

MINUTES OF COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

At a Meeting of the Council for the Borough of Slough held at the Council Chamber - Observatory House, 25 Windsor Road, SL1 2EL on Thursday, 7th March, 2024 at 7.00 pm

Present:- The Worshipful the Mayor (Councillor Abbasi), in the chair; Councillors E. Ahmed, I. Ahmed, Ajaib, Akram, Anderson, Bedi, Carter, Chahal, Dar, Dauti, Dhillon, Escott, Gahir, Gill, Iftakhar, Instone, Kelly, Khawar, Manku, Mann, Matloob, Mohammad, Mohindra, Muvvala, Nazir, Naveed, O'Kelly, D. Parmar, Qaseem, Rana, J. Sabah (until 8.33pm), W. Sabah, Satti, Shaik, Smith, Stedmond, Tomar, Wright and Zarait

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Hulme and Shah

53. Declarations of Interest

None were declared.

54. Meeting Procedure

A suggested procedure for the budget debate had been circulated to Members in the supplementary agenda.

It was moved by Councillor Smith,
Seconded by Councillor Chahal,

“That in accordance with procedure rule 27.1, Rule 16.5 on rules of debate be suspended insofar as is necessary to enable the procedure as circulated to be adopted and that the Council consent to:

- Members of the Leadership speaking for up to 45 minutes in total on the budget agenda items;
- Members of the Labour Group speaking for up to 30 minutes in total on the same items;
- Members of the Liberal Democrat Group speaking for up to 5 minutes in total.”

The procedural motion was put and carried unanimously.

Resolved – That the proposed procedure for the budget debate be approved and adopted.

55. General Fund Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2027/28

It was moved by Councillor Smith,
Seconded by Councillor Chahal,

“That the Capital Programme for 2024/25 to 2027/28 as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved.”

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(Councillors J Sabah and W Sabah left the meeting)

The recommendation was put and carried and, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a record of the vote was taken as follows:-

There voted for the recommendation:-

Councillors E.Ahmed, I.Ahmed, Ajaib, Akram, Anderson, Bedi, Carter, Chahal, Dar, Dauti, Dhillon, Escott, Gahir, Gill, Iftakhar, Instone, Kelly, Khawar, Manku, Mann, Matloob, Mohammad, Mohindra, Muvvala, Naveed, Nazir, O’Kelly, Parmar, Qaseem, Rana, Satti, Shaik, Smith, Stedmond, Tomar, Wright and Zarait 37

There abstained from voting:-

The Worshipful, The Mayor Councillor Abbasi 1

Resolved - That the Capital Programme for 2024/25 to 2027/28 as set out in Appendix A to the report be approved.

56. Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25

It was moved by Councillor O’Kelly,
Seconded by Councillor Smith,

- a. “Approve the Treasury Management Strategy (TMS) for 2024/25 at Appendix 1 including:
 - i. the Annual Investment Strategy for 2024/25
 - ii. the Annual Borrowing Strategy for 2024/25
 - iii. Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement for 2024/25
 - iv. the Prudential Indicators for the period 2024/25 to 2026/27
 - v. the Capital Strategy for the 2024/25

- b) Approve that regular training be provided for all Members on Treasury Management and its context within the overall finance framework of the Council, as recommended by the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee following consideration of the strategy at its meeting on 29 February 2024.”

(Councillor W.Sabah re-joined the meeting)

The meeting was adjourned at 8.45pm to seek clarification on the figures provided in the report and restarted at 8.50pm.

The recommendations were put and carried and, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a record of the vote was taken as follows:-

There voted for the recommendations:-

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Councillors E.Ahmed, I.Ahmed, Bedi, Chahal, Dauti, Dhillon, Iftakhar, Kelly, Khawar, Manku, Mohindra, Muvvala, Naveed, O'Kelly, Rana, Satti, Shaik, Smith, Stedmond, Tomar, Wright and Zarait 22

There abstained from voting:-

Councillors Ajaib, Akram, Anderson, Carter, Dar, Escott, Gahir, Gill, Instone, Mann, Matloob, Mohammad, Nazir, Parmar, Qaseem, W.Sabah and The Worshipful, The Mayor Councillor Abbasi 17

Resolved -

a. That the Treasury Management Strategy (TMS) for 2024/25 at Appendix 1 be approved including:

- vi. the Annual Investment Strategy for 2024/25
- vii. the Annual Borrowing Strategy for 2024/25
- viii. Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement for 2024/25
- ix. the Prudential Indicators for the period 2024/25 to 2026/27
- x. the Capital Strategy for the 2024/25

b) That regular training be provided for all Members on Treasury Management and its context within the overall finance framework of the Council.

