

Slough Borough Council

A fresh start – Corporate Plan 2023-27

Introduction from the Leader

[Holding space for introduction from the Leader]

What is a Corporate Plan?

The Corporate Plan is a key strategic document for SBC, which sets out our vision for the council and what we hope to deliver in the borough.

It is not intended to cover everything the council does but sets out the council's aspirations and goals that will be delivered alongside our day-to-day activities. The plan has three core elements, our:



Purpose - our key mission statement and driving focus for the council



Approach - the type of council we wish to be, our values, how we will work and our relationship with residents and partners



Priorities - the key challenges we will look to address over the next four years

Recovery & Improvement

The refresh of the Corporate Plan provides an opportunity to ensure that our purpose and strategic objectives are based on the latest evidence of need to deliver the best outcomes for our residents. The timeframe for the plan will align with the council's Medium Term Financial Plan so that there is clarity of objectives against which resources will be planned and allocated.

However, we start this next chapter of our journey against a backdrop of government intervention. The scale of the council's challenges was brought home in a series of government Directions from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the appointment of Commissioners in December 2021. In addition, the council remains under a separate Direction from the Department for Education.

We now need to deliver change and improvement and deliver this at pace. Without doing this, we will never be able to make a real difference on our purpose as a council or deliver against our strategic priorities.

Our primary objective remains to be able to demonstrate tangible progress against the Directions so that we are able to recover and improve our position, if we are to have any prospect of surviving as a viable authority.

Whilst it has been recognised that 2023 has seen some momentum developing around key aspects of the Directions there is still a long way to go. Our starting point has been agreeing the planned savings, understanding the financial context, collaborating on a refresh of the Corporate Plan and addressing culture to rebuild trust among staff and residents.

Progress against our Recovery Plan is reported monthly to Commissioners at the Improvement and Recovery Board and will be reported quarterly to Full Council.

How was the strategy developed?

Slough Borough Council introduced its last Corporate Plan in May 2023 – Doing Right by Slough. The plan responded to the Directions issued to the Council and set out SBC’s approach towards improvement and recovery.

The council now knows more about what its recovery will need to look like and has a new executive leadership team in place and a new administration following the 2023 election. This presents us with an opportunity to refresh our approach and agree a new vision for our town and the council for the next four years.


We now also have access to new data from the 2021 Census, which tells us more about Slough’s residents. Data from the Census and other key sources of information have been distilled into a Slough Insights pack - which provides us with evidence of the key opportunities and challenges facing Slough.

A draft structure for the Corporate Plan was developed to respond to these challenges – particularly the stark health inequalities and unique demographic profile of the town – and to adopt a new approach as an organisation to cement our improvement and recovery.

The council subsequently consulted on this structure with residents and partners, with the majority of respondents supporting the plan’s proposed purpose, approach and priorities. Respondents also had the opportunity to comment in their own words and their feedback has fed into this final version of the plan and will also inform service delivery plans and further key strategies.

About Slough - 10 key facts

Further key data about Slough and the town's key strengths and challenges can be found in the Slough Insights pack, published alongside the Corporate Plan.

	With a population of 158,500, Slough is over 10 times more densely populated than the average for England
	There is an average of 3 people per household – the highest average size in England, and 16% of households are overcrowded
	Slough has the second youngest population in the country – with 25% of residents aged 15 and under
	The town is also one of the most ethnically diverse in England and 44% of residents were born outside of the UK
	Slough has low healthy life expectancy - the average number of years that a person can expect to live in full health – at just 58 for men, and 60 for women
	28% of year 6 children in Slough are obese, compared to a South-East average of 20% and only 52% of adults are physically active
	Slough has pockets of severe deprivation and 70% of neighborhoods fall below the national average in the Index of Multiple Deprivation
	Slough has a 45% higher crime rate than the average for the Thames Valley
	Slough's residents earn £28 less per week than the regional average, and there is a gap of £84 between residents and all those who work in Slough
	Slough overall has good levels of educational attainment – with 63% of Key Stage 4 students achieving grade 5 or above in English and Maths GCSEs

Our Purpose: Closing the healthy life expectancy gap, by focusing on children

Slough has poor healthy life expectancy compared to neighbouring areas and one of the youngest populations in the country. A child's early development and experiences play a key role in determining future health and wellbeing.

We will work closely with our partners and our community to improve outcomes for all Slough's children and give them a good start in life.

