

## **Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 16th December, 2019.**

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

**Also present under Rule 30:-** Councillors Ajaib, Hulme, A Sandhu, Sharif and Strutton

### **PART 1**

#### **70. Declarations of Interest**

Item 4 (Minute 73) – Council Taxbases 2020/21: Councillor Mann declared that she was the chair of Britwell Parish Council.

Item 7 (Minute 76) – Tower & Ashbourne Houses Redevelopment: Councillor Akram declared that she lived close to Tower House and Ashbourne House.

Item 7 (Minute 76) – Tower & Ashbourne Houses Redevelopment: Councillor Nazir declared a personal interest in that the single remaining leaseholder was known to him. He remained in the meeting and voted.

#### **71. Minutes of the Meeting held on 18th November 2019**

**Resolved –** That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2019 be approved as a correct record.

#### **72. Performance & Projects Report Q2 2019/20**

The Strategic Insight Manager introduced a report that set out the latest performance information for the second quarter of 2019/20 to the end of September 2019. The report included progress against the Corporate Balanced Scorecard indicators; updates on the 28 projects in the portfolio; and on the manifesto commitments.

Nine out of the twenty-two performance indicators were achieving the set targets with a further four close to target. Notable improvements on the previous quarter included the attainment gap at Early Year's Foundation stage, average journey times and household waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting. However, the number of 'Red' rated indicators had increased to six. These included the number of direct payments, total crime rate, households in temporary accommodation and number of empty properties brought back into use. In relation to key projects, it was noted that one had been completed during the quarter – Speech and Language Therapy commission – and twenty-five out of the twenty-eight live projects were either 'Green' or 'Amber'. The vast majority of manifesto commitments were on track for delivery and none were 'Red' rated.

Members discussed several indicators including the crime rate per 1,000 population, which was 'Red' rated and has risen to the highest level for a year.

## Cabinet - 16.12.19

It was recognised that there was significant variation in the indicator as it was based on reported crime to the Police, which was driven by crime type and seasonality and was not directly in the Council's control. The work of the Safer Slough Partnership in monitoring and tackling crime was highlighted. Reported crime was a useful measure, and Members asked whether an additional indicator could be identified which would reflect the Council's performance. It was agreed that the options for suitable indicators would be explored and brought to Members for consideration for inclusion in the 2020/21 performance reporting process.

Speaking under Rule 30, Councillor Strutton asked a number of questions including about the potential future impact of Heathrow expansion on journey times, street cleanliness, reported crime, direct payments, recycling and bringing empty properties back into use. Lead Members and Directors responded to the various points raised.

At the conclusion of the discussion the report was noted.

**Resolved** – That the Council's current performance as measured by the performance indicators within the balanced scorecard, the progress status of the gold projects and the manifesto commitments be noted.

### 73. Council Taxbases 2020/21

The Service Lead Finance introduced a report that set out the properties in Slough and their categories of occupation for the purposes of determining the council taxbase for the 2020/21 financial year. The Council was required by law to set the taxbase by 31<sup>st</sup> January each year and the figures would be used in the calculation of the council tax for 2020/21.

The taxbase for 2020/21 had been calculated by using the data available relating to dwellings provided by the Valuation Office Agency as at 30<sup>th</sup> November 2019. It calculated the statutory council taxbase to be 42,918.1 for 2020/21, based on a collection rate of 98.4% which was the same as the current year. The report also made a number of recommendation about Council Tax discounts for long term empty properties, the collection rate and sought approval to give delegated authority to the Section 151 Officer to make any necessary adjustments and to set the Business Rates baseline.

There had been a 0.3% increase in the taxbase from 2019/20, equivalent to a net increase of 128.3 properties. Clarification was sought about why this figure appeared to be low given previously reported levels of growth. It was noted that there had been a 1.2% increased in dwellings but this had been offset by the increased eligibility for Council Tax discount.

At the conclusion of the discussion the recommendations were agreed.

