

## **Cabinet (Extraordinary) – Meeting held on Tuesday, 29th March, 2022.**

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

**Also present under Rule 30:-** Councillor Gahir

**Apologies for Absence:-** None

### **PART 1**

#### **98. Declarations of Interest**

None were declared.

#### **99. Slough Borough Council First Stage Recovery Plan**

The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive introduced a report that set out the high-level proposals for SBC's Recovery Plan.

The Leader highlighted that this was the first-stage of the plan and set out the approach and key themes. It was recognised that the Council faced very significant challenges to address the scale of the financial and corporate leadership failures over several years, and the Leader stated that Members took their share responsibility for both the failings and the commitment to resolve the problems the Council faced.

A robust recovery plan was required to provide a focus for the Council's the recovery and improvement plans and effectively implement the Directions issued by the Secretary of State. The plan was linked to the functional capability assessments and leadership reports elsewhere on the Cabinet agenda.

The Chief Executive summarised the key themes of the recovery plan which were:

- Leadership and culture
- Financial recovery and onward sustainability
- Business planning and performance management
- Governance
- Organisational capability, capacity and resilience
- Technological capability, capacity and resilience
- Citizen service standards and performance

Lead Members welcomed the work carried out to date on the Recovery Plan and emphasised their collective commitment to take the necessary steps to put in place and implement a recovery and improvement plan. The importance of the plan being built on data and evidence, feedback and

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working with partners was particularly welcomed. It would be important to ensure the plan was a 'living document' and continue to evolve as part of the Council's continuous improvement over the coming years. Several Members highlighted that residents needs should be at the centre of the plan and engagement with them was crucial.

The Cabinet agreed that improving organisational cultures and behaviours, including Member-Officer relations was important. Constructive and well informed challenge would improve decision making and this would require good governance processes, such as timely and high quality reports to Members. The role of the Overview & Scrutiny function and performance management were highlighted as Members priorities for the improvement plan.

Speaking under Rule 30, Councillor Gahir expressed support for the approach being taken and concurred with the comments of Cabinet Members to ensure that scrutiny was strengthened as it had a vital role to play in the improvement journey.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Cabinet agreed the first stage recovery plan.

**Resolved –** That the key themes and approach for developing the council's Recovery Plan, as outlined in section 3 and 4 of the report be agreed.

### **100. Slough: Solid Foundations for Recovery**

The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive introduced a report which focused on the steps to improve leadership and culture at the Council to ensure the recovery programme was built on solid foundations.

The report highlighted that the Council was under formal Government intervention and the root cause of organisation failure of the scale in Slough was a failure of leadership at both officer and Member level. Improving leadership across the Council was therefore central to the delivery of the recovery plans and the report set out the approach and some of the practical ways that this would be addressed. The recommendations included specific steps for the Cabinet and Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) which included leadership development and tailored development plans for each Lead Member and CLT committing to providing collective leadership, involving staff in the process of change and developing a new workforce strategy.

Lead Members welcomed the proposals, particularly the specific measures to improve engagement across the Council such as roadshows and stronger internal mechanisms in areas such as whistleblowing. It was recognised that as a democratic body the relations between Members and officers was a key priority and developing a culture of constructive challenge, trust and collaborative working was important.

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At the conclusion of the discussion the recommendations were agreed.

### **Resolved –**

That it be approved that the following 12 recommendations be built into the Council's wider Recovery Plan:

- Recommendation 1: Cabinet will commit to ongoing, facilitated leadership development as a collective.
- Recommendation 2: In addition, each Lead Member will have their own tailored development plan, so that they are empowered to fulfil the Executive roles properly.
- Recommendation 3: Commitment to re-statement and regular communication on priorities within the organisation and outside - clearly outlining what is going well, not so well and what has changed as a result of the intervention.
- Recommendation 4: Commitments to diversity and how the members will obtain tangible evidence to show change has happened.

