

# Slough Borough Council Best Value Commissioners

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## Improvement and Recovery Board – Meeting held on Thursday 19 December 2024

### Present:

Chair, Gavin Jones, Lead Commissioner  
Ged Curran, Commissioner  
Denise Murray, Finance Commissioner  
Will Tuckley, Managing Director Commissioner and Head of Paid Services

### Members

Cllr Dexter Smith, Leader, with responsibility for Improvement and Recovery  
Cllr Wal Chahal, Deputy Leader, and Lead for Financial Oversight and Council Assets

### Officers

Peter Hopkins, Director Property and Assets  
Sukdave Ghuman, Monitoring Officer  
Patrick Hayes, Executive Director Regeneration, Housing & Environment  
Tessa Lindfield - Director of Public Health & Health Protection  
Sue Butcher, Executive Director Children's Services and Chief Executive Slough Children's Services  
Sonia Khan, Director of Strategy, Change and Resident Engagement

### Secretariat

Annabelle Lim, Deputy Chief of Staff to Commissioners

### Also Present

Martin Chalmers, Director Digital, Data & Technology  
David McNamara, Interim Finance Director  
Andrew Merritt-Morling, Programme Manager  
Stephanie Clark, Recovery Programme Manager  
Jane Senior, Director Commissioning  
Lisa Keating, Director of Housing  
Mandy Brown, outgoing Chief of Staff to Commissioners  
Helen Barugh, incoming Chief of Staff to Commissioners

### Apologies for Absence

Annabel Scholes, Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services, S151 Officer  
Cllr Pavitar Mann, Leader of the Opposition  
David Coleman-Groom, Interim Executive Director of Adults' Services

## **Minutes**

### **1. Welcome and Introductions (Gavin Jones)**

- 1.1 Mandy Brown said goodbye as it was her last day as Chief of Staff to Slough Best Value Commissioners and thanked colleagues. Helen Barugh introduced herself as the new Chief of Staff.
- 1.2 Gavin opened discussion on the recently published English Devolution White Paper as it poses a great opportunity. Attendees discussed the role of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in housing targets, the proposed changes to the planning system, the strategic position and contribution of Slough, potential partners and the geographies to consider. Will Tuckley emphasised the need to grab the agenda and reflected on the importance of considering what was in the interest of Slough residents.

### **2. Declarations of interest (Gavin Jones)**

- 2.1 No declarations of interest.

### **3. Minutes and actions from previous Improvement and Recovery Board (Gavin Jones)**

- 3.1 The minutes and actions of the previous meeting held on 25 July 2024 were approved.

### **4. Update from the Finance Board (Denise Murray)**

- 4.1 A lot of work has been done on the historic accounting challenges, discovery work and outstanding accounts. 18/19 and 20/21 accounts have been published in line with the backstop date, with January the publication target date for the remaining accounts.
- 4.2 The property and finance teams have been doing a lot of work on assets. General Fund properties are in a firmer position with work ongoing for HRA properties to finalise the position.
- 4.3 Regarding the budget and MTFS, further work had been done to drive the £17m gap down and the position is now indicating a £3m gap. Further thought needs to be given to a debt reduction strategy and resilience of reserves.
- 4.4 On the Local Government Finance Settlement, David McNamara indicated it was better than expected, however, expressed some disappointment for the Temporary Accommodation grant. Denise reminded attendees that this was a provisional settlement and that they were now in the consultation phase. The council would need to reply by mid-January.

5. **Update from the Transformation Board (Ged Curran)**
  - 5.1 The council is in a much better place than 12 months ago, thanks to both the approach and hard work put in. Preparatory work now needs to turn to delivery.
6. **Refresh of improvement and recovery plan (Sonia Khan)**
  - 6.1 The draft circulated yesterday is more comprehensive but appreciate it may not be where we want it to be. It is a work in progress and we want this to be considered an iteration. Commissioners said they want to ensure their view and that of the improvement and recovery plan are aligned. They expected a workshop with necessary CLT officers before it goes to Cabinet on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025.
7. **Target Operating Model (Sonia Khan)**
  - 7.1 We have been working on tighter governance, for example, we now meet fortnightly and are currently finalising the appointment of a programme director. We are testing ideas with partners with digital first a priority. We are working with community partners. Work going on with Adult Social Care and Temporary Accommodation (TA) is being brought to a review point.
  - 7.2 On TA, process mapping is being developed which will begin to set out early opportunities and quick wins. We are meeting with the housing team to go through this.
8. **Data and insight (Sonia Khan)**
  - 8.1 We are identifying where there may be issues with data cleansing. We are reviewing if metrics are as meaningful as possible and work needs to be done to make performance data more relevant. Denise said that readers of the report need to be clear on where areas need to be resolved and the actions required.
  - 8.2 The exercise will be starting in January and expected to go until the end of March. Gavin asked for clarification on whether a plan would be in place by the end of March to resolve issues or if the issues would be resolved by then. Sonia said given the uncertainty of how long it may take to resolve problems and that not all areas are known, the timeline remains unclear. Gavin indicated the danger would be the pace of work. Martin Chalmers said that he is keen that this work is integral in improvement and transformation plans.
9. **Update on staff survey (Will Tuckley)**
  - 9.1 Staff survey results were received and have been published on the intranet and presented to both members and staff. We will now focus on communication, development, and engagement. Any area that had 8 or more responses will get a scorecard to assist in taking action. Regarding the timeline for staff engagement, the process has already begun. Gavin agreed the latest staff survey was a step forward.
10. **AOB**
  - 10.1 None.

Gavin thanked everyone for all their hard work over the past year.

**Meeting closed at 11.30.**

**Addendum**

Please note that, as a result of the council reviewing their governance arrangements, this is the final set of minutes for the Improvement and Recovery Board. From March 2025, it is replaced by the Best Value Board.

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