

Cabinet – Meeting held on Tuesday, 5th March, 2024.

Present:- Councillors Smith (Chair), Chahal (Vice-Chair), I. Ahmed, Bedi, Kelly, Manku, Muvvala and Wright

Apologies for Absence:- None.

PART 1

99. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

100. Slough Autism Strategy 2024-29

The Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Mental Health and Learning Disabilities introduced a report that sought approval of the Autism Strategy 2024-29 including the Autism Action Plan.

The aim of the strategy was to ensure that Slough was a place where autistic people lived long and purposeful lives, experienced good health and achieved a desired quality of life. The Strategy sought to minimise the negative impacts of social isolation and loneliness and aimed to prevent or delay crises. The strategy had been developed following a number of engagement events with autistic adults and the wider community, and with active support of the Co-Production Network and partners.

The Cabinet welcomed this important strategy and particularly commended the high level of engagement with service users in its production. Lead Members asked about the financial implications and officers responded that this was a high level strategy with no direct financial implications, however, it was anticipated that delivery of the action plan would help deliver cost efficiencies through effective preventative work.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the strategy and to receive an annual update on progress.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Slough Autism Strategy 2024-29 set out at Appendix 2 to the report be approved.
- (b) That it be noted that a report would be brought back to Cabinet annually setting out the progress against the Action Plan and recommending any amendments to the Strategy.

101. Direct award of Contract for Housing Related Support service for homeless people (HRS)

The Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Mental Health and Learning Disabilities introduced a report that sought approval to make a direct award of an 18-month contract to Look Ahead for an accommodation-based housing related support service for homeless people with complex needs.

It was noted that the service would operate out of a purpose built property which had been used for this purpose for 17 years. This would ensure the Council was able to meet its duty to support residents who were homeless, or at risk of homelessness and with complex needs, and for whom the Council held a housing duty.

The Part II appendix which contained exempt information relating to the procurement process, was considered and noted in Part I without disclosing any of the exempt information.

Lead Members recognised the importance and value of these services in supporting some of the most vulnerable residents of the town. A question was asked about the financial implications and the steps that would be taken to achieve best value in the contract. Officers explained the approach that would be taken and commented on the importance of using good quality data and monitoring the key performance indicators.

After due consideration the recommendations were agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That an 18-month direct contract award for an accommodation-based housing -related support service for homeless people from 31st October 2024 to 30th April 2026 be approved.
- (b) That funding for the direct contract award of £415,500 for the 18-month period (£277,000 p.a. pro rata) be approved.
- (c) That delegated authority be given to the Executive Director for People (Adults) in consultation with the Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Mental Health and Learning Disabilities, Lead Member for Highways, Housing and Transport and the Lead Member for Finance, Council Assets, Procurement and Revenues to negotiate the final contract terms and to enter into the contract with Look Ahead.

102. Housing Homelessness Residents in Affordable rented Housing widening the housing Choice for Slough Residents

The Lead Member for Highways, Housing and Transport introduced a report on a revised housing placement policy.

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The revised policy aimed to increase choice for those impacted by homelessness and enabled the Council to secure access to affordable rented accommodation in areas outside the borough subject to the necessary criteria outlined in the placement policy which was set out at Appendix A to the report.

The Lead Member outlined some of the current challenges in the homelessness and temporary accommodation budget which was reporting a significant overspend. The current budget deficit was estimated at £6.7m and whilst action was being taken to achieve additional savings in 2024/25 estimated at £1.6m in the full year and a further £1.3m over the next two years, it was not anticipated that these financial objectives would be sustainable over the medium to longer term using the current traditional operational model of service.

The new Placement Policy set out the criteria that would be used to prioritise vulnerable residents for the scarce supply of social housing, local private rented accommodation and temporary accommodation. It aimed to end the use of hotel accommodation except for the use in critical emergencies by the end of the 2024/25 financial year and to deliver sustained reductions in temporary accommodation costs. The policy had carefully considered all the necessary regulatory statutory, partner consultation when considering placement, and partnering to support those placed out of borough, to allow such placements to be safely made and improve the longer-term affordable housing prospects for those placed.

Members agreed the necessity to reduce temporary accommodation costs and provide appropriate support to vulnerable residents. The revised placement policy was agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Placement Policy be approved.
- (b) That it be noted that housing officers in placing clients out of borough would develop the necessary bespoke support arrangements consistent with the needs of residents and the local areas in which placements are made.
- (c) That it be agreed that a report on the progress made in implementing the new placement policy and its operational and financial impacts be submitted within 6 months from the date of implementation.