Cabinet noted the intention of the Chief Executive to ensure the following:

- Recommendation 5: The CLT will commit to ongoing, facilitated leadership development as a collective.
- Recommendation 6: Regular staff surveys will be undertaken and will include a section on CLT leadership. Any shortcomings will be addressed and fed back to staff.
- Recommendation 7: Visibility of officer senior leadership – improvements to include Chief Executive/ Executive Director visits to departments, unscheduled walkabouts, use of technology to communicate and obtain feedback, weekly blog from Chief Executive and attendance at induction programme or key message video.
- Recommendation 8: Recruitment and Retention of staff will be fundamental to the Council's recovery. The Council will publish a workforce strategy to address
- Recommendation 9: A working group is established involving staff from across the organisation to propose a set of organisation values and behaviours. Once adopted, these will form a key part of the employer brand and will be used in recruitment, professional development and performance management
- Recommendation 10: An annual staff survey (with intra year thematic polling) will be undertaken. Results will be published and scrutinised. Any response action will be published and reported back to the organisation
- Recommendation 11: Bi-annual "Leader and CEO roadshows" will be undertaken, supported by smaller informal sessions with groups of staff. Where staff will have the opportunity to be updated on issues affecting the Council and where they will have the opportunity to interact with senior leaders

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- Recommendation 12: The Council should monitor and publish its staff diversity figures and create opportunities through its recruitment and staff development for people from diverse backgrounds to join and advance within the organisation.

### **101. Slough: Functional Capability Assessments**

The Leader of the Council introduced the report on the functional capability assessments which were part of the Council's response to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Direction to assess the functional capability of all services by the end of February 2022.

The Leader commended the Cabinet and Council staff who have worked intensively over the past year in particular to address the financial challenges and keep services running during a very difficult period for the authority. The assessment of functional capability in each service had been carried out through a structured process and the report set out key themes and areas of concern identified.

The Chief Executive summarised the report and explained that this is an input to the recovery plan as it aims to identify gaps in the organisation. There was still work to be done but this will feed into the wider corporate plan. The second phase of the process was to produce costed action plans that addressed the key gaps identified in the functional assessment.

The report was noted and approved.

**Resolved –** That the analysis and findings included in the report be approved.

### **102. Initial ICT Improvement Programme**

The Director of Finance gave a presentation and summarised the report on the initial ICT improvement programme which provided an update regarding the current programme of work to modernise the Council's ICT facilities and sought to improve the service in terms of both cost savings and service delivery improvements.

It was recognised that the Council's IT systems were in need of significant improvement and the report set out the first phase of the improvement plan for ICT. Recovery from the current position regarding ICT would be a long term programme. The Director stated that it was expected a plan regarding the future staffing structure would be ready in the near future to achieve a more permanent structure in the team.

Lead Members discussed various aspects of the report and endorsed the initial plan. They agreed clearly set out the issues with a clear plan and timeline to make the necessary improvements. It was recognised that ICT was fundamental to the delivery of services across the Council and the Cabinet agreed the recommendations and to receive further reports on future

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phases. Lead Members commended Officers in the ICT team for the extensive work they had undertaken to develop the plan and also for their work during the pandemic when the Council largely moved from office to remote based working.

### **Resolved –**

The Cabinet:

- noted the initial assessment of the issues with the service set out in the Reasons for Recommendations in the report.
- noted that these would be continuously worked on from now going forward.
- approved the expenditure set out in Appendix 2 to the report and contained within the Council's recently approved budgets.
- noted the work being undertaken by the digital team and the projects outlined in appendices 3 and 4 and that a delivery update will be brought back when the work has been fully assessed.
- noted that the Director of Finance would be approving the licences and contracts set out in appendix 5 and taking forward actions to avoid this reoccurring for these contracts in the future.
- noted that work continues to identify any other such matters.
- noted the outcome of the DLUHC cyber security assessment and the work being undertaken, appendices 6 and 7 to the report.
- delegated authority to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Leader, to appoint ICT officers on an interim basis and to commence procurement for an ICT partner(s).
- agreed that a report be presented to Cabinet with an updated plan for future phases in quarter 3 2022/23.

### **103. Exclusion of Press and Public**

It was not necessary to exclude the press and public as Appendices 6 and 7 of the Initial ICT Improvement Programme were considered and noted during Part I of the meeting without disclosing any of the exempt information.

### **104. Initial ICT Improvement Programme - Appendices 6 and 7**

**Resolved –** That appendices 6 and 7 be noted.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 5.31 pm and closed at 6.52 pm)