57. General Fund Revenue Budget 2024-25, and Medium Term Financial Strategy 24/25 to 27/28

It was moved by Councillor Smith,
Seconded by Councillor Chahal,

1. "Note the section 25 Report of the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial at Appendix A that confirms in particular the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.
2. Approve the 2024/25 budget on the basis of an increase in the general element of Council Tax of 7.99% and an increase in the Adult Social Care Precept element of 0.51%.
3. Approve the Council Tax Resolution 2024/25 as set out in Appendix B on the basis that it is not excessive in accordance with the principles approved under section 52ZB and 52ZC of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and as permitted by the proposed The Referendums Relating to Council Tax Increases (Principles) (England) Report 2024/25.
4. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial, to place a notice in the local press of the amounts set under recommendation 3 within a period of 21 days following the Council's decision.
5. Approve the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as set out in Appendix C, based on the estimated financial deficit in the Capitalisation Direction and to be funded by capitalisation of:

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- a. £23.078m for 2024/25
 - b. NOTE that the remaining years of the MTFs imply an estimated financial deficit totalling £27.460m, approval of which will be subject to annual approval to DLUHC
6. Approve the overall General Fund revenue budget for 2024/25, as set out in Appendix D1 of £162.1m to include:
 - a. Growth for pressures of £13.855m
 - b. Inflationary pressures of £4.472m including pay and contract inflation
 - c. Proposed savings by Directorates of £12.206m in 2024/25, with further savings of £6.836m in 2025/26 and £1.796m in 2026/27
 7. Approve measures to control spending and improve the finances of the Council at Appendix F.
 8. Note the impact of a change in legislation to implement a 100% premium on Council Tax for properties left unoccupied for 1 year as opposed to 2 years as set out in Appendix G1, such change to take effect on 1 April 2024
 9. Determine that Council Tax will be increased for furnished properties periodically occupied from 1 April 2025 in accordance with the Scheme for Properties Occupied Periodically at Appendix G2 and s.11C of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
 10. Agree that the Council Tax Support Scheme approved on March 9th 2023 should remain in place, with the exception of minor amendments for clarification purposes as set out in Appendix B1.
 11. Delegate to Cabinet the authority to approve an increase in funding for the new Transformation project on receipt of a report and robust Business Plan.

Council is asked to note that at its meeting on 26th February 2024 the Cabinet agreed to:

1. Write-off of individual debts over £15,000, with a total value of £646,000, as set out in Appendix H.
2. Approve the proposed fees and charges for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix J (where these relate to executive functions);
3. Approve the Contract Sum for Slough Children First Limited for 2024/25 as £39,044,000”

It was moved by Councillor Mann, as an amendment,
Seconded by Councillor Anderson,

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“Local Plan (Net nil)

- Increase Local Plan expenditure by £330k on progressing evidence base.

Funded by:

- Securing £150k additional funding from relevant external bodies (spend above reduced if not fully achieved).
- £180k to be funded from the councils earmarked (but not specifically allocated to projects) transformation fund.”

The amendment was put and, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a record of the vote was taken as follows:-

There voted for the amendment:-

Councillors Ajaib, Akram, Anderson, Carter, Dar, Escott, Gahir, Gill, Instone, Mann, Matloob, Mohammad, Nazir, Parmar, Qaseem and W.Sabah 16

There voted against the amendment:-

Councillors E.Ahmed, I.Ahmed, Bedi, Chahal, Dauti, Dhillon, Iftakhar, Kelly, Khawar, Manku, Mohindra, Muvvala, Naveed, O’Kelly, Rana, Satti, Shaik, Smith, Stedmond, Tomar, Wright and Zarait 22

T.here abstained from voting:-

The Worshipful, The Mayor Councillor Abbasi 1

Resolved - That the amendment in relation to the Local Plan not be agreed.

It was moved by Councillor Mann, as an amendment,
Seconded by Councillor Anderson,

“Enforcement officer (Net nil)

- Additional enforcement officer £55k

Funded by

- Identifying equivalent POCA funding of £55k (spend above reduced if not fully achieved).”

