

Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 18th January, 2021.

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

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Hulme, Smith and Strutton

PART 1

86. Declarations of Interest

Item 4 (Minutes 89 and 97 refer): Britwell Centre and Localities Update – Councillor Anderson declared that he was a registered patient at the surgery involved and would not vote on matters relating to this element of the report.

87. Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th December 2020

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 14th December 2020 be approved as a correct record.

88. Acquisition of Land at Former Akzo Nobel Manufacturing Site

The Cabinet considered a report and received a comprehensive presentation on a proposal to acquire the residential element of the former Akzo Nobel site on Wexham Road for the development of up to 1,000 new homes. The report followed the decision of the Cabinet on 18th May 2020 to delegate authority to officers to complete Heads of Terms with Panattoni to seek to acquire the land.

This was an important site within the ‘Square Mile’ in the town centre Regeneration Framework Masterplan approved by Cabinet in November 2019. It provided a opportunity to deliver on some of the Council’s key housing targets by providing a mixed tenure scheme of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom properties. The site plan was set out at Appendix A to the report and it was noted that the residential land was in southern portion of the former Akzo Nobel paint factory and research and development facility. Outline planning consent had been issued on 19th November 2020 for up to 1,000 residential dwellings. By acquiring the site the Council could bring forward an exemplar scheme which would make a contribution to a wide range of strategic housing, environmental and regeneration aspirations. The economic benefits were summarised and it was noted that it was expected to increase the economically active population by 1,220, boost local spending power by £29m and generate £1.7m in Council Tax revenue and £5.4m in New Homes Bonus payments.

(Councillor Akram joined the meeting)

Whilst the Regeneration Framework Masterplan envisaged development taking place over a period of 15 years, it was highlighted that if the Council had control over the site it could be brought forward more quickly. The project

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would take significant resources and a new development project team would be put together to coordinate the Council wide input. The Cabinet agreed the importance of ensuring sufficient capacity was put in place to manage this development and the other key regeneration projects being driven forward by the Council. The contamination issues on the site had been extensively assessed by external advisors who were present at the meeting and answered questions from Members.

Lead Members discussed the risks including a potential post-Covid downturn in the housing market and the amount of affordable housing that could be included in a Council led scheme. The purchase of the site would enable the Council to design a scheme that met housing, environmental and commercial objectives. In response to a question it was noted that the land could be acquired from within existing borrowing limits.

Councillors Smith and Strutton spoke under Rule 30 and made a number of comments including about the provision of family housing, the borrowing arrangements, the fact that housing was on the south side of the site rather than the canal side to the north and about the impacts on the transport network. These points were responded to and considered.

The report included detailed appendices, which contained exempt information, that set out the financial and commercial implications, risks, a legal report and environmental report. The Cabinet agreed to pass a resolution to exclude the press and public for part of the discussion to consider the exempt information.

(Between 7.42pm and 8.11pm the Cabinet meeting was held in Part II)

The Cabinet moved back into Part I to consider the recommendations, which were agreed. In view of the timescale to complete the acquisition the Cabinet agreed to implement the decisions urgently which would mean it could only be called in for post-decision scrutiny.

Resolved –

- (a) That the acquisition of the Property be approved in line with the financial and legal terms set out in Confidential Appendix C (Part II Report – Financial, Commercial & Risk);
- (b) That delegated authority be given to the Executive Director of Place, following consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Executive Director of Corporate Services (Section 151 Officer), to agree the detailed terms of the acquisition and take any action ancillary to or necessary to achieve acquisition of the Property;
- (c) That delegated authority be given to the Executive Director of Place following consultation with the Executive Director of Corporate Services (Section 151 Officer) and the Leader of the Council (Lead Member for Regeneration & Strategy), to take any action, including appointing consultants, to review and investigate various development and

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financing options for the Property and report back to Cabinet within 6 months of the acquisition.

- (d) That delegated authority be given to the Executive Director of Place following consultation with Executive Director of Corporate Services to introduce the proposed Development Project Team, noting that the capital costs would include a budget to cover staffing costs for years 1-5 of the project as set out in sections 2.2 and 2.3 of Confidential Appendix C (Part II Report – Financial, Commercial & Risk).
- (e) That these decisions be implemented urgently.

89. Britwell Centre and Localities Update

The Cabinet received a report and detailed presentation that updated on the Localities workstream projects and particularly on the proposed remodelling of the Britwell Hub to include the relocation of the Avenue GP practice. The report also proposed the refurbishment of the small hall at Cippenham Community Centre to provide a new location for the Slough Children's Services Trust Contact Centre.

