

Date of issue: Tuesday, 24 January 2023

MEETING	CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITY SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING JOINTLY WITH THE PLACE SCRUTINY PANEL (Councillors Begum (Chair), Muvvala (Vice Chair), Ali, Brooker, Hussain, Kaur, M. Malik, S. Malik, Mohammad, Cheema, Gill, Grewal, Minhas, Sandhu, Wright, Non-Voting Co-opted Members Christine Griffin Trevor Pollard
DATE AND TIME:	WEDNESDAY, 1ST FEBRUARY, 2023 AT 6.30 PM
VENUE:	COUNCIL CHAMBER - OBSERVATORY HOUSE, 25 WINDSOR ROAD, SL1 2EL
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER: (for all enquiries)	MANIZE TALUKDAR 07871 982 919

NOTICE OF MEETING

You are requested to attend the above Meeting at the time and date indicated to deal with the business set out in the following agenda.



STEPHEN BROWN
Chief Executive

AGENDA

PART I

AGENDA ITEM	REPORT TITLE	PAGE	WARD
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Apologies for absence.

1. Declarations of Interest

All Members who believe they have a Disclosable Pecuniary or other Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting must declare that interest and, having regard to the circumstances described in Section 9 and Appendix B of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter is discussed.

CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

- | | | | |
|----|--|-------|--|
| 2. | Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 December 2022 | 1 - 6 | |
| 3. | Member Questions | | |

(An opportunity for panel members to ask questions of the relevant Director/Associate Director, relating to pertinent, topical issues affecting their Directorate – maximum 10 minutes allocated.)

SCRUTINY ISSUES

- | | | | |
|----|---|-----------|-----|
| 4. | Budget Proposals 2023-24 | 7 - 78 | All |
| 5. | Task & Finish Group Report on Complaints Handling | 79 - 108 | All |
| 6. | Members' Attendance Record | 109 - 110 | All |
| 7. | Date of Next Meeting -
1 March 2023. | | |

Press and Public

Attendance and accessibility: You are welcome to attend this meeting which is open to the press and public, as an observer. You will however be asked to leave before any items in the Part II agenda are considered. For those hard of hearing an Induction Loop System is available in the Council Chamber.

Webcasting and recording: The public part of the meeting will be filmed by the Council for live and/or subsequent broadcast on the Council's website. The footage will remain on our website for 12 months. A copy of the recording will also be retained in accordance with the Council's data retention policy. By entering the meeting room and using the public seating area, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings.

In addition, the law allows members of the public to take photographs, film, audio-record or tweet the proceedings at public meetings. Anyone proposing to do so is requested to advise the Democratic Services Officer before the start of the meeting. Filming or recording must be overt and persons filming should not move around the meeting room whilst filming nor should they obstruct proceedings or the public from viewing the meeting. The use of flash photography, additional lighting or any non hand held devices, including tripods, will not be allowed unless this has been discussed with the Democratic Services Officer.

Emergency procedures: The fire alarm is a continuous siren. If the alarm sounds Immediately vacate the premises by the nearest available exit at either the front or rear of the Chamber and proceed to the assembly point: The pavement of the service road outside of Westminster House, 31 Windsor Road.

Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel (Meeting Jointly with the Place Scrutiny Panel) – Meeting held on Wednesday, 7th December, 2022.

Present:- Councillors Begum (Chair), Muvvala (Vice-Chair), Ali, Brooker, Hussain, Kaur, M. Malik, Mohammad, Cheema, Gill, Grewal and Sandhu

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillor Gahir

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors S. Malik, Minhas, Christine Griffin, Trevor Pollard,

PART 1

20. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Strutton declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he had previously been employed in the bus industry.

21. Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 October 2022

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2022 be approved as a correct record.

22. Member Questions

There were no Member questions.

23. Financial Overview

The SBC Head of Financial Management gave a slide presentation which provided an overview of the Council's current financial position and financial strategy.