The amendment was put and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a record of the vote was taken as follows:-

There voted for the amendment:-

Councillors Ajaib, Akram, Anderson, Carter, Dar, Escott, Gahir, Gill, Instone, Mann, Matloob, Mohammad, Nazir, Parmar, Qaseem and W.Sabah 16

There voted against the amendment:-

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Councillors E.Ahmed, I.Ahmed, Bedi, Chahal, Dauti, Dhillon, Iftakhar, Kelly, Khawar, Manku, Mohindra, Muvvala, Naveed, O’Kelly, Rana, Satti, Shaik, Smith, Stedmond, Tomar, Wright and Zarait 22

There abstained from voting:-

The Worshipful, The Mayor Councillor Abbasi 1

Resolved - That the amendment in relation to Enforcement Officer not be agreed.

It was moved by Councillor Mann, as an amendment,
Seconded by Councillor Anderson,

“Planning Service

- Reverse the proposed £218k of the savings in planning and earmarked budget to specifically target commercialisation work in the planning service (for example - growth in PPA income, pre-application fee income and growth in building control income).

Funded by:

- £218k from the councils earmarked (but not specifically allocated to projects) transformation fund.”

The amendment was put and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a record of the vote was taken as follows:-

There voted for the amendment:-

Councillors Ajaib, Akram, Anderson, Carter, Dar, Escott, Gahir, Gill, Instone, Mann, Matloob, Mohammad, Nazir, Parmar, Qaseem and W.Sabah 16

There voted against the amendment:-

Councillors E.Ahmed, I.Ahmed, Bedi, Chahal, Dauti, Dhillon, Iftakhar, Kelly, Khawar, Manku, Mohindra, Muvvala, Naveed, O’Kelly, Rana, Satti, Shaik, Smith, Stedmond, Tomar, Wright and Zarait 22

There abstained from voting:-

The Worshipful, The Mayor Councillor Abbasi 1

Resolved - That the amendment in relation to Planning Service not be agreed.

It was moved by Councillor Mann, as an amendment,
Seconded by Councillor Anderson,

“Street cleaning

- Conversion of street cleaning saving £71k to new ward-based street cleaning pot.

Funded by:

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- £71k from corporate contingency sum held for non-delivery of savings.”

The amendment was put and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a record of the vote was taken as follows:-

There voted for the amendment:-

Councillors Ajaib, Akram, Anderson, Carter, Dar, Escott, Gahir, Gill, Instone, Mann, Matloob, Mohammad, Nazir, Parmar, Qaseem and W.Sabah 16

There voted against the amendment:-

Councillors E.Ahmed, I.Ahmed, Bedi, Chahal, Dauti, Dhillon, Iftakhar, Kelly, Khawar, Manku, Mohindra, Muvvala, Naveed, O’Kelly, Rana, Satti, Shaik, Smith, Stedmond, Tomar, Wright and Zarait 22

There abstained from voting:-

The Worshipful, The Mayor Councillor Abbasi 1

Resolved - That the amendment in relation to Street Cleaning not be agreed.

It was moved by Councillor Mann, as an amendment,
Seconded by Councillor Anderson,

“The Curve

- Stopping the planned closure of the Curve in 2024/25 and savings of £175k in this financial year and £50k to conduct feasibility study and new management options of the Curve (for example its retention as a central library), which will seek to realise savings in line with the 2025/26 savings target.

Funded by:

- £225k to be funded from the councils earmarked (but not specifically allocated to projects) transformation fund.”

The amendment was put and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a record of the vote was taken as follows:-

There voted for the amendment:-

Councillors Ajaib, Akram, Anderson, Carter, Dar, Escott, Gahir, Gill, Instone, Mann, Matloob, Mohammad, Nazir, Parmar, Qaseem and W.Sabah 16

There voted against the amendment:-

Councillors E.Ahmed, I.Ahmed, Bedi, Chahal, Dauti, Dhillon, Iftakhar, Kelly, Khawar, Manku, Mohindra, Muvvala, Naveed, O’Kelly, Rana, Satti, Shaik, Smith, Stedmond, Tomar, Wright and Zarait 22

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There abstained from voting:-

The Worshipful, The Mayor Councillor Abbasi 1

Resolved - That the amendment in relation to The Curve not be agreed.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 8.2 the Mayor moved that the meeting continues past 10.30pm to complete all of the remainder of business. The meeting signified its consent.

It was moved by Councillor Mann, as an amendment,
Seconded by Councillor Anderson,

“Service Growth

- £476k to replenish the councils earmarked (but not specifically allocated to projects) transformation fund.