**Resolved –**

- (a) That the level of council tax discount in respect of second homes remains at 0%.
- (b) That the level of discount in respect of long-term empty properties remains at 0%, with the charge of a 100% Empty Home Premium for on properties that have been empty longer than 2 years.
- (c) That the collection rate for council tax for 2020/21 be set at 98.4%. This is the same rate as for 2019/20.
- (d) In accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 2012 and the Local Authorities' (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012 the amount calculated by Slough Borough Council as its council tax base for 2020/21 shall be:
  - i) Parish of Britwell 868.6
  - ii) Parish of Colnbrook with Poyle 1,912.9
  - iii) Parish of Wexham Court 1,416.5
  - iv) Slough Town 38,720.1
  - v) All areas 42,918.1
- (e) That the S151 officer be delegated with responsibility to adjust the taxbase following Cabinet due to any changes in Government guidance around this subject and the Collection Fund figures for distribution.
- (f) That the S151 officer be delegated with responsibility to adjust the taxbase following Cabinet should any new property information become available and the Collection Fund figures for distribution require amendment.
- (g) That the S151 officer be delegated with responsibility to set the Business Rates baseline following consultation with the Lead member for Governance and Customer Services.

**74. Medium Term Financial Strategy (2020/21 to 2022/23) and Initial 2020/21 Budget Considerations**

The Service Lead Finance introduced a report that updated on the Council's latest medium term financial strategy (MTFS) forecasts for the years 2020/21 to 2022/23. The report set out how resources would be targeted to meet the Council's priorities and included areas of growth and savings proposals to balance the budget. If agreed, the assumptions and proposals would be included in the budget being prepared for Cabinet and Council consideration in February 2020.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer had announced a one year spending review for 2020/21 which included some additional funding for adult social care,

## Cabinet - 16.12.19

homelessness and high street regeneration. The implications for Slough were not yet known. The Government had also announced that local authorities could raise Council Tax by up to 2% plus an additional 2% adult social care 'precept' before a referendum had to take place. The MTFS assumed these provisions would be fully utilised but these decisions would be taken by Members in due course.

The Lead Member for Health & Wellbeing commented that the modest additional funding made available nationally for adult social care would not be sufficient to address the short term funding shortfall and there was an urgent need to prioritise the longer term reforms that it was widely agreed were required. Members discussed a number of other issues including the impact of the Slough Children's Services Trust financial position and the work undertaken to develop achievable and realistic savings targets necessary to balance the budget. Councillor Strutton spoke under Rule 30 and asked a question about the public health grant and the ring fencing of the revenue generated from the adult social care precept. The allocation for Slough's public health grant was explained, and it was noted that the borough received a relatively low sum per resident. The adult social care precept was ring-fenced and the Council was required to demonstrate that it had been spent on adult social care.

At the conclusion of the discussion the recommendations were agreed.

### **Resolved –**

- (a) That the revised Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is approved, as the basis for considering 2020/21 budget options;
- (b) That the 2020/21 budget is modelled on the basis of a Council Tax increase of 3.99% for 2020/21 (which includes the Government's 2.00% adult social care precept), for resource planning purposes; the 3.99% is for modelling purposes only at this time. The decision on the Council Tax to be set for 2020/21 will be made by members in February and may not be at the maximum figure included in the MTFS once the budget work has been finalised.
- (c) That the ongoing uncertainty is noted, regarding the extent to which the Authority may retain a share of business rates growth and the way that central government assesses the Authority's need to spend in the future. This makes medium term financial planning more difficult than usual;
- (d) That the timing of the provisional local government finance settlement is noted, as it will be announced later than normal (due to the General Election), so the time for scrutinising budget proposals will be less than usual;
- (e) That the initial savings proposals (and additional income generation proposals) are noted, as they are designed primarily to fund some of

the additional 2020/21 spending pressures from Slough Children's Services Trust (SCST).

**75. The Transfer of Relevant Adoption Services from the Trust to a Regional Adoption Agency**

The Director of Children, Learning & Skills Services introduced a report that sought approval for the Council to join the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) arrangements hosted by the London Borough of Harrow in order to procure adoption services provided by the Thomas Coram Foundation.