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

Following a question, the Head of Financial Management confirmed that the nationally agreed pay rises for staff had been accepted by the unions and the increase had been backdated and paid to staff in the November payroll.

Previous finance reports had indicated that the Council would need to make savings of £200m in the current year and £100m the following year, however the report indicated that this figure was £66m.

The SBC Head of Financial Management advised that the current projected figure was £100m and that this figure had increased since the slides had initially been put together.

Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel - 07.12.22

Would it be necessary to implement the full 2% increase in council tax to fund adult social care, or could this percentage be lower, particularly since the government had promised £1b in funding for adult social care?

The Council needed to do everything possible to reduce the current deficit. There was the opportunity to increase council tax by 5%, which was being modelled in a bid to reduce the deficit. There was a projected deficit for subsequent years and it was important to close this gap as rapidly as possible. The capitalisation direction, which included the sale of assets, would remain in place until the Council's finances were balanced.

Would the proposed increase in council tax have an impact on the repayment amounts?

The SBC Head of Financial Management explained that the Council had large amounts of debt on which it was paying a low rate of interest, however, as and when those debts needed to be replaced, the Council would end up paying a higher rate of interest. If, the Council did not reduce its level of borrowing, then the interest on these debts would continue to grow. Hence the repayment of those debts would help to bring down the level of borrowing on which the Council was paying a higher level of interest.

With regard to the asset disposal strategy, which assets would the Council retain and how much would they be worth?

The SBC Head of Financial Management stated that he did not have the exact figures to hand. He undertook to provide this information to the Panel after the meeting. He added that smaller value assets and those which would be necessary for operational purposes would be retained. Once assets had been sold, there would be a need to focus on reducing service provision to achieve additional savings.

Had the possibility that some assets may not sell or may achieve a lower than projected price been risk assessed and how would this be mitigated against?

The SBC Head of Financial Management responded that the projected price of assets had been calculated on the basis of modelling and the Council would do everything possible to achieve the projected sale prices and avoid any risks from downward market pressures.

Was the projected revenue saving of £200m this year and £60m next year an achievable target?

The SBC Head of Financial Management advised that modelling was built on the assumption that these sales would be achieved on a phased basis. All the repayments would not solely be achieved through the sale of assets. Ebbs and flows in cash flow would need to be managed and it may be necessary to borrow from PWLB (Public Works Loan Board) on a short term basis to manage the profiling of the repayments.

Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel - 07.12.22

What effect would an adverse audit report for the 2018/19 accounts have on the Council's finances?

An adverse audit report would harm the Council's reputation, however, it would depend on the auditors' final conclusions. In practical terms, the auditors had indicated that they would accept the accounts submitted. DLUHC (the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities) had informally indicated that it would accept the accounts the Council had produced and provide an actual capitalisation directive for that year.

The SBC confirmed that the £14m savings figure was an annual target.

Would the £20m savings figure reduce annually following the sale of assets?

The SBC Head of Financial Management advised that asset sales would not generate savings directly, they would however provide cash flow in the interim. Capital receipts could be used to repay capital financing, reduce borrowing and reduce the minimum revenue on the Council accounts. This had been modelled up to 2028 and beyond. The overall capitalisation direction would fluctuate, as there were four years of outstanding accounts to be finalised, and there were likely to be adjustments which would have a bearing on the final figure. The deliverability of savings was crucial. Other things such as inflation and the cost of energy would further increase pressures on the Council, all of which could create some degree of uncertainty.

How much were the auditors charging to audit the accounts for 2018/19 and subsequent years?

The SBC Director of Finance advised that the cost for auditing the 2018/19 accounts amounted to approximately £700k. The auditors had not yet provided an estimate of their charges for subsequent years, however, he anticipated that the amount would be slightly lower. The final audit fee would be paid in 2023/24. He added that the auditors' rates had recently increased, and normally the figure would have been in the region of £200-£250k.