The Part II Appendices containing exempt financial information were considered and noted without disclosing any of the exempt information.

Lead Members noted the updated position on the Britwell Hub remodelling. The proposal was aligned to the One Public Estate strategy and the Council's Localities Strategy. The presentation covered the health issues in Britwell and the business case set out how collaboration between the Council, Clinical Commissioning Group and Avenue Medical Centre/Farnham Road Surgery would help deliver improved health outcomes. A summary of the specific health benefits of co-locating the surgery was provided which included services that local residents currently had to travel elsewhere for. If approved it was expected that construction would begin in March and completed by December 2021. Lead Members sought assurance that the new health services would be sustained and CCG representatives at the meeting set out the "co-production" approach that would be taken with local people and partners. The recommendations were agreed.

The Cabinet also discussed progress on the delivery of other sites in the Localities Strategy. It was noted that the new Chalvey Hub construction had been completed and Trelawney Avenue was due to be considered for planning approval in February 2021. The updated was noted.

Resolved –

- (a) That the business case for the Contract Award with an estimated value of £3 million for the construction works remodelling of Britwell Hub be approved;

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- (b) That the Council enter into a funding agreement with NHS England;
- (c) That the leasing of the Britwell GP Hub at an abated rent assessed by the District Valuer be approved;
- (d) That delegated authority be given to the Executive Director of Place to agree the terms of and enter into the required legal documents to facilitate the lease of Britwell GP Hub and re-location of the existing contact centre;
- (e) That the proposed relocation of the Slough Children's Services Trust Contact Centre to Cippenham Community Centre be approved;
- (f) That the revised timescales on the Britwell Hub be noted;
- (g) That the progress on the localities programme be noted.

90. Council Taxbases 2021/22

The Executive Director of Corporate Services introduced a report that presented information on the properties in Slough and their categories of occupation for the purpose of determining the council taxbase for 2021/22. A revised table at paragraph 5.6 of the report was tabled and noted.

The taxbases set out had been calculated by reference to data on dwellings within the borough provided by the Valuation Office Agency as at 30th November 2020. The calculations were summarised and it was noted that the aggregate figure of 41,577.1 was lower than the figure of 43,615.9 in 2020/21 due to the fact that Slough had seen a significant increase in Council Tax support claimants this year which reduced the tax base. Working age claimants had increased by 74.7% as at quarter 2 2020/21 compared to the previous year. There was a further reduction in the tax base as the collection rate was expected to decrease to 98.2% from 98.4% to reflect the likely increase in non-collection due to the impact of Covid-19.

Speaking under Rule 30, Councillor Strutton commented on the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's revenue collection and asked whether the figures were realistic given the likely timescale for the economic recovery. Assurance was provided that the figures were the most accurate available and they used published data from the relevant official bodies.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the recommendations were agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Tax Base calculation for 2021/22 be approved as:

i)	Parish of Britwell	810.4
ii)	Parish of Colnbrook with Poyle	1,830.3
iii)	Parish of Wexham Court	1,348.3

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iv)	Slough Town	36,839.7
iv)	All areas	40,828.7

Band D equivalent properties;

- (b) That the Council Tax collection rate of 98.2% for 2021/22 be noted; and
- (c) That the estimated deficit on the Council Tax Collection Fund as at 31 March 2021 was estimated to be £3,456k, of which £931k related to 2019-20 and £2,525k related to 2020-21. The Council's share of the deficit was £2,881k, of which £2,105k related to 2020-21 and would be spread across 3 years as instructed by the Government. The deficit to be repaid in 2021-22 by the Council was £1,478k.

91. HRA Rents & Service Charges 2021/22

A report was considered that proposed changes to housing rent and service charges for 2021/22.

The proposals had been developed in line with the new Rent Standard introduced from April 2020 by the Regulator of Social Housing. For the five years from 2020/21 the setting of rent increases for HRA social and affordable rent properties was capped at CPI + 1%. It was noted that this followed a four year period of rent reductions.

The proposed rents had been considered by the Neighbourhoods & Community Services Scrutiny Panel on 6th January 2021. No comments had been referred to Cabinet.

After due consideration the Cabinet agreed to the rents and service charges as set out in the report.

