

Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 18th November, 2019.

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

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

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Bains.

PART 1

56. Declarations of Interest

Items 8 and 14 (Minutes 63 and 69): Tower House & Ashbourne House Development – Councillor Nazir declared a personal interest in that the single remaining leaseholder was known to him. He remained in the meeting and voted.

57. Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th October 2019

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 14th October 2019 be approved as a correct record.

58. Revenue Financial Budget Monitoring Report - 2019-20 (Quarter 2 April to September 2019)

The Service Lead Finance introduced a report that updated on the financial position of the Council's revenue account to September 2019, which was the second quarter of the 2019/20 financial year.

The forecast year end position for Council run services was an overspend of £0.193m (0.18%) of the revenue budget. This was an improvement on the position at the end of the first quarter despite increasing pressures on the Council. However, when the forecast financial position of Slough Children's Services Trust (SCST) was included the forecast overspend was £7.03m of which £6.8m was due to the Trust. This was a reduction of £2.6m since the previous quarter and the work to review expenditure, identify in year savings and ensure strong financial controls were in place was explained. The detailed position for each directorate was summarised and noted. The Housing Revenue Account was on track to deliver the planned net deficit budget of £2.87m.

Lead Members recognised the work undertaken to control the Council's own budget and noted that the discussions with SCST and the Department for Education continued to address the issues with the Trust's financial position. The Cabinet considered and approved the virement and write off requests as set out in sections 9 and 10 of the report.

Resolved –

- (a) That the reported underlying financial position of the Council, including the Slough Children's Services Trust (SCST), as at the second quarter of the year be noted;
- (b) That the management actions being undertaken by officers, and the progress made to date, to reduce the budget pressures be noted;
- (c) That the potential impact on the Council's general reserves and associated implications for the Council based on the latest financial projections, be noted;
- (d) That the virements and write offs as requested in Section 9 and 10 be approved.

59. Capital Monitoring Report at 30th September 2019

The Service Lead Finance introduced a report that provided a summary of spend against capital budgets for the 2019/20 financial year to the end of September 2019.

The total revised capital budget for 2019/20 was £213m of which £94m had been spent by the end of the second quarter. This was 44% of the revised budget and the programme was on track to spend 95% by the end of the year. The forecast underspend of 5% was a significant improvement on previous years and Members welcomed the fact that the range of projects in the capital programme would be delivered. The report was noted.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

60. Community Investment Fund

The Director of Finance & Resources introduced a report that sought approval for changes to the process for the co-ordination, monitoring and delivery of projects funded through the Community Investment Fund (CIF).

The fund was introduced to give ward councillors the opportunity to directly impact on their communities by investing in relatively small projects that would have a positive impact in their wards. The proposed changes of the process were designed to improve stability and consistency with one individual officer taking responsibility to strengthen the management of the fund and communicate with councillors. Reporting arrangements would also be improved with quarterly updates to the Capital Monitoring Board. It was proposed that projects requiring significant design or engineering be submitted by Members by 31st August each year to provide a realistic delivery timescale by the end of the year. All other projects would need to be submitted by 31st January.

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The Cabinet welcomed the proposed changes and agreed that they be implemented from 1st April 2020. Members emphasised the importance of clearly communicating the new processes with ward councillors prior to the implementation of the changes. It was noted that the pause on CIF revenue funding in the current year remained in place due to the pressures on the revenue budget caused by the Slough Children's Services Trust overspend.

Resolved – That the following changes to the Community Investment Fund be approved:

- a) A single officer would be responsible for the end to end management of the Community Investment Fund process with authority to approve/reject applications and control and report on the status of each project.
- b) Reports would be submitted to the Capital Monitoring Board, on a quarterly basis, on the spending of the fund and the amount remaining.
- c) Projects requiring specialist design, engineering input and/or planning permission/consultation need to be submitted by 31 August; other projects needed to be submitted by 31 January. To support this information would go out to all Ward Councillors about the launch of each year's fund giving them all the information they would need about criteria, timetable and how to apply.
- d) Cabinet noted that work to assess financial liabilities on the Council as a result of budget pressures was ongoing and as a result the pause on revenue allocations remained in place.

61. Town Centre Regeneration Report

The Leader of the Council, Interim Director of Regeneration and Service Lead Regeneration gave a comprehensive presentation that updated on the regeneration of the town centre.