With regard to any potential council tax increase, how much income would each additional percentage point increase in council tax generate for the Council?

The SBC Head of Financial Management stated that each percentage point was equivalent to approximately £650m and therefore a 5% increase in council tax would generate £3m.

The Council's main financial thrust was the sale of its assets and repayment of its loans. If, the Council did not sell its assets or income from those sales was lower than anticipated, how would this be dealt with?

The SBC Head of Financial Management stated that the sale of assets was not the entire thrust of the Council's financial strategy. There were also significant annual savings targets - £22m savings for next year and £14m for

subsequent years, eventually reducing down to £8m. The recent sale of the Akzo Nobel site for £140m provided confidence and assurance that the asset disposal strategy was on track.

A Member speaking under Rule 30 asked what the total value of asset sales to date amounted to and whether this had any impact on the MRP. He also asked if other means of income generation, such as car park charges, had been explored.

The SBC Head of Financial Management advised that the figure was £162m for the current year. Modelling had been carried out on the overall target and therefore any impact on the MRP would not have been assessed. A certain profile had been set in terms of generating savings in coming years, it would therefore be challenging to try deliver all those in a single year. Other areas such as the Council's Estates were being looked at with a view to income generation, and would be reported on in due course.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

24. Place & Communities and Housing & Property budget proposals 2023/24

The SBC Executive Director of Place and Communities presented the report Place and Communities and Housing and Property Budget proposals 2023/24.

Members asked the questions below and received the following responses.

How short of staff were the housing repairs and the leaseholders teams? He had received numerous complaints from residents about not being able to contact staff in either team.

The SBC Executive Director advised that the housing repairs team consisted of the contractor team and the client team. Currently the client team was at 40% of the capacity it needed. The contractor's performance was improving. The leaseholder team had been reduced to no staff with interims put in place. The new housing management system would help alleviate some of the pressure. It was important to strike a balance between recruiting additional staff and implementing more effective processes.

The SBC Executive Director, Property & Housing stated that there was a recruitment drive to fill vacant posts and the management structure was being consolidated. He added that budget pressures on the HRA (Housing Revenue Account) was not as acute as that on the general fund. New staff had been recruited to the Estate Management team, but there were market challenges to contend with.

Was Slough charged for the use of the household waste and recycling centre at Langley? The SBC Executive Director of Place and Communities confirmed that Slough paid a management and a tonnage fee to Buckinghamshire for the use of the Langley and Burnham sites. The cost was

Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel - 07.12.22

£155 per ton. Charges would be introduced at the Chalvey site to mirror the Bucks charges.

How likely was it that the shortfall in the savings targets would be achieved?

The SBC Executive Director of Place and Communities stated that the shortfall related to earlier plans to lease parts of Observatory House or to sell it. These plans had not been implemented and were under review. The shortfall also related to the leisure management fee, which was significantly lower than anticipated following a negotiated settlement with the provider.

Had any targets been set for the green waste collection charges?

The SBC Executive Director of Place and Communities stated that the green waste scheme had been implemented in 2022 but no targets been set. The take up rate in other authorities was in the region of 50-65% of households. He made the point that if residents did not take up the scheme then this would reduce collection costs. Take up levels would be more apparent from spring of 2023.

A Member pointed out that there were some errors in the figures in the final column on slide 44 and that he had raised similar issues at previous scrutiny meetings. The Director of Finance apologised and stated revised figures would be circulated.

Following a question, the Executive Director advised that every local authority by law had to have a household waste recycling centre, which would be free for local residents. There had been no traffic-related issues at the recycling sites for some years.

The Executive Director, Property and Housing stated that a number of different options were being explored with regard to Observatory house.

Would short term savings by reducing highways maintenance lead to greater expense further down the line? The Executive Director of Place and Communities stated that this would need to be reviewed as and when.

Following a question about making savings by reducing street lighting, he stated that this topic was being further explored and would be reported on at a future meeting.

Was the service for the number 4 bus being reduced?