Together, we will work to improve the conditions for families in Slough, seeking to enhance our borough's built and natural environment, as well as striving to improve the social determinants of health such as education, employment, income and crime.

We will listen to the voices of children and young people and ensure they have a say in the future of our town.

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Our Approach

To deliver change and improve, we know we need a new approach as an organisation. This section sets out the type of council we wish to be, our values, how we will work and our relationship with residents. These are the principles that will enable us to be a sustainable organisation, providing good value in service to our residents.



RESIDENT
FOCUSED



PROVIDING
FINANCIAL
SUSTAINABILITY



ENABLING
RESIDENTS AND
COMMUNITIES



STRENGTHENING
PARTNERSHIPS



BUILDING TRUST

Resident Focused

We will serve the people of Slough first and foremost: responding to their concerns, ensuring their views are heard and delivering on the issues that matter most to them.

How we will do this:

- Ensuring residents are consulted on key decisions.
- Improving response times and customer service.
- Making it easier for residents to access advice and information.

Providing financial sustainability

We will build on our work to provide financial sustainability for the council and embed good practice for local government: living within our means, balancing our budget and being honest and open about the difficult decisions that we will need to make over the coming years.

How we will do this:

- Ensure that the corporate plan aligns with the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy which sets out how our priorities will be resourced. Any financial implications arising from implementation of actions are fully factored into the budget and the MTFP planning process.
- Continue to improve our financial resilience, focusing on financial recovery and onward sustainability.

Enabling residents and communities

We will focus on enabling residents to live well independently: building community capacity and resilience, fostering self-sufficiency and creating platforms that allow our community to shape Slough's future.

How we will do this:

- Being active and present in our community
- Working with residents to cultivate strong, healthy and attractive neighbourhoods where residents live well, independently, and become self-sufficient.
- Providing opportunities for residents to change the things they believe need changing in their community.

Strengthening partnerships

We will strengthen relationships with partners, the community and our young people through collaboration and co-operation: developing a united way of working, toward a shared vision for our town and its residents.

How we will do this:

- Developing more effective strategic partnerships – particularly with the Slough Health & Wellbeing Board and Safer Slough Partnership – focused on action and delivering rapid progress.
- Creating new relationships with local employers to harness the strength of Slough's business community, target skills gaps and create employment opportunities for residents.
- Re-establishing, re-energising and building on our shared 2040 partnership vision for Slough.

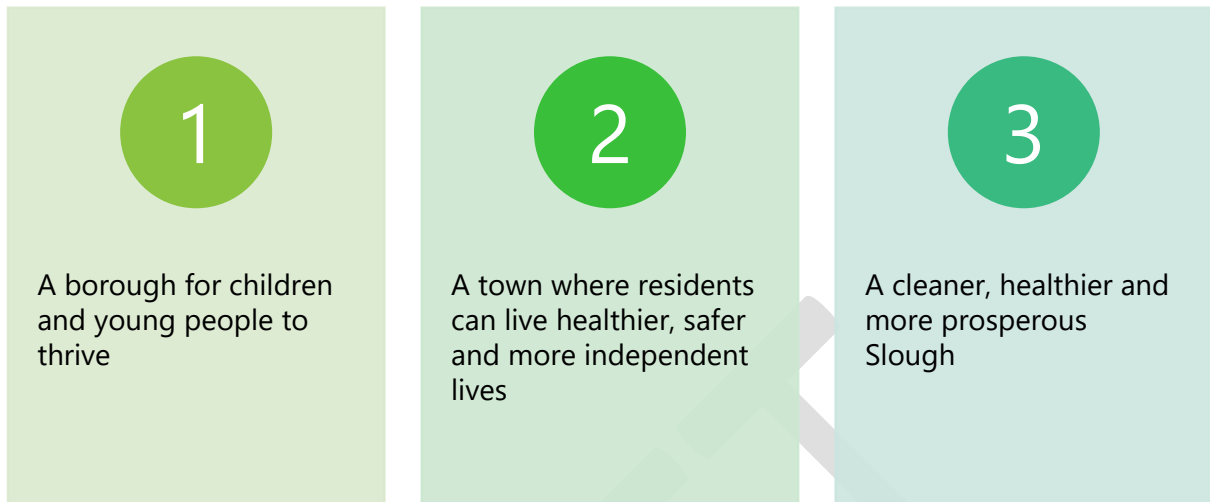
Building trust

We will work to restore trust and confidence in SBC: ensuring that we are reliable, responsive and open, as we continue to recover and improve.

