

People Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Monday, 24th October, 2022.

Present:- Councillors Qaseem (Chair), P. Bedi (Vice-Chair), Begum, Brooker, Matloob and Sandhu

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Bal and Basra

PART 1

11. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Brooker declared that he was a member of the Audit Committee.

12. Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 September 2022

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2022 be approved as a correct record.

13. Member Questions

It was noted that response to Members' Question relating to the meeting held on 31 March 2022 had circulated via email prior to the meeting.

14. Slough Children First (SCF) Business Planning - Task and Finish Group

The SBC Head of Governance and Scrutiny presented the Slough Children First (SCF) Business Planning -Task and Finish Group ((T&FG) report.

Members were provided with a summary of the proposal to convene a SCF Business Planning T&FG, and also set out an outline of the scope, remit, and associated timescales for the group.

The SBC Deputy Monitoring Officer highlighted the importance of the work of the T&FG in ensuring and mindful of the following:

- The context and background of the council's wider situation
- Would be undertaking a review of complex documents to formulate a business plan within a limited time scale to ensure approval of budget at Council.
- The review must be concluded by 23 February 2023 at the latest.
- To note that SCF became wholly owned by the council in April 2021, prior to being an individual trust.
- Changing and improving financial performance and joint working with the council to be noted as one of the overarching objectives.
- The 2021 governance review of Slough Borough Council, which could be described as a 'best value' inspection. The Local Government Act 1995 placed a duty of ensuring 'best value' on all local authorities, which required all local authorities to make arrangements to secure

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continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, while having regard to economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Members asked the following questions and received the responses set out below:

A Member asked whether the T&FG could ask for the business plan to be reviewed if areas of concerns were identified. The Deputy monitoring officer advised that the T&FG should be informed by the Mutual Ventures Report, a confidential report which would provide some guidance and could be reviewed by the T&FG.

A member asked how business plans had been developed prior to the governance report, and whether they had been reviewed by a committee. The Deputy monitoring officer explained that she had not been in the council for long, but highlighted that the SCF became wholly owned by the council in April 2021. It was noted that a slightly amended version of the business plan had been put in place, due to limited time, with the proviso of a six monthly update.

In response to a question as to whether the T&FG would be able to review the investment plans, the Interim Director of People (Children) confirmed that previous reports had been reported to scrutiny panels for information. The business plan that had already been drafted and reported to council had been rejected by the time he joined the council in January 2021. A further business plan was subsequently developed and reported to a scrutiny panel, which raised a number of issues and was agreed at cabinet as interim. The SCF Board agreed to develop a 7 Year plan. He explained that that the difficulty both nationally and locally was managing increasing demands and complexities. The current business plan explored early intervention plans to manage demand. Slough Borough Council (SBC) did not have available early help with key partners and public sector, as most authorities did.

A member asked about the role and cost of the DfE commissioners. The Interim Director of People (Children) advised that the DfE commissioners covered C5 (Core Five), as well as education, which could be misleading. He advised that the one of the key role of new DfE commissioner was to challenge and support the improvement work. He would check with the commissioners to find out whether there were any costs involved.

The Chair stated that that there was a large amount of detail relating to the annual review and governance review, and the T&FG would be able to ask questions once it had been set up.

A member asked whether given the short time frame of February 2023 and considering the amount of work required to be undertaken, whether it would be possible for officers to arrange and meet within the T&FG within this period. The SBC Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that, she and the Finance Contract Manager and council officers were committed and confident that

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other officers involved would be also, given the critically importance of the review. The Head of Children's Services confirmed that the T&FG could also expect commitment from staff at SCF.

It was recommended that the Chair should set the parameters and scope regarding governance and finance and that the T&FG should report recommendations back to the Panel prior to reporting to cabinet.

Resolved – That:

- 1) Slough Children First Business Planning -Task and Finish Group be convened.
- 2) The Panel commends to this T&FG the 'key lines of enquiry' set out at section 5.7 of the officer report, subject to any input from the committee in light of the report and its appendices.
- 3) The T&FG be made up of the following members from the committee (Councillors Qaseem, Bedi, Brooker, Sandhu and Matloob) and report its findings to the People Scrutiny Panel within three months, subject to the discretion of the Panel Chair.
- 4) The report be noted.

15. Members' Attendance Record

Resolved – That the Members' Attendance record be noted.

16. Date of Next Meeting - 28 November 2022

The chair requested for the work programme for the remainder of the year to be provided at the next meeting.

Resolved – That the date of the next meeting is confirmed as 30 January 2023.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.08 pm)