

Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 14th October, 2019.

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

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillors Ajaib, Dhaliwal, Minhas, Strutton and Wright

PART 1

43. Declarations of Interest

Agenda item 13 (Minute 54): Response to LGA Financial Peer Review of SCST: Councillor Swindlehurst declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he was a substitute member of the LGA City Regions Board. He would remain in the meeting and participate in discussion on the item.

Agenda item 13 (Minute 54): Response to LGA Financial Peer Review of SCST: Councillor Pantelic declared a non-pecuniary interest in that she was a member of the LGA Community Wellbeing Board. She would remain in the meeting and participate in discussion on the item.

44. Minutes of the Meeting held on 16th September 2019

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 16th September 2019 be approved as a correct record.

45. Cabinet Portfolios and Lead Member Responsibilities

The Cabinet formally noted the revised portfolios and responsible Lead Members appointed by the Leader of the Council with effect from 19th September 2019.

Councillor Bains was welcomed to the Cabinet as the new Lead Member for Inclusive Growth & Skills and Councillor Carter had moved to the Children & Schools portfolio. There had been some minor changes to the portfolios which were detailed in Appendix A to the report.

Resolved – That the revised portfolios and responsible Lead Members be noted.

46. Treasury Management Annual Report

The Service Lead Finance introduced a report that summarised treasury activity in 2018/19 and the first part of 2019/20.

The Cabinet noted that the Capital Financing Requirement as at 31st March 2019 was £552.9m, an increase from £434.6m in the previous year. The Council had reduced the average rate on its borrowing to 2.06% and assessed the relative risks regularly with the authority's treasury advisors,

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Arlingclose. Investment activity was reviewed and it was noted that the Council held £108m of non-treasury investments at 31st March 2019, for example in directly owned properties and James Elliman Homes, which generated a rate of return of 5.68%. It was confirmed that none of the Prudential Indicators had been breached.

Lead Members asked about the borrowing position and it was confirmed that the Council was seeking to move to longer term borrowing where appropriate. Whilst the level of borrowing had increased in the past year, it was noted that this remained proportionate and affordable, and the investments were generating strong returns. The total borrowing figure included the Housing Revenue Account self-financing settlement which gave the Council greater control of housing stock. There would be future opportunities to reschedule these loans when permitted to achieve a more preferential rate.

Speaking under Rule 30, Councillor Strutton asked for clarification on the breakdown of the Council's borrowing which was detailed in section 5.3 of the report. The Leader commented that borrowing had increased in the past year, including for the purchase of the Council's new Headquarters as had been agreed by Council in July 2018.

At the conclusion of the discussion the report was noted.

Resolved – That the Treasury Management activities for 2018/19 and the beginning of 2019/20 as set out in the report be noted.

47. Community Investment Fund 2019/20 Update

The Service Lead Finance introduced a report that updated on the Community Investment Fund in 2019/20.

A total of £1.05m had been budgeted for the year with each Member allocated £20,000 capital and £5,000 revenue to support projects in their wards. There was £634,000 of capital and £157,000 revenue yet to be allocated to projects in the current year and £110,000 of the Cabinet's capital allocation remained available. In view of the pressures on the revenue budget arising from the funding position of Slough Children's Services Trust, it was recommended that any unspent CIF revenue funding be paused until further notice. This was agreed.

The Leader tabled a proposal to utilise some of the remaining Cabinet capital allocation for the coming year which included funding for Christmas lights on Farnham Road, replacing trees lost to drought, additional equipment in parks and literature to support oral health education. It was agreed that these projects would be allocated £95,000 of the £110,000 which was available.

The status of a number of specific projects was raised and Lead Members commented that the timelines for projects receiving CIF allocations needed to be significantly tightened up to ensure that projects were delivered more quickly once the funding had been allocated. At the conclusion of the

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discussion the recommendations in the report and the tabled proposals for the use of the Cabinet allocation were agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That the expenditure to date from the Community Investment Fund 2019/20 be noted;
- (b) That due to the current financial situation within the Slough Children's Services Trust (SCST) that any unspent revenue funding within the Community Investment Fund 2019/20 is paused until further notice; and
- (c) That the following schemes be funded from within the Cabinet's remaining capital funding allocation of the 2019/20 Community Investment Fund:
 - Farnham Road Christmas lights - £19,300
 - Replacement trees for those lost to drought across Slough - £50,000
 - Equipment installation and repairs to support developing Parks Strategy - £24,000
 - Oral health education literature - £1,700

48. Active Slough- A Leisure Strategy for Slough

The Lead Member for Health & Wellbeing and the Leisure Services Manager gave a comprehensive presentation on the progress made in delivering the Council's five-year Leisure Strategy which had been agreed by Cabinet in 2014 and aimed to get "more people, more active, more often."