The update included the Interim Planning Framework and the wide range of commercial, industrial, leisure, residential, infrastructure and retail projects planned and underway. Taken together, the projects represented more than £3bn of mixed-use development in the 'Square Mile' of central Slough in the next ten years. It was noted that a separate report on the transport and parking strategy for the centre of Slough would be considered by Cabinet in the next few months to take forward the Transport Vision agreed in February 2020. The 'Square Mile' in the centre of the town was envisaged to accommodate between 7,500 to 9,000 new homes on sites including the former Thames Valley University site, Horlicks, Stoke Wharf and Akzo Nobel. In relation to the TVU/North West Quadrant site, it was noted that the Council would enter into an Option Agreement to North West Quadrant LLP, a subsidiary of Slough Urban Renewal managed by Muse in November 2019 to

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develop the detailed masterplan. The Cabinet welcomed this positive further step given the strong track record Muse had in very successful urban regeneration schemes. The masterplan for this site was due to be considered by Cabinet in the second quarter of 2020.

The Interim Planning Framework also included plans for a new business quarter in the town centre and the emerging proposals the owners had for the redevelopment of the Queensmere and Observatory shopping centres. The majority of the development was likely to be workspace-led with a new Central Business District to create the jobs and economic activity required to support a wide range of town centre activity. It was noted that retail would still form an important part of the proposals but the footprint was likely to be reduced to be in the range of 250,000 to 500,000 sqft. The Council was in the process of establishing a steering group with British Land to support the further development of the proposals. The proposed timescale for the development was that a masterplan would be produced in the first half of 2020 and would be followed by public consultation.

The Cabinet welcomed the ambitious scale of the proposed regeneration which together represented one of the largest in the UK. The importance of aligning and co-ordinating the various schemes as far as possible was emphasised as was the need to progress the transport and parking strategy. Members commented that the major changes in the retail landscape in recent years would provide an opportunity to design and develop a vibrant, mixed use town centre that was 'fit for the future'. The Council would have a key role in bringing forward development on its own sites, to add to the hotels development and The Curve; to work positively with developers to enable other schemes and crucially to play a place-shaping role.

Lead Members discussed a wide range of issues including the contribution the regeneration would make to meeting the town's housing need, including affordable housing; the potential impact of the delay to Crossrail services; the provision of the much needed market leading hotels which were under construction; and the importance of high quality design as demonstrated by the developers of the Horlicks site. The Cabinet expressed some frustration that the owners plans to redevelop Queensmere and Observatory shopping centres had not come forward as quickly as had been anticipated in recent years but the Council was ready to work positively with British Land and the owners to bring forward the scheme and align it with the wider town centre strategy.

Speaking under Rule 30, Councillor Strutton commented on a number of aspects of the regeneration proposals including the importance of free digital communications infrastructure in the town centre and access and car parking issues for vulnerable people including those with disabilities and carers. The transport and parking strategy was being developed and would be considered in due course. The Cabinet had already agreed the recommendations of the disability task and finish group and the commitment to make Slough a disability friendly town would be included in town centre regeneration plans. Councillor Hulme commented on the importance of ensuring genuinely

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affordable housing was provided as part of the redevelopment and asked about the future plan for the Adelphi. It was noted that the current tenants lease had a further 18 months to run and the Council would use this time to develop plans which would positively contribute to the culture and leisure offer in the town centre. Councillor Smith also addressed the Cabinet under Rule 30 and expressed concern about the apparent significant change of strategy from retail to office in the Observatory and Queensmere redevelopment. It was responded that the Interim Planning Framework for the town centre set out the rationale and evidence for the strategic approach being taken and this had already been approved by the Planning Committee.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Cabinet noted the presentation. An update would also be provided to full Council on 26th November 2019. The Cabinet would consider the recommendations in the Part II report later in the meeting.

Resolved –

- (a) That it be noted that subject to planning, over £3b of mixed-use development was likely to complete in the “square mile” of central Slough defined in section 5.3 of the report within a period of 10 years.
- (b) That it be noted that the option in favour of SUR to redevelop the North West Quadrant had been signed in November 2019 and that a planning application for a mixed use scheme comprising residential, commercial, retail, food and beverage, entertainment and cultural uses would be submitted in 2020.
- (c) That it be noted that British Land was proposing the comprehensive redevelopment of the Queensmere and Observatory shopping centres and was reporting that public consultation would commence in quarter two 2020, with a planning application being submitted in spring 2021 for a scheme comprising three phases of mixed-use development.
- (d) That the activities that have been undertaken to deliver the town centre Clean, Safe and Vibrant programme since August 2018 (as set out in Appendix One to the report) be noted.
- (e) That it be agreed that additional technical/specialist resources would be required to deliver the Council’s regeneration aspirations within the square mile and that delegated authority be given to the interim Director of Regeneration following consultation with the Director of Finance & Resources and Leader to establish and finance the additional resources required.
- (f) That recommendations 7.1 - 7.5 as set out in Confidential Appendix Two be approved.
- (g) That the next Town Centre Regeneration Progress Report be presented to Cabinet in January 2020.