How we will do this:

- Demonstrating our commitment to integrity and public service through our conduct.
- Publishing regular progress reports on the council's recovery.
- Improving transparency on our performance and decision-making.

Our strategic priorities



In order to deliver on our key purpose to increase healthy life expectancy, there are a number of key challenges we will need to focus on over the next four years.

Resources will primarily be allocated to deliver these outcomes, and there will need to be a demonstrable, evidenced link between them and everything we do as a council.

Service plans are being developed to ensure effective delivery of the priorities and further information will be published in other key strategies that are currently being created.

These cannot be achieved by us as alone but will be tackled together with our partners and our communities.

1. A borough for children and young people to thrive

Providing quality services for vulnerable children and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

Improving outcomes for disadvantaged children and young people

Tackling high rates of child obesity

Increasing children and young people's participation in decisions that affect them and in shaping the future of Slough

Why this is important?

Research from the King's Fund has shown that:

- A child's development is an accurate predictor of educational outcome, which in turn is related to long-term health outcomes.
- Experiences in early life are increasingly being recognised as having a lasting effect on adult health both directly and through influencing adult health behaviours.
- Adverse experiences and neglect in the early years lead to poor development, which affects later life chances.
- Children who are obese or overweight at school age are at greater risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes in later life.

A person's early years are of fundamental importance in shaping their future education, employment and income outcomes, which collectively determine 30% of their health & wellbeing.

Children and young people have the right to participate in decisions that affect them, to be heard and to be taken seriously (Article 16, UNCRC).

How we will measure success:

- Number of new Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans issued
- Percentage of new EHC plans issued within 20, weeks including exceptions
- Percentage of eligible 2-year-olds receiving 15 hours of free early years education or childcare
- Pupil exclusions in Slough schools as a percentage of school population
- Children Missing from Education (CME) as a percentage of school population
- Percentage of care leavers in education, employment or training
- Rate per 10,000 of children receiving targeted early help
- Percentage of children looked after in external foster care placements
- Percentage of children and young people in external residential placements
- Rate per 10,000 of Children Looked After (CLA)
- Percentage of referrals to children's social care within 12 months of earlier referral
- Percentage of children aged 2.5 years who received a child development review
- Proportion of children obese at Year 6

2. A town where residents can live healthier, safer and more independent lives

Working with partners to target health inequalities and promote wellbeing

Supporting residents to be as independent as possible, whilst providing quality services for the most vulnerable adults

Improving community safety and tackling anti-social behaviour – providing a safer town to grow-up

Why this is important?

- Slough has low healthy life expectancy and high rates of preventable ill-health, as well as inequalities in health between different areas of the borough and between different population groups which need to be addressed.
- Maximising independence, confidence and capacity for self-management has been demonstrated to enable people to live the life they want, stay independent at home for longer and reduce the need for emergency and statutory services.
- Levels of community safety determine 5% of a person's health outcomes. Antisocial behaviour has been demonstrated to cause personal harm to others, leading to changed routines and a lower quality of life. Other implications include negative mental health, such increased stress and anxiety, and depression.

How we will measure success:

- Percentage of new clients who received short-term services, where no further request was made for ongoing support
- Number of safeguarding concerns recorded
- Percentage of safeguarding referrals that meet section 42
- Percentage of care homes in the borough with a Care Quality Commission (CQC) rating of either good or outstanding
- Number of anti-social behaviour and environmental related service requests open for more than 90 days
- Perception of safety in the community
- Percentage of NHS health checks offered to the total eligible population in the quarter
- Proportion of population receiving dental checks: Access to NHS dental services - successfully obtained a dental appointment

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3. A cleaner, healthier and more prosperous Slough

Affordable, safe and healthy homes – improving the quality of council housing stock and the private rented sector

Improving air quality, promoting active travel and sustainable forms of transport, and taking action to prevent or minimise the impact of climate change

Providing clean, quality public spaces and working with developers to deliver a modern town centre for future generations

Engaging with businesses to create new employment opportunities for Slough families and routes to upskill

Why this is important?