An officer advised that the number 4 bus service was being reduced in the evenings and weekends. The number 6 bus service was being withdrawn on Sundays and public holidays. The number 5 bus service would continue operating, albeit on a shorter route, and that this may be supplemented by another provider. Negotiations were ongoing with Heathrow airport and all the other operators to maintain these routes.

Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel - 07.12.22

The proposed cuts to subsidies for bus services went against what had been agreed at previous scrutiny meetings.

An officer stated that there was significant decline in bus use nationally due to high costs. Bus use currently stood at 65%. This meant large subsidies to bus companies were no longer feasible. Nevertheless, modal shift continued to be a Council priority. He added that E-scooters and bikes were becoming increasingly popular.

He added that the future of the bus lane was under review as part of a range of different measures. There was a proposal to roll out an A-4 cycle way and Slough had been awarded £10.5m for this. If public transport use continued to decline, bus companies may decide to withdraw unprofitable services. Following another question, he advised that there was no change to the eligibility criteria for receiving concessionary bus passes.

Following a question, an officer confirmed that existing CPZs would be expanded out and resident parking permit charges, which had remained static for a number of years, would be increased. Charges for road closures for commercial or utility works, were being reviewed and would also be increased.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

25. Members' Attendance Record

Resolved – That the attendance record be noted.

26. Date of Next Meeting - 11th January 2023

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.10 pm)

BUDGET SCRUTINY 2023/24 PLACE & COMMUNITIES

1 FEBRUARY 2023

Page 7

AGENDA ITEM 4

OVERVIEW

- In December 2022, the Place & Communities Directorate presented a combined total value of savings for financial year 2023/24 of **£3.272m**. (£3.822m less 0.550m from Housing & Property)
- Following continued efforts to build upon these, the Directorate has subsequently identified a further **£0.506m** of savings to add to the above.
- Thus the total position for the Place & Communities Directorate in respect of 2023/24 savings is now **£3.778m**
- The following slides set out further detail on the additional savings identified since December's scrutiny sessions
- EIAs have been prepared and made available in respect of all proposals

2023/24 – BUDGET SAVINGS PROPOSALS (1)

The following savings proposals have been put forward for delivery to further contribute towards the 2023/24 budget target:

Libraries - £0.276m (subject to agreement at February Cabinet)

- A library service will be provided at the 4 current library locations for an average of 141 hrs/wk (was 152hrs/wk) **BUT** will be predominantly self service **AND** supervision of library areas will be in part provided as part of the duties of non library staff. There is a dependency on collaborative support from: -
 - Facilities Officers at the Curve
 - Facilities Officers and Customer Services Assistants at Britwell

- The £276k saving will be achieved by deleting vacant library staff posts.

2023/24 – BUDGET SAVINGS PROPOSALS (2)

Stop Public Facing CCTV - £105k

- Contributions from Careline and internal recharges stop on 31 March 2023 giving no income to offset the £630k needed to run the Councils current 24/7/365 CCTV Control room in 2023/24.
- Subject to agreement at February Cabinet: -
 - Responsibility for public facing CCTV will pass from Slough Borough Council to Thames Valley Police on 1 April 2023
 - Internal facing CCTV at SBC buildings, depots and on-board vehicle cameras will be recorded footage only and will be managed by officers within relevant services as part of their existing duties
 - £105k of the £630k savings resulting from discontinuing our CCTV room will be a budget saving. The remainder would be an overspend if we continued to operate the current service

2023/24 – BUDGET SAVINGS PROPOSALS (3)

Dim Street Lighting and Park Lighting - £0.025k

- Dimming of lights reduces units of electricity consumed. Lights are currently set at c75% capacity BUT each light column can be adjusted separately and there may be the opportunity to reduce electricity further without undue detriment.
- Subject to agreement by Significant Decision in January 2023: -
 - Trials will be carried out by officers in February and March 2023 to test what further dimming may be accommodated at which locations
 - A further paper will be brought to Cabinet in June 2023 to discuss the findings and to recommend action to be taken
 - In the interim a notional target of £25k has been set