The Education & Adoption Act 2016 would require all local authorities to join a RAA by 2020 and the aim was to improve the adoption service through larger recruitment teams and a wider pool of adopters. It was noted that the transfer of services from Slough Children Services Trust to the RAA would require amendments to the Statutory Direction the Council was currently under and discussions were underway with the Department for Education. The London Borough of Harrow was the host authority for the RAA that it was proposed the Council would join and the service would be carried out by the Thomas Coram Foundation for Children. All adoption statutory functions were in scope of the arrangement including adopter recruitment and training, matching and adoption support. Full due diligence had been completed through the DfE to establish that these were competent organisations to lead the RAA.

Lead Members discussed various aspects of the proposal including the transfer of staff and financial implications. Six full time equivalent staff would transfer from the Trust to the RAA but they would remain located in Slough. The financial implications were set out in section 4 of the report.

At the conclusion of the discussion the recommendations were agreed.

**Resolved –**

- (a) That the Council join the Regional Adoption Agency arrangements hosted by the London Borough of Harrow in order to procure adoption services provided by the Thomas Coram Foundation for Children under those arrangements; and
- (b) That powers be delegated to the Director of Children, Learning and Skills Services, in consultation with the Lead Member for Children and Schools, to agree all terms with the London Borough of Harrow, the Secretary of State For Education, the Thomas Coram Foundation for Children, the Slough Children's Services Trust and other participant authorities and to arrange for the Council to enter into or execute all deeds and agreements necessary to put such arrangements into effect, and
- (c) That a delegation to the Director of Children, Learning and Skills to make all further decisions regarding the final arrangements to enable

## **Cabinet - 16.12.19**

the Council join the RAA including amendments to the arrangements with SCST as appropriate, and

- (d) That powers be delegated to the Director of Children, Learning and Skills, in consultation with the Section 151 officer, to approve the financial model and funding contributions, and
- (e) That the requirement for the TUPE transfer of adoption staff from SCST to Thomas Coram Foundation for Children is noted.

### **76. Tower & Ashbourne Houses Redevelopment**

The Service Lead Housing Development and Contracts introduced a report that updated Lead Members on the position following the advertisement of the notification of intention to appropriate land at Tower House and Ashbourne House which had been agreed by Cabinet on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

It was confirmed that no responses had been received following the advertisement and the Cabinet was recommended to pass resolutions to confirm that appropriation powers be used in advance of making the compulsory purchase authorised on 4 February 2019 as updated on 18 November 2019, subject to obtaining the consent of the Secretary of State. The use of compulsory purchase powers would proceed unless an agreement could be negotiated with the final leaseholder.

The recommendations were agreed.

#### **Resolved –**

- (a) That it be acknowledged that no responses were received following the advertisement of notice of intention to appropriate those parts of the relevant land that comprise open space under section 122(2A) of the Local Government Act 1972;
- (b) To appropriate the Council Interests for planning purposes so as to facilitate the comprehensive regeneration of land at and adjacent to Tower House and Ashbourne House, including the provision of affordable housing, subject to the consent of the Secretary of State under section 19(2) of the Housing act 1985;
- (c) That the decision to proceed with the CPO as considered at the meeting of Cabinet on 18 November 2019 be affirmed;
- (d) That it be acknowledged that the appropriation of the Council Interests and the compulsory purchase of the interests in the Order Land would enable reliance on Section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 to override third party rights affected by works on or use of that land;
- (e) That it be noted that the Service Lead for Housing Development and Contracts had delegated authority to proceed with making and effecting

the confirmation and implementation of the CPO following the appropriation, under the powers delegated by the resolutions made at the Cabinet meeting on 4 February 2019 and 18 November 2019 including seeking the Secretary of State's Consent further to section 19(2) of the Housing Act 1985.

**77. Procurement of Community Mental Health Accommodation Services**

The Lead Member for Health & Wellbeing introduced a report that sought approval to proceed with the procurement of a care and support service for a new supported accommodation service for people with mental health needs.