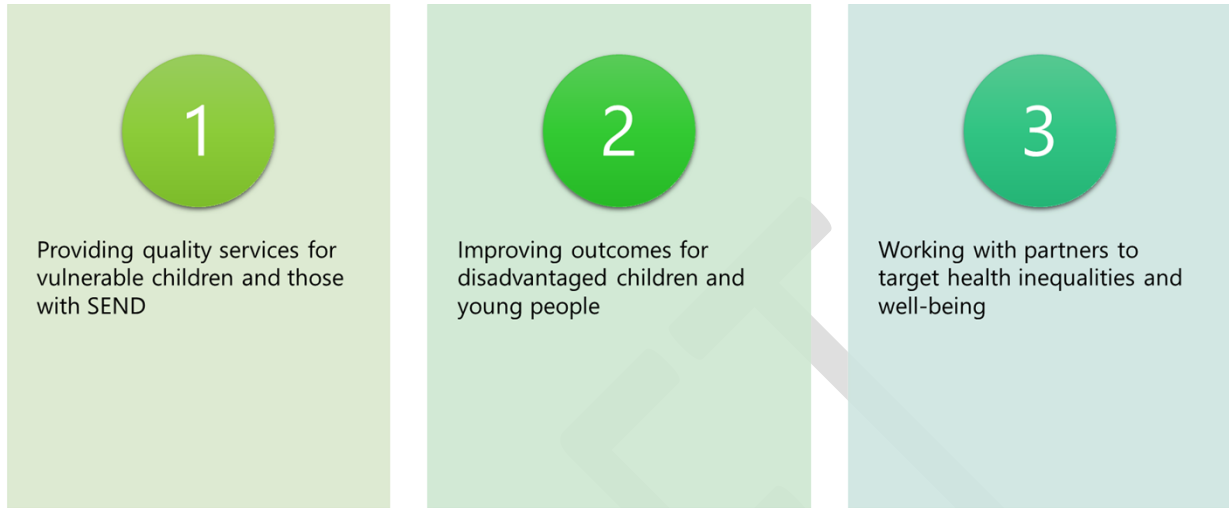
- Poor quality housing, with issues such as damp, can lead to a number of health problems, including respiratory issues, physical pain, and headaches, particularly affecting children.
- Children living in crowded homes are more likely to be stressed, anxious and depressed, have poorer physical health, and attain less well at school, and overcrowding has been associated with higher transmission of diseases such as COVID-19.
- Both short- and long-term exposure to air pollution can lead to a wide range of diseases, including stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer and aggravated asthma. 6.3% of all deaths in Slough are attributable to particulate air pollution.
- Access to good-quality, well-maintained public spaces can encourage greater levels of physical and social activity, boosting people's physical and mental health. Environmental quality and the built environment determine 10% of a person's health outcomes.
- There is clear evidence that being in good work improves health and wellbeing across people's lives and protects against social exclusion. Employment and income collectively determine 20% of a person's health outcomes.

How we will measure success:

- Number of Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) approaches
- Number of homeless cases prevented or relieved
- Total number of homeless households placed in temporary accommodation
- Standard voids at month end
- Average re-let time in days for standard voids
- Percentage of SBC housing repairs completed within timescale by Osbourne
- Percentage of SBC housing repairs completed within one visit by Osbourne
- Percentage of decisions made on major planning application within 13 weeks or timescale agreed with applicant"
- Percentage of decisions made on non-major planning application within 8 weeks or timescale agreed with applicant
- Air quality in Slough: NO₂ (Nitrogen Dioxide) concentration levels for four Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs):
 - AQMA 1: Spackmans Way
 - AQMA 2: Brands Hill
 - AQMA 3: Windmill
 - AQMA 4: Wellington Street
- Number of public transport local bus journeys undertaken
- Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling, or composting
- Missed refuse bins per 100,000 collections
- Missed recycling bins per 100,000 collections
- Number of incidents of fly-tipping reported
- Unemployment rate: Number of 16-64 year olds claiming unemployment related benefits as a percentage of working age population
- Number of businesses (enterprises) registered

Equality commitments

Slough is one of the most diverse places in the country, but there is more to be done to promote equality. We have therefore built objectives into the above priorities, which seek to reduce disadvantage and create a more equitable Slough:



We are also committed to putting equality and inclusion at the heart of our role as an employer, to support our workforce who help to deliver this plan.

Our objective will be to recruit and develop a skilled, committed and inclusive workforce, where diversity is valued and, one which is representative of our local communities.

Finance

The financial challenges and other issues facing Slough Borough Council are of an unprecedented magnitude and face a Council that is one of the smallest unitary councils in England and which does not therefore have the critical mass needed to be financially sustainable without radical action.

The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy is therefore aimed at the objective of delivering finance resilience through the finance recovery plan and achieving onward sustainability.

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