2023/24 – BUDGET SAVINGS PROPOSALS (4)

Delete unneeded vacant AD post - £0.100m

➤ The post of AD Place Regulation will merge with the vacant post of AD Community and be renamed AD Community & Public Protection. It follows that the Place & Communities directorate will now have 2 ADs, rather than 3, namely: -

- AD Place Operations
- AD Community & Public Protection

The Directorate has also put forward proposals for price increases as part of the Fees and Charges report which went to Cabinet on 16 January, details of which can be found within [the report](#).

2023/24 – BUDGET PROPOSALS SUMMARY

Ref. No.	Saving title	2023/24 Saving (£m)
	TOTAL VALUE OF PROPOSALS PRESENTED IN DEC 2022	3.272
	Libraries *	0.276
	Stop Public Facing CCTV	0.105
	Dim Street Lighting & Park Lighting *	0.025
	Deletion of unneeded vacant posts	0.100
	UPDATED TOTAL VALUE OF 2023/24 SAVINGS	3.778

*The savings marked with an asterisk have been assessed to require a full EIA

CONSULTATION

The following proposals have been assessed to require a consultation:

➤ **Libraries**

- A public consultation was undertaken between October 2021 and January 2022. This included an online questionnaire, a brief survey contained within a wider consultation booklet, a number of focus groups and drop-in sessions. It was used to inform the Cabinet Paper of 21 March 2022 and will also be used to inform the Cabinet Paper 17 February 2023

**Consolidated Pack of EIAs
Place and Community Directorate
Budget Savings 2023/24
Scrutiny Meeting 1/02/2023**

The following pages contain the EIA assessments of the proposals being put forward by the Place and Community Directorate. Below is an index of each proposal and the pages on which the EIA for each proposal appears.

Proposal reference	Proposal name	Page number
PL-2324-05	Dim Street lighting and park lighting	2 – 8
PL-2324-19	2023-24 Library Service model	9 – 17
PL-2324-46	Stop SBC funded CCTV Monitoring of public spaces	18 – 24
PL-2324-59	Delete Unneeded Vacant AD Post	25 – 31
	RAG rating guide	32

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

SUMMARY RAG RATING

The outcome of this EIA has been assessed to be:	
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SECTION 1:

Title	PL-2324-05 - Dim Street lighting and park lighting
What are you analysing? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the policy/project/activity/strategy looking to achieve? Who is it intended to benefit? Are any specific groups targeted by this decision? What results are intended? 	The intention is that SBC make an energy & cost avoidance saving across the borough by dimming street lighting and park lighting. Residents walking the streets and through the parks after midnight and before sun rise may feel less safe with reduced lighting. Possible risks include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in crime and disorder. Increase in road traffic safety concerns. Increase in perception of lack of safety. Whilst a saving can be made, there are potential impacts and community concern.
Date sent to Finance	29.07.2022
Version number and date of update	V8 – 12/01/2023

SECTION 2: Do you need to complete a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)?

Not all proposals will require a full EIA, the assessment of impacts should be proportionate to the nature of the project/policy in question and its likely impact. To decide on the level of detail of the assessment required consider the potential impact on persons with protected characteristics.

