

Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 6th July, 2009.

Present:- Councillors Anderson (Chair), S Chaudhry, Matloob, Parmar, Small and Swindlehurst.

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors S K Dhaliwal and O'Connor.

PART I

12. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

13. Minutes

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 16th June, 2009 were agreed as a correct record subject to the resolution in Minute 8 (Extension to the Interim Accommodation Arrangements for Iqra Slough Islamic Primary School) being amended to read 'in consultation with' in place of 'in conjunction with'.

The Chair proposed and it was agreed that the order of business be varied to enable the item on Slough Town Football Club to be taken next.

14. Slough Town Football Club

The Assistant Director of Property Services advised Members of a proposal that had been received on behalf of Slough Town Football Club (STFC) and Paradigm Housing Association (Paradigm) for disposal of the former Arbour Vale School site.

STFC's previous proposals for the development of the Arbour Vale site had been considered by the Cabinet in February 2008 following which the Club was given three months to provide additional detailed information. Despite being unable to respond in a satisfactory form, discussions had continued between Officers and representatives of both the Club and Paradigm to find an acceptable alternative solution for the delivery of a new club facility on the site which would provide a new permanent home for STFC in the Borough.

As a result of the ongoing negotiations a revised outline proposal had been received from the Club and Paradigm involving two main components – a residential development and a community football stadium. Details of the proposed transactions were summarised in the report along with plans showing the development proposals.

Valuations of land in the current economic market were proving very difficult. If the Cabinet agreed the recommendation then it would be a condition of any transaction with Paradigm and STFC that a formal valuation was undertaken which would determine the level of any undervalue. If the result was an undervalue of less than £2m then the Council could use its wellbeing powers in conjunction with its powers to provide leisure facilities to authorise the

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transaction. If the undervalue was more than £2m then the Council could use its powers to contribute towards provision of the leisure facilities from the proceeds of the sale.

Members were advised that the structure of the proposed transaction was such that it was possible to sell the site with or without the West Wing remaining in situ and the decision could be taken by Members at a later date on whether or not this part of the site should be included in the sale. Officers were currently considering a number of options relating to the possible re-provision of West Wing's performing arts facility including Heart of Slough and recommendations will be the subject of a future separate report to Members.

Members were advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered this report at its meeting on 2nd July, 2009 and representatives from both STFC and Paradigm had attended the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to promote the proposals and answer specific questions relating to the development. Members of the Committee had been generally supportive of the proposals and the desire to bring the Football Club back within the boundaries of the town. However, there were some concerns over the potential loss of the West Wing arts facility and recommended that the proposal submitted by the STFC should be supported in principle but that the West Wing arts facility should be retained if at all possible given the currently poor level of participation in the arts by Slough residents.

The Cabinet received a presentation from the Chairman of the Slough Town Football Club and a representative from Paradigm Housing on the details of the proposals and the benefits to the council, town and community in proceeding with the proposals.

In discussing the proposals Cabinet Members welcomed the scheme as it had been part of the Administration's manifesto to work with Slough Town Football Club. Cabinet Members very much hoped that there would not be planning issues if the housing footprint stayed the same as it was currently. Members discussed the possible mix of housing to be provided acknowledging that the pressure on the housing register was for three, four and five bedroom houses within the town. In answer to questions Members were advised that it was envisaged that the community facility would be open and available for community use. Members noted the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's recommendation and confirmed that the future of the West Wing would be considered at a later date. Members welcomed the fact that the proposed stadium would be as flexible as possible to ensure that there could be as wide a use of it as possible. With regard to the standard of football that Slough could aspire to play in the proposed stadium, Members were advised that, with investment, it could be developed to Conference Level.

Members considered the valuation of the land and noted that if the undervalue was less than £2m the Council could use its well being powers. Members considered that the proposal clearly demonstrated economic, social and environmental benefits. The Chair thanked the representatives of the Football

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Club and Paradigm Housing and the Officers for their work in bringing this report to Members which was very much welcomed and Members looked forward to the scheme progressing.

Resolved -

- (a) That the contents of the report and representations from Slough Town Football Club and Paradigm Housing Association be noted.
- (b) That the Council wishes to see a football stadium built within the town for sports and community related users.
- (c) That the proposed terms for disposal of the former Arbour Vale site be approved and that the Borough Solicitor and Secretary, in conjunction with the Director of Resources be authorised to complete a formal agreement on these terms, subject to any alterations or amendments required to make commercial sense or to protect the Council's interests.
- (d) That members have considered the Well-Being Powers of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2000 and have judged that this proposal represents a scheme which will directly affect the economic social and environmental well being of their area.
- (e) That the recommendation from Overview & Scrutiny Committee be noted.

15. Performance and Financial Reporting for 2009/10

The Cabinet considered a report highlighting the Council's overall performance from delivery of service to financial management. The report focused on performance management, debt recovery and the revenue monitoring position to January 2009.

As part of the general debate on the item it was agreed that the Director of Resources would provide Councillor Matloob with a breakdown of staff from BAME backgrounds occupying senior positions.

Resolved - That the following aspects of the report be noted:

- i. Performance
- ii. Human Resources – Qtr 4 Statistics
- iii. Financial performance – revenue.

16. IT Computer Room - Proposed Way Forward

The Cabinet considered a report proposing the relocation of the Council Computer Room as part of the Council's Accommodation Strategy.

