

## Slough Borough Council

<b>Report To:</b>	Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee (CISC)
<b>Date:</b>	26 <sup>th</sup> March 2024
<b>Subject:</b>	Launching a Task and Finish Group with the aim of developing community Involvement between Slough Children First and Community and Faith Groups
<b>Chief Officer:</b>	<b>Sue Butcher</b> , Chief Executive of Slough Children First and Executive Director of People (Children)
<b>Contact Officers:</b>	<b>Ben Short</b> , Director of Operations Slough Children First <b>Fanny Jacob</b> , Head of Referral and Assessment, Slough Children First <b>Alexander Polak</b> , Statutory Scrutiny Officer
<b>Ward(s):</b>	All
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
<b>Appendices:</b>	<b>Appendix A</b> – Draft Scope: ‘Developing Community Involvement between Slough Children First and Community and Faith Groups’

### **1. Summary and Recommendations**

- 1.1 This report recommends launching the committee’s next Task and Finish Group immediately, as per the committee’s forward plan. Appendix A sets out the draft scope. The topic is ‘Developing Community Involvement between Slough Children First and Community and Faith Groups’ This contributes directly towards the Council’s improvement & recovery, being linked to the Council’s corporate plan.

#### **Recommendations:**

- a. That a Task and Finish Group be launched as per the draft scope at Appendix A, including appointment of its chair and, if possible, its membership.**

#### **Commissioner Review**

DLUCH Commissioner:

The Commissioners support the establishment of this group. It would be helpful if the group could include in its enquiries the extent to which the Council and SCF combine their efforts in engaging with faith and community groups. This is important to ensure that residents do not experience a fragmented and disjointed approach.

DFE Commissioner

The Commissioner has passed on comments to the author which have been incorporated in this report.

## 2. Report

- 2.1 In accordance with this committee's work programme considered by the committee on 3 January 2024, this paper proposes to launch a 'Task and Finish Group' on the topic of 'Developing Community Involvement between Slough Children First and Community and Faith Groups'. However, it should be noted that the Task and Finish Group will also have implications for the work of the People (Children) directorate which provides educational support services including support for children with special educational needs and disabilities. (SEND).
- 2.2 This topic was originally recommended for the Corporate Improvement and Scrutiny Committee (CISC) forward plan due to identification of a need for Children's Services as a whole, i.e. People (Children) and Slough Children First, to work more closely with local community and faith groups. This issue has importance in terms of the overall improvement and recovery of the Council.
- 2.3 The Slough Children First Business and Improvement Plan 23-26 was approved by Cabinet on 18 September 2023 and sets out the shared vision between Slough Children First and Slough Borough Council where every child will be '**Happy, Safe & Loved, Thriving**'. To achieve this, it has been identified that Children's Services as a whole, needs to strengthen its links and collaboration with community and faith groups.
- 2.4 [Slough Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2023-27](#) sets out five principles (below), four of which relate to the interaction between residents many of which will be members of community and faith groups. This reflects the findings from the 2023 resident survey. Delivery of the Corporate Plan is a key driver of the Council's improvement and recovery journey, and effective resident engagement has been identified as key to successful delivery of the plan.



RESIDENT  
FOCUSED



PROVIDING  
FINANCIAL  
SUSTAINABILITY



ENABLING  
RESIDENTS AND  
COMMUNITIES



STRENGTHENING  
PARTNERSHIPS



BUILDING TRUST

- 2.5 This Task and Finish Group will explore the engagement of residents through the lens of community and faith groups. If the committee wishes to commission this group to commence now, it must elect one of the councillors, from its 'pool of chairs', to lead the work. The most important criterion for this choice is: "which councillor is most enthusiastically interested in the subject matter?" Experience has shown that this is by far the greatest determinant of a Task and Finish group's success.
- 2.6 Ideally, the committee would also agree membership of the Task and Finish group at this meeting. There must be a minimum of three to proceed. These do not have to be CISC Members – Task and Finish members may be drawn from any councillor except members of the Cabinet. Again, enthusiasm should be the

strongest criterion for inclusion in the group, however it is also desirable to ensure a degree of political proportionality i.e. members of at least two Groups being on the Task and Finish group. If Group Leaders have provided the Chair with any suggested volunteers from outside the committee, the Chair will announce their names in the meeting.

- 2.7 The constitution allows for Task and Finish Groups to run for a maximum of 4 months but the Task and Finish group can determine its own timescales within that if it wishes to conclude more quickly – subject only to the availability of officer and member resource to support a faster exercise. Extension beyond 4 months is possible with the approval of the chair of the parent committee.

### **3. Implications of the Recommendations**

#### *Financial implications*

- 3.1 This is not a decision-making report so there are no direct financial implications. Where further work is required to respond to the issues identified, any recommendations from CISC will be made to the Cabinet by Slough Children First where relevant.

#### *Legal implications*

- 3.2 The Local Government Act 2000 introduced a new political management system for local councils in England and Wales, requiring them to have a separate 'executive' in the form of a leader, or elected mayor, and cabinet. To provide a counterweight for this, the Act also introduced the concept of 'overview and scrutiny' – sometimes referred to simply as 'scrutiny' – whereby every council with an executive management structure is required to have an overview and scrutiny committee. This enables the rest of the council to scrutinise the executive by investigating their decisions and policies, and issuing reports and recommendations where any shortcomings are identified.

#### *Risk management implications*

- 3.3 Overview and Scrutiny, commonly referred to as Scrutiny, is a statutory function and is currently subject to government direction in Slough. It is important that topics selected by the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee clearly contribute to the overall improvement drivers for the council, to demonstrate that the conditions of the government intervention are being met.

#### *Equality implications*

- 3.4 There are no specific equalities implications arising at this stage, however it is intended that the work will identify ways to engage Community and Faith Groups representing all backgrounds and so ultimately should improve equalities outcomes. A detailed assessment will be done on the Task and Finish group's final recommendations.

#### *Corporate Parenting Implications*

3.5 Some of the members of Community and Faith Groups may be children who are looked after by Slough Borough Council or care experienced young people. This means that members have a specific statutory responsibility towards them as corporate parents. Although this Task and Finish Group is not intended to focus on these children and young people, members of the group should be aware the likelihood of these children and young people being members of these groups and should not seek to identify them without their age-appropriate permission or from an adult with parental responsibility for a specific child. However, any suggestions for the increased involvement of looked after children and young people and care experienced young people would be welcomed.

#### **4. Appendices**

**Appendix A:** Draft Scope for 'Developing community Involvement between Slough Children First and Community and Faith Groups