The focus of the strategy had been an ambitious capital programme to transform the Council's core leisure offer and provide facilities and programmes in communities across the Borough. Major facilities such as Arbour Park Community Sport Stadium, Slough Ice Arena, Salt Hill Activity Centre, Langley Leisure Centre and The Centre had been built or refurbished on budget and within predicted timescales. A new leisure contract had been procured with Everyone Active managing these facilities and current projections were that total usage in 2019/20 would be 1.2 million. In addition to the increased use of facilities the new contract would result in an estimated saving to the Council of £10m over the next ten years. The neighbourhood programme included 26 green gyms, 7 multi-use games areas, cricket pitches and walking tracks. The Active Slough programme had provided more than 100 mainly free sessions each week out in communities.

The Cabinet congratulated Officers on the success in delivering the programme to upgrade Slough's facilities, several of which had received national awards and recognition. It was expected that any sustainable increases in the levels of activity in Slough would take some time to come through in official figures, however, it was noted that key measures such as

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membership and usage of the facilities and programmes was very positive. The next phase of the leisure strategy would focus on the wellbeing and health of residents and would be informed by the 'health beliefs' research currently underway in Slough. Lead Members commented on the importance of understanding the factors influencing residents levels of activity at ward level including ethnicity, age, cost of facilities etc. Effective communication and messaging to target groups would be crucial in promoting more active lifestyles.

Speaking under Rule 30, Councillor Strutton raised several issues including some operational and parking issues at the Salt Hill Activity Centre and safety issues in facilities in Salt Hill Park following recent incidents. The Officer reported that car parking at the centre was being reviewed with the option of introducing charges or enforcement if required. The Lead Member for Planning & Regulation confirmed that additional CCTV coverage would be provided in Salt Hill Park.

At the conclusion of the discussion the report was noted.

Resolved – That the report and progress made in implementing the Leisure Strategy be noted.

49. Impact Assessment of a No Deal Brexit on Slough

The Service Lead Finance introduced a report that updated on the potential impacts of a 'no deal' Brexit on Slough and the Council's operations.

There remained a risk that the UK would leave the European Union on 31st October 2019 without a deal and the Council had therefore continued its planning for such an eventuality. The risk analysis was set out in the appendix to the report and Members were provided assurance that these issues had been assessed and mitigated as far as possible. A weekly reporting process was in place to the Corporate Management Team, which was also circulated to Lead Members.

The Cabinet discussed some of the key risks including workforce issues with the potential loss of EU nationals working in sectors such as construction, education, health and social care. Speaking under Rule 30, Councillor Strutton expressed the view that some potential benefits of Brexit were not included in the report, for example the opportunity for the Council's housing companies to purchase residential properties more cheaply if there was a downturn in the housing market. The Officer responded that there was more detailed internal plan on housing issues.

At the conclusion of the discussion the report was noted.

Resolved – That the current position and the activity the Council had undertaken to mitigate risks of a 'No Deal' Brexit be noted.

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50. References from Overview & Scrutiny

There were no references from Overview & Scrutiny.

51. Notification of Forthcoming Decisions

The Cabinet considered and endorsed the Notification of Decisions published on 13th September 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 October to December 2019 be endorsed.

52. 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.

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

53. Part II Minutes - 16th September 2019

The Part II minutes of the last meeting held on 16th September 2019 were approved.

54. Response to LGA Financial Peer Review of Slough Children's Trust

The feedback from the LGA Peer Review of Slough Children's Services Trust finances was noted and the Cabinet agreed the funding of two 'invest to save' initiatives during 2019/20 which would contribute to addressing the Trust's in-year overspend.

55. Heart of Slough Old Library Site Senior Debt Report

It was agreed to provide a senior debt loan facility to support the residential element of the Old Library Site development under the existing match funding terms of the Local Asset Backed Vehicle Partnership Agreement, and to recommend the consequential adjustments to the capital programme to Council.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.33 pm and closed at 9.15 pm)