The new accommodation would assist people with complex mental health needs in an 11 unit property owned by a local developer. The annual cost of care to the mental health team would be £440k and the value of the new service over the entire life of the contract was circa £2.2m. In some cases the individuals places in the service may be eligible for Section 117 funding from health budgets. The new service would build on the success of Hope House which was the first supported accommodation service to deliver a community based recovery and reablement service. The model developed by the team in Slough had been recognised for its innovation in engaging and empowering individuals to live independently.

Speaking under Rule 30, Councillor Strutton commented on the excellent service provided by the mental health team and the potential wider savings to health and social care services that could be achieved by effective support to people with such conditions.

The Cabinet welcomed the approach that was being taken in Slough to provide such innovative mental health support and agreed that the procurement for this further service could be commenced.

**Resolved –** The procurement of a care and support service for a new supported accommodation service for people with mental health needs.

**78. Amendment to Temporary Accommodation and Private Sector Placement Policy**

The Lead Member for Housing & Community Safety introduced a report that sought approval to amend the Temporary Accommodation and Private Sector Placement Policy to offer options to house homeless households outside of Slough.

The background, policy, equality impact assessment and legal implications as set out in the report were reviewed. The proposal would enable more homeless households in temporary accommodation to be housed in suitable, settled homes. Lead Members recognised the potentially negative impact an out of borough policy could have on some households but that it needed to be considered out of necessity given the pressures caused by the significant

## **Cabinet - 16.12.19**

increase in homeless households in recent years, the constraints and cost of housing supply in Slough and the impact on reductions in housing related benefits. Sections 5.7 and 5.8 of the report set out the criteria that would be used to determine whether an out of borough offer would be appropriate. The criteria excluded certain groups from such offers for example those receiving medical treatment, providing essential care or households with children in care or special needs. It was acknowledged that some households may want to be placed outside of the borough for financial or other reasons. The amended policy would be reviewed after one year and the Cabinet was particularly sensitive to any adverse impacts on families with school age children.

Councillor Hulme addressed the Cabinet under Rule 30 and raised a number of issues including the consultation undertaken, the potential for legal challenge and the definition of reasonable offer. Councillor Strutton also highlighted the importance of working with households to make reasonable offers that would meet their specific needs.

After due consideration the recommendation was agreed.

**Resolved** – That delegated authority be given to the Director of Place and Development, following consultation with the Lead Member for Housing, the decision to agree the resource allocation for this policy going forward.

### **79. References from Overview & Scrutiny**

There were no references from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee or scrutiny panels.

### **80. Notification of Forthcoming Decisions**

The Cabinet considered and endorsed the Notification of Decisions published on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2019 which set out the key decisions expected to be taken by the Cabinet over the next three months.

**Resolved** – That the published Notification of Key Decisions for the period between December 2019 to February 2020 be endorsed.

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

**Resolved** – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the items in Part II of the agenda as they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 the Schedule 12A the Local Government Act 1972.



## **Cabinet - 16.12.19**

Below is a summary of the matters considered during Part II of the agenda.

### **82. Part II Minutes - 18th November 2019**

The Part II minutes of the last meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2019 were approved.

### **83. Tower & Ashbourne Houses Redevelopment - Appendices**

Two appendices containing exempt information relating to the proposed use of compulsory purchase powers for Tower House and Ashbourne House were noted in resolving the matters in Part I of the agenda.

### **84. Update on the Financial Position at Slough Children's Services Trust**

An update was provided on discussions with the Department for Education and Slough Children's Services Trust regarding its financial position and a decision was taken regarding the Council's contribution to addressing the Trust's in year overspend.

### **85. Nova House - Update on Progress**

The proposed schedule and cost of works to address the fire safety issues at Nova House were agreed.

### **86. Compulsory Purchase Order: Acquisition of 6 Carlisle Road, SL1 3DG**

The proposed use of compulsory purchase powers to bring the empty residential property back into use was agreed.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.31 pm and closed at 8.29 pm)