103. Berkshire Prosperity Board

The Leader of the Council introduced a report on a proposal of the six Berkshire local authorities to set up a joint committee, known as the Berkshire Prosperity Board, to enable funding previously held by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to be provided for Berkshire wide prosperity projects.

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This report set out details of the proposed governance structure and functions, with proposed delegation to officers to finalise these arrangements to take account of Government guidance and any grant conditions.

Core funded from central government to Local Enterprise Partnerships was being withdrawn from April 2024 with LEP functions transferring to local authorities where appropriate. The Leader updated the Cabinet on discussions between local authority leaders in Berkshire about how positive collaboration on relevant issues could continue. The recommended option the establishment of a Berkshire Prosperity Board to discharge the following functions:

- Work to a shared vision of inclusive and sustainable economic prosperity through working together to address challenges and meet opportunities.
- Have a strengthened case to Government and private investors for greater investment into strategic projects across Berkshire.
- Function as a vehicle to commission the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) core functions in response to the Government's review of Local Economic Partnerships.
- Have a stronger, collective voice in lobbying Government and other agencies using a systems leadership approach.
- Advantageously position Berkshire in readiness for potential devolution proposals to benefit from additional responsibilities and funding opportunities.
- Progress joint working on the six identified work themes and be agile in responding to new opportunities as they arise.

The Cabinet were supportive of the proposal in principle and asked about any costs to the Council. In response it was noted that the Board would operate within existing budgets, utilising any transferred funding from the LEP and external grant monies.

At the conclusion of the discussion the matters relating to executive functions were approved and it was agreed to recommend the non-executive aspects of the report to full Council.

Resolved –

- (a) Approve the setting up of a joint committee across the six Berkshire local authorities to exercise executive functions in relation to economic prosperity.
- (b) Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial, to agree and enter into an inter-authority agreement between the six Berkshire local authorities to facilitate decision-making by the Berkshire Prosperity Board Joint Committee (BPB)

Recommended to full Council –

- (c) Approve of the functions and procedure rules for the Berkshire Prosperity Board Joint Committee (BPB) as set out in Appendix 1 be added to Part 3.5 of the Constitution;
- (d) Delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to amend the Constitution to make minor amendments to the functions and procedure rules for the BPB and to amend other parts of the Constitution, including Article 13 – Decision Making, Part 4.2 - Access to Information Procedure Rules and Part 4.4 of the Executive Procedure Rules, to take account of the existence of the BPB.

104. Capital Point, 33 Bath Road, Slough – Lego Reversionary Leases

The Lead Member for Finance, Council Assets, Procurement and Revenues & Benefits introduced a report that sought approval for the grant of reversionary leases between Lego Company Ltd (tenant) and the Council (landlord) at Capital Point, 33 Bath Road, Slough.

The proposed reversionary leases would secure additional rental income for the Council should the asset be retained or would have a positive impact in the event the Council chose to dispose of the asset in the future. The current leases were due to expire on 23rd June 2024. Terms had been negotiated with Lego Company Ltd and were detailed in the Part II appendices which were considered and noted during Part I of the meeting without disclosing any of the exempt information. Avison Young had provided advice to the Council and facilitated the negotiations with the tenant. The advice from Avison Young was that the terms agreed represented the best consideration reasonably obtainable in the current market conditions.

In response to a question from a Lead Member it was confirmed that there was a break clause in the lease should it be required to be utilised. The Cabinet welcomed the fact that Lego was a strong brand and employer within Slough and had a good rent payment history. Lead Members agreed the recommendations.

Resolved –

- (a) Approved the grant of reversionary leases and effectively, the grant of further lease terms prior to expiry of the current leases, with the Tenant at Capital Point, 33 Bath Road, Slough.
- (b) Delegated authority to the Executive Director of Regeneration, Housing and Environment, in consultation with the Lead Member for Financial Oversight, Council Assets, Procurement, Revenue & Benefits and the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial, to negotiate and finalise the new lease terms and to enter into the reversionary leases

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with the Tenant consistent with the terms detailed in Appendix 1 – Lease Report.

105. Exclusion of Press and Public

All business was conducted in Part I of the meeting therefore it was not necessary to exclude the press and public.

106. Direct award of Contract for Housing Related Support service for homeless people (HRS)

Resolved – That the Part II Appendices be noted.

107. Capital Point, 33 Bath Road, Slough – Lego Reversionary Leases - Appendices

Resolved – That the Part II Appendices be noted.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.20 pm)