62. Urban Tree Challenge Fund

The Lead Member for Sustainable Transport and Environmental Services introduced a report that proposed providing £521,945.02 from general capital funding to match the £501,409.16 grant from the Urban Tree Challenge Fund. The funding would see the planting of 1,200 standard and small trees and 6,000 whips at 31 different locations across Slough in the next 18 months.

The Council's successful bid to the Urban Tree Challenge Fund would continue the positive work to plant new trees in the Borough, including the 550 as part of the Mayoral initiative in 2018/19. Members asked how the sites had been selected and it was noted this had been done based on consultations with officers and Members and the eligibility criteria for the fund. The funding included resource to maintain planted trees and the Lead Member commented that there would be engagement with residents so that they could help maintain those planted in their communities.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the recommendation was agreed.

Resolved – That the re-profiling of the capital schemes in year be agreed to release £521,954.02 to enable the Council to comply with match funding conditions of the Urban Tree Challenge Fund and thus receive from the Forestry Commission a grant of £501,409.16 (51% SBC for 49% FC).

63. Development at Tower House and Ashbourne House

The Service Lead Housing Development and Contracts introduced a report that proposed a series of recommendations to progress towards the use of compulsory purchase powers to secure the single remaining leasehold in Ashbourne House to move forward with the redevelopment to provide 193 affordable new homes.

The Cabinet noted the background, legal implications and history of engagement with the single remaining leaseholder that had refused to transfer their interest to the Council. If the recommendations were agreed, the relevant legal processes and public notices of the intention to appropriate would be progressed, with a further report to Cabinet in December 2019. It was proposed and agreed that the relevant resolutions be implemented urgently to advertise the required notices at the earliest opportunity.

Lead Members considered and noted the Part II appendix without disclosing any of the exempt information. The Cabinet had previously agreed the use of compulsory purchase powers in principle and sought, and was given, assurance that the Council had engaged with and made reasonable offers to the remaining leaseholder to seek to resolve the matter without the need to use such powers. It was recognised that the appropriate processes needed to be followed, and the Cabinet agreed that the wider public benefits of redeveloping the site to provide the new affordable homes justified approving the recommendations as set out in the report.

Resolved –

- (a) That the draft Order Map and Schedule appended to the report be approved;
- (b) That the progress of the planning application for the Scheme (planning application reference S/00020/5) be noted and that it be confirmed that the planning purposes underpinning the CPO were to facilitate the development, redevelopment and improvement of the Order Land and the Council Interests including (without limitation) for the Scheme as further described in the Supporting Information to the report;
- (c) That it be acknowledged that the delivery of the Scheme would encompass works upon or use of the Order Land which may infringe upon third party rights, in respect of which section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 may be required to authorise the overriding of such rights, or other matters burdening the land, where that was needed to deliver the Scheme;
- (d) That it be noted that a decision would be required on whether, in accordance with section 122 of the Local Government Act 1972, to appropriate the Council Interests to the same planning purposes as the CPO (i.e. development, redevelopment and improvement of the Order Land and the Council Interests including (without limitation) for the Scheme and described in the Supporting Information to the report), so as to 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; and
- (e) That delegated authority be given to the Service Lead for Housing Development and Contracts to:
 - a. advertise notice of an intention to appropriate the relevant land under section 122(2A) of the Housing and Planning Act 2016;
 - b. give further consideration of the statutory requirements for appropriation of the Council Interests (including for the avoidance of doubt authority to consider any properly made objections received pursuant to those statutory steps) and thereafter to report to Cabinet on whether or not to proceed with appropriation in light of any issues raised; and
 - c. in the event that Cabinet decides to appropriate the land, proceed with making and effecting the confirmation and implementation of the Order following any appropriation, under the powers delegated by the resolutions made at the Cabinet meeting on 4 February 2019;
- (f) To acknowledge therefore that the foregoing resolutions may give rise to claims for compensation against the Council under section 204 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016, in addition to claims for compensation made in respect of the acquisition of interests included in the Order;

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- (g) That recommendation (e) be implemented urgently in accordance with paragraphs 20 and 21 of the Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

64. References from Overview & Scrutiny

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

65. Notification of Forthcoming Decisions

The Cabinet considered and endorsed the Notification of Decisions published on 18th October 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 November 2019 to January 2020 be endorsed.

66. 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.

67. Part II Minutes - 14th October 2019

The Part II minutes of the last meeting held on 14th October 2019 were approved.

68. Town Centre Regeneration Report - Appendix 2

Recommendations 7.1 to 7.5 of the Confidential Appendix were approved.

69. Tower House and Ashbourne House Development - Appendices

The Part II Appendices were noted in resolving the matters set out in Part I of the agenda.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.31 pm and closed at 9.08 pm)