The Director of Resources outlined the options available to the Cabinet and the reasons behind recommending placing equipment in a purpose built commercial data centre. Officers had investigated a number of providers of hosted computer rooms. Based on experience in the market, contractual requirements around pricing in Euros, Officers recommended the Sungard

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option and full details of the recommendation were contained in the report. The Director of Resources advised that there had been a concern with regard to the need to issue a new telephone number for services, however this had now been resolved and the telephone number for 'My Council' and contacts could be retained.

Members were advised that the current proposal had an annual rental cost of £440,000 although Officers would continue to try to negotiate this downwards. This was within budget availability and would reduce when the Shared Services came into operation assuming responsibility for some of the Council's key business systems. There would also be a one-off cost of networking and moving to the new accommodation estimated to be approximately £300,000 which would be the same for all options. There would also be an annual line rental in the region of £185,000 again manageable within existing resources. Officers recommended entering into a three year contract with an option to extend by a further two years if appropriate.

This report had been considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 2nd July, 2009. The Committee had recommended that officers be instructed to attempt to locate a suitable high quality facility in the Slough area rather than relocating outside of the town.

In answers to questions the Director of Resources confirmed that there were no staff implications to the proposals.

Members of the Cabinet indicated that, whilst in principle there support for the facility being off-site, the Cabinet supported the recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny Committee that whilst the Council needed to achieve a Tier 4 level of service this should ideally be provided in Slough. There was also a concern over the cost of the proposal and a view that this should be negotiated down. It was agreed that Officers would be asked to consider alternative solutions for a high quality (Tier 4) facility in the Borough if possible for report back to the September meeting of the Cabinet.

Resolved -

- (a) That the need to replace the current computer room be noted.
- (b) That Officers consider alternative solutions for a high quality (Tier 4) facility in the Borough, if possible, for report back to September meeting.
- (c) That Officers commission Unisys to begin the next phase of the project.

17. Berkshire Unitary Authorities Joint Minerals and Waste Core Strategy Development Plan document

The Cabinet considered a report detailing matters arising from Public Examination into the Berkshire Unitary Authorities Joint Minerals and Waste Core Strategy Development Plan document (JMWCS). Members were

advised that issues had come to light during the Examination which had meant that the Inspector had now advised that he would not be able to approve the JMWCS in its current form and that the Joint Strategic Planning Unit and the Berkshire Unitary Authorities would have to decide how to proceed. A summary of issues and reasons for the adjournment were detailed in the report. Four options were available to the Berkshire Unitary Authorities in deciding how to proceed with the current JMWCS and the Examination had been adjourned for six weeks to allow time for individual authorities to decide which of the options to proceed with. In considering the Inspector's comments it was apparent that the changes that were needed to the JMWCS to make it acceptable could not be undertaken within a six week or even a six month period. Furthermore the changes that were needed to the JMWCS were likely to make the plan significantly different to the version submitted to the Secretary of State at the start of the year.

In view of this the only available option, other than for the Inspector to recommend that the Plan be not approved, (which had cost implications) was for the Berkshire unitary authorities to ask the Secretary of State to formally withdraw the Plan. Members noted that if the Examination into the JMWCS proceeded it was clear that the Government Inspector would reject the Plan and find it to be 'unsound'. Given the limited options available the Cabinet therefore agreed to recommend the Secretary of State withdraws the existing version of JMWCS Development Plan document.

Recommended - That the Secretary of State withdraws the existing version of the Joint Minerals and Waste Core Strategy Development Plan document.

18. Trading Standards Statutory Service Delivery Plan 2009/10 and Food, Health & Safety Statutory Service Delivery Plans 2009/10

The Cabinet considered the Statutory Service Plans in relation to Food Safety, Health and Safety and Trading Standards. Members of the Cabinet welcomed the statutory plans and placed on record the Council's congratulations to the Director and staff within the Directorate for the outstanding service they provided to the people of Slough.

Recommended -

- (a) That the Statutory Service Plans in relation to the Food Safety, Health & Safety and Trading Standards work undertaken by the Council be endorsed.
- (b) That Officers be congratulated on the work undertaken and success achieved.

19. References from Scrutiny

The Cabinet considered two recommendations from Scrutiny.

Learning Pledge

The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 24th June, 2009 had considered a report on "The Learning Revolution", a White Paper published in March 2009. To help create a culture of learning and build on the principles of informal adult learning, the White Paper introduced a "Learning Pledge" and advocated organisations to sign up to it. The Panel considered the benefits of signing up to the Pledge and noted that if the Council were to sign up it would be able to apply through a competitive bidding process for "one-off" funding to support the implementation of the learning revolution. The Panel had recommended that the Cabinet resolve that the Council sign the Learning Pledge. Members of the Cabinet were in full support of signing the Pledge as it aligned clearly to the Council's strategic approach.

Biodiversity Duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

The Community, Leisure and Environment Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 30th June, 2009 had considered the Council's biodiversity duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. The Panel noted that under Section 40 of this Act every public body must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. The Panel had been advised of a wide range of actions taken by the Council to comply with this duty. Members were also advised that the Sustainable Schools Strategy could be utilised in engaging schools and children in the maintenance and conservation of biodiversity within Slough and the Panel had recommended that the Council should maximise use of both the Sustainable Schools Strategy and its planning powers to encourage biodiversity. The Cabinet were pleased to support this recommendation.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Council sign the Learning Pledge.
- (b) That the Council maximises the use of both the Sustainable Schools Strategy and its planning powers to encourage biodiversity.

20. Executive Forward Plan

Resolved – That the Plan be agreed.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.10 pm)