Funded by:

- Reduction in the net budget allocations for both temporary accommodation by £100k and adult social care by £376k. To be achieved through improved demand management and prevention strategies or delivering increased savings or income generation (for example - increase ASC collection rate by an additional 1%).”

The amendment was put and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a record of the vote was taken as follows:-

There voted for the amendment:-

Councillors Ajaib, Akram, Anderson, Carter, Dar, Escott, Gahir, Gill, Instone, Mann, Matloob, Mohammad, Nazir, Parmar, Qaseem and W.Sabah 16

There voted against the amendment:-

Councillors E.Ahmed, I.Ahmed, Bedi, Chahal, Dauti, Dhillon, Iftakhar, Kelly, Khawar, Manku, Mohindra, Muvvala, Naveed, O’Kelly, Rana, Satti, Shaik, Smith, Stedmond, Tomar, Wright and Zarait 22

There abstained from voting:-

The Worshipful, The Mayor Councillor Abbasi 1

Resolved - That the amendment in relation to Service Growth not be agreed.

The original recommendations were put to the vote and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a record of the vote was taken as follows:-

There voted for the recommendations:-

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Councillors E.Ahmed, I.Ahmed, Bedi, Chahal, Dauti, Dhillon, Iftakhar, Kelly, Khawar, Manku, Mohindra, Muvvala, Naveed, O'Kelly, Rana, Satti, Shaik, Smith, Stedmond, Tomar, Wright and Zarait 22

There voted against the recommendations:-

Councillors Ajaib, Akram, Anderson, Carter, Dar, Escott, Gahir, Gill, Instone, Mann, Matloob, Mohammad, Nazir, Parmar, Qaseem and W.Sabah 16

There abstained from voting:-

The Worshipful, The Mayor Councillor Abbasi 1

Resolved -

1. Note the section 25 Report of the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial at Appendix A that confirms in particular the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.
2. Approve the 2024/25 budget on the basis of an increase in the general element of Council Tax of 7.99% and an increase in the Adult Social Care Precept element of 0.51%.
3. Approve the Council Tax Resolution 2024/25 as set out in Appendix B on the basis that it is not excessive in accordance with the principles approved under section 52ZB and 52ZC of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and as permitted by the proposed The Referendums Relating to Council Tax Increases (Principles) (England) Report 2024/25.
4. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial, to place a notice in the local press of the amounts set under recommendation 3 within a period of 21 days following the Council's decision.
5. Approve the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as set out in Appendix C, based on the estimated financial deficit in the Capitalisation Direction and to be funded by capitalisation of:
 - a. £23.078m for 2024/25
 - b. NOTE that the remaining years of the MTFS imply an estimated financial deficit totalling £27.460m, approval of which will be subject to annual approval to DLUHC
6. Approve the overall General Fund revenue budget for 2024/25, as set out in Appendix D1 of £162.1m to include:
 - a. Growth for pressures of £13.855m
 - b. Inflationary pressures of £4.472m including pay and contract inflation
 - c. Proposed savings by Directorates of £12.206m in 2024/25, with further savings of £6.836m in 2025/26 and £1.796m in 2026/27

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7. Approve measures to control spending and improve the finances of the Council at Appendix F.
8. Note the impact of a change in legislation to implement a 100% premium on Council Tax for properties left unoccupied for 1 year as opposed to 2 years as set out in Appendix G1, such change to take effect on 1 April 2024
9. Determine that Council Tax will be increased for furnished properties periodically occupied from 1 April 2025 in accordance with the Scheme for Properties Occupied Periodically at Appendix G2 and s.11C of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
10. Agree that the Council Tax Support Scheme approved on March 9th 2023 should remain in place, with the exception of minor amendments for clarification purposes as set out in Appendix B1.
11. Delegate to Cabinet the authority to approve an increase in funding for the new Transformation project on receipt of a report and robust Business Plan.

That Council notes that at its meeting on 26th February 2024 the Cabinet agreed to:

1. Write-off of individual debts over £15,000, with a total value of £646,000, as set out in Appendix H.
2. Approve the proposed fees and charges for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix J (where these relate to executive functions);
3. Approve the Contract Sum for Slough Children First Limited for 2024/25 as £39,044,000.

58. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30-year Business Plan and Medium Term Budgets 2024/25

It was moved by Councillor Kelly,
Seconded by Councillor Chahal,

- a) "That the HRA revenue budget for 2024/25 be approved as set out in Table 3 & Appendix C which reflects the annual rents & service charges increases already approved by Cabinet.
- b) That the HRA 5-year Capital Programme as set out in Table 4 & Appendix D be approved.
- c) That the draft 5-year HRA reserves and balances as set out in Appendix E be noted."

The recommendations were put to the vote and carried with 38 votes for and 1 abstention.

Resolved -

- a) That the HRA revenue budget for 2024/25 be approved as set out in Table 3 & Appendix C which reflects the annual rents & service charges increases already approved by Cabinet.
- b) That the HRA 5-year Capital Programme as set out in Table 4 & Appendix D be approved.
- c) That the draft 5-year HRA reserves and balances as set out in Appendix E be noted.

59. School Funding Report - Dedicated Schools Grant 2024/2025

It was moved by Councillor Bedi,
Seconded by Councillor Chahal,

- (a) "Note the DSG allocations for Slough (Table 1) as published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)
- (b) Approve the local authority formula for allocating resources to Slough schools for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix A, the Authority Proforma Tool (APT).
- (c) Approve a transfer from the Schools Block allocation of £100,000 to the Central Schools Services Block and £761,539 to the High Needs Block in the 2024/25 financial year (£861,539 being 0.5% of the total schools' block allocation).
- (d) Approve the Dedicated Schools Grant Budget for 2024/25 at £231,514,470 including the allocations between the four funding blocks as set out in this report.
- (e) Delegate authority to the Executive Director – Children's Services, in consultation with the Lead Member for Children and Education and the Executive Director for Finance and Commercial, to make minor changes to the schools' budget in year."

The recommendations were put to the vote and agreed with 38 votes for and 1 abstention.

Resolved -

- (a) Note the DSG allocations for Slough (Table 1) as published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)
- (b) Approve the local authority formula for allocating resources to Slough schools for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix A, the Authority Proforma Tool (APT).
- (c) Approve a transfer from the Schools Block allocation of £100,000 to the Central Schools Services Block and £761,539 to the High Needs Block in the 2024/25 financial year (£861,539 being 0.5% of the total schools' block allocation).
- (d) Approve the Dedicated Schools Grant Budget for 2024/25 at £231,514,470 including the allocations between the four funding blocks as set out in this report.

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- (e) Delegate authority to the Executive Director – Children’s Services, in consultation with the Lead Member for Children and Education and the Executive Director for Finance and Commercial, to make minor changes to the schools’ budget in year.

60. Establishment of Berkshire Prosperity Board

It was moved by Councillor Smith,
Seconded by Councillor Chahal,

“That Council note the recommendations of Cabinet on 5th March 2024 -

1. Approve the setting up of a joint committee across the six Berkshire local authorities to exercise executive functions in relation to economic prosperity.
2. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial, to agree and enter into an inter-authority agreement between the six Berkshire local authorities to facilitate decision-making by the Berkshire Prosperity Board Joint Committee (BPB)

That Council resolves -

3. Approval of the functions and procedure rules for the Berkshire Prosperity Board Joint Committee (BPB) as set out in Appendix 1 be added to Part 3.5 of the Constitution;
4. Delegated authority to the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to amend the Constitution to make minor amendments to the functions and procedure rules for the BPB and to amend other parts of the Constitution, including Article 13 – Decision Making, Part 4.2 - Access to Information Procedure Rules and Part 4.4 of the Executive Procedure Rules, to take account of the existence of the BPB.

The recommendations were put to the vote and agreed with 38 votes for and 1 abstention.

Resolved -

“That Council note the recommendations of Cabinet on 5th March 2024 -

1. Approve the setting up of a joint committee across the six Berkshire local authorities to exercise executive functions in relation to economic prosperity.
2. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial, to agree and enter into an inter-authority agreement between the six Berkshire local authorities to facilitate decision-making by the Berkshire Prosperity Board Joint Committee (BPB)

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That Council resolves -

3. Approval of the functions and procedure rules for the Berkshire Prosperity Board Joint Committee (BPB) as set out in Appendix 1 be added to Part 3.5 of the Constitution;
4. Delegated authority to the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to amend the Constitution to make minor amendments to the functions and procedure rules for the BPB and to amend other parts of the Constitution, including Article 13 – Decision Making, Part 4.2 - Access to Information Procedure Rules and Part 4.4 of the Executive Procedure Rules, to take account of the existence of the BPB.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 7.00 pm and closed at 11.34 pm)