future capitalisation directions to balance future years budgets, estimated at an additional £172m, £479m in total
- iii. The minded to directions will be converted into actual directions on an annual basis as the accounts for each year are closed and audited.

70. Update on the Dedicated Schools Grant Management Plan

It was moved by Councillor Anderson,
Seconded by Councillor Swindlehurst,

“That the Council note

- a) the forecast position for DSG spend in 2021/22 to 2024/25
- b) the overarching issues that have resulted in the DSG deficit and the actions taken to date to address these
- c) the Council has been invited to take part in the ‘safety valve’ intervention programme with the DfE which is expected to commence in April/May 2022.”

The recommendations were put to the vote and carried with 27 votes for and 6 abstentions.

Resolved - That the Council note

- d) the forecast position for DSG spend in 2021/22 to 2024/25
- e) the overarching issues that have resulted in the DSG deficit and the actions taken to date to address these
- f) the Council has been invited to take part in the ‘safety valve’ intervention programme with the DfE which is expected to commence in April/May 2022.

71. Council Tax Support Scheme 2022/23

It was moved by Councillor Anderson,
Seconded by Councillor Swindlehurst,

“That the Council Tax Support Scheme remain unchanged for 2022-23 and that as allowed within the scheme the income bands are updated once more in line with inflation (3.1%) to protect the most vulnerable from the ongoing and significant cost of living rises.”

The recommendation was put to the vote and agreed unanimously.

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Resolved – That the Council Tax Support Scheme remain unchanged for 2022-23 and that as allowed within the scheme the income bands are updated once more in line with inflation (3.1%) to protect the most vulnerable from the ongoing and significant cost of living rises.

72. To receive updates from the Best Value Commissioners

The Lead Commissioner, Mr Caller, outlined details of decisions taken by Commissioners at a meeting held on 9th March 2022. Members were reminded that the Commissioners were acting under powers given to them by the Secretary of State in the Directions under Section 15(5) and (6) of the Local Government Act 1999, in relation to the appointment and dismissal of statutory officers.

At the meeting held on 9th March, the Best Value Commissioners decided that Josie Wragg be summarily dismissed for gross misconduct and that Gavin Jones be appointed as the Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service. Mr Caller placed on record his thanks to all Members of the Investigating and Disciplinary Committee for their due diligence in consideration of the matter.

Resolved -

- (a) That the Council note the Best Value Commissioners decision that Josie Wragg be summarily dismissed for gross misconduct as Slough Borough Council's Chief Executive, Head of Paid Service and Returning Officer, with effect from 9th March 2022, without notice or pay in lieu of notice but be paid for accrued leave, as set out in section 3 of the report.

It was moved by Councillor Swindlehurst,
Seconded by Councillor Mann,

- (b) "That Gavin Jones be appointed as Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service with effect from 9th March 2022, and that Council confirms that it concurs with this appointment."

The recommendation was put to the vote and agreed unanimously.

Resolved - That Gavin Jones be appointed as Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service with effect from 9th March 2022, and that Council confirms that it concurs with this appointment.

73. Elections - Interim Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer and Review of Polling Place Changes 2022

It was moved by Councillor Swindlehurst,
Seconded by Councillor Mann,

- a) "That the appointment of Angela Wakefield as Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer be approved.
- b) That the designated polling stations, set out at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved."

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The recommendations were put to the vote and agreed unanimously.

Resolved –

- c) That the appointment of Angela Wakefield as Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer be approved.
- d) That the designated polling stations, set out at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 7.00 pm and closed at 9.42 pm)