Resolved –

- (a) That Council house dwelling rents for 2021/22 to increase by 1.5% (CPI + 1%) over the 2020/21 rent with effect from Monday 5th April 2021. This was in line with current government guidelines and legislation.
- (b) That Garage rents, heating, utility and ancillary charges to increase by 0.5% with effect from Monday 5th April 2021. This was based upon the September CPI figure.
- (c) That Service charges increase by 0.5% with effect from Monday 5th April 2021. This was based upon the September CPI figure.
- (d) That 'Other committee' property rents (i.e. properties in the ownership of other council departments but let to tenants and managed by the

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Housing Revenue Account on their behalf) increase by 0.5% from Monday 5th April 2021. This was based on the September CPI figure.

- (e) That Properties leased from James Elliman Homes increase by 1.5% (CPI + 1%) from Monday 5th April 2021 in line with the September CPI figure.
- (f) That DISH (Development Initiative Slough Housing) property rents are recommended to increase by 1.5% (CPI + 1%) over the 2020/21 rent, and service charges to increase by 0.5% both with effect from Monday 5th April 2021. This was as per the Council's recommendation to the DISH Board.

92. Covid-19 Decisions Update

The Cabinet received a report which set out the further significant decisions taken by officers in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and sought ratification of the Executive decisions.

The decisions taken since the previous meeting of the Cabinet included service changes in the transition between the national 'lockdown' and new tiered system in December and plans to introduce a lateral flow testing programme for the community. The Significant Decision which granted an exemption from competitive tendering for the testing programme as set out in Appendix B was ratified.

At the conclusion of the discussion the significant decisions in Appendix A were ratified.

The Cabinet also agreed a vote of thanks to Officers, NHS and other partners and the voluntary and community sector for the work on Covid-19 including community testing and the delivery of the vaccination programme.

Resolved –

- (a) That the report be noted;
- (b) That the Significant Decisions taken by Silver as set out in Appendix A be ratified; and
- (c) That the Significant Decision taken by the Chief Executive and Executive Director, People (Adults) on Slough's Asymptomatic Testing for Covid-19 Programme as at Appendix B be ratified.

93. References from Overview & Scrutiny

The Chair of Neighbourhoods & Community Services Scrutiny Panel, Councillor Hulme, introduced a reference report from their meeting held on 18th November 2020 relating to the Repairs, Maintenance & Investment (RMI) contract, that:

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“Internal audit conduct a comprehensive and wide ranging review of the contract with Osborne to evaluate whether the objectives and performance measures were being met. Councillors and residents should be engaged in that review”.

Councillor Hulme summarised some of the issues that had particularly concerned the Panel, which included the large backlog of repairs, the volume and time taken to resolve complaints and the fact improvement plans had not been made available to the Panel. Members had recognised there had been some recent improvements with a new management team coming into place, however, members of the Panel had stated they did not have full confidence that improvement would lead to the outcomes originally specified in the contract. The Panel had concluded that an internal audit be conducted to review the contract.

The Executive Director of Customer & Community explained that work was already underway with Osborne’s to continue to improve delivery after a difficult period and advised the Cabinet that the recommendation could be accepted. Lead Members also supported the recommendation, although given the work programme of internal audit it was proposed and agreed that the review take place as soon as practicable, which was envisaged to be within six months of 2021. Notwithstanding the audit, the Cabinet emphasised the importance of continuing to work with Osborne’s to address performance issues.

The recommendation was then agreed and the Cabinet thanked the Panel for the extensive work they had carried out on this matter.

Councillor Strutton made a request to speak under Rule 30, however, no prior notification had been given and the request was therefore refused.

Resolved – That the recommendation of the Neighbourhoods & Community Services Scrutiny Panel from its meeting on 18th November 2020 on the RMI contract be accepted and that an audit of the full contract be carried out as soon practicably possible.

94. Notification in Forthcoming Decisions

The Cabinet considered and endorsed the Notification of Key Decisions published on 18th December and 31st December 2020 which set out the key decisions expected to be taken by the Cabinet in the next three months.

Resolved – That the published Notification of Decisions be endorsed.

95. Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved – That the matters in Part II of the agenda be considered and resolved during Part I, without disclosing any of the exempt information, but that the Part II reports remain restricted as they

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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.

The following is a summary of the matters considered during Part II of the agenda:

96. Acquisition of Land at Former Akzo Nobel Manufacturing Site - Appendices B to G

The Part II Appendices which included exempt information relation to the financial, legal, commercial and land contamination issues were considered and noted. The Cabinet had moved into Part II during consideration of the Part I report to discuss the exempt information prior to resolving the matters in Part I.

97. Britwell Centre and Localities Update - Appendix 1 and 2

The Appendices included exempt information relating to the financial issues of the proposal were noted in resolving the matters in the Part I report.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.11 pm)