2.1	Please provide an overview of who uses/will use your service or facility and identify who are likely to be impacted by the proposal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>If you do not formally collect data about a particular group then use the results of local surveys or consultations, census data, national trends or anecdotal evidence (indicate where this is the case). Please attempt to complete all boxes.</i> <i>Consider whether there is a need to consult stakeholders and the public, including members of protected groups, in order to gather information on potential impacts of the proposal</i>
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	Equality Characteristic	Current or expected make up of service users	Over-represented or Under-represented relative to overall size in local population?
	Gender	All	Yes
	Ethnicity	All	No
	Disability	All	Yes
	Sexual orientation	All	No
	Age	All	Yes
	Religion or belief	All	No
	Gender Identity	All	No
	Pregnancy/Maternity	All	No
	Marriage/Civil Partnership	All	No
<p>2.2 Are there any groups with protected characteristic that are overrepresented in the monitoring information relative to their size of the population? If so, this could indicate that the proposal may have a disproportionate impact on this group even if it is a universal service.</p>	<p>The Elderly/Disabled population could be affected by the dimming of street lighting however, due to the nature of this group and the time periods that are involved i.e. late evening to the early hours of the morning; most of this group are more likely to be in their properties at the associated times. In the summer periods the impact on dimming will be reduced due to the brighter days and so again the dimming is unlikely to affect them when it is implemented. Disabled groups specifically partially sighted could be affected with reduced lighting levels and this will be assessed in the trial and feedback.</p> <p>Female Gender groups are likely to be affected through perceived safety issues with dimmed lighting levels. A review with Thames Valley Police and key stakeholders will contribute to where lighting levels may have to remain the same.</p>		
<p>2.3 Are there any groups with protected characteristics that are underrepresented in the monitoring information relative to their size of the population? If so, this could indicate that the service may not be accessible to all groups or there may be some form</p>	<p>N/a</p>		

of direct or indirect discrimination occurring.

2.4 Does the project, policy or proposal have the potential to disproportionately impact on people with a protected characteristic? If so, is the impact positive or negative?

	None	Positive	Negative	Not sure
Men or women	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People of a particular race or ethnicity (including refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and gypsies and travellers)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disabled ¹ people (consider different types of physical, learning or mental disabilities)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People of particular sexual orientation/s	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in particular age groups (consider in particular children, under 21s and over 65s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People who are intending to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process or part of a process of gender reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Impact due to pregnancy/ maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People of particular faiths and beliefs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People on low incomes*	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

***People with in some equality groups are more likely to be on low incomes (e.g. single parents (mainly women), people with disabilities, some ethnic minority groups etc). This is especially important when you are looking at fees, charges and access to services.**

If any of the answers to the questions above is, “negative” or “unclear” you will need to undertake a detailed impact assessment.

2.5 Based on your responses, should a full, detailed EIA be carried out on the project, policy or proposal

Yes No

¹ Disability discrimination is different from other types of discrimination since it includes the duty to make reasonable adjustments.

2.6	Provide brief reasons on how you have come to this decision?
	Changes to lighting levels could affect a number of protected groups, there is insufficient information to say whether this is a real risk or a perceived risk and therefore a trial and engagement with key stakeholders will help in identifying the real impacts on the communities.

If the answer in 2.5 above is “No” then sections 3 and 4 are not required to be completed.

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SECTION 3: ASSESSING THE IMPACT

In order to be able to identify ways to mitigate any potential impact it is essential that we know what those potential impacts might be. Using the evidence gathered in section 2, explain what the potential impact of your proposal might be on the groups you have identified. You may wish to further supplement the evidence you have gathered using the table below in order to properly consider the impact.

Protected Group		Positive impact?			Negative impact? If so, please specify the nature and extent of that impact	No specific impact	If the impact is negative how can it be mitigated? Please specify any mitigation measures and how and when they will be implemented	What , if any, are the cumulative effects of this decision when viewed in the context of other Council decisions and their equality impacts
		Eliminate discrimination	Advance equality	Good relations				
Gender	Men						It is expected that both men and women could be affected by dimming of lights.	
	Women				✓			
Race	White					✓		
	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups					✓		
	Asian/Asian British					✓		
	Black/African/Caribbean/Black British					✓		
	Gypsies / travellers						✓	
	Other ethnic group						✓	
Disability	Physical					✓		
	Sensory				✓		Residents with a visual impairment will be more adversely affected	
	Learning Difficulties					✓		
	Learning Disabilities					✓		

	Mental Health					✓	
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Protected Group		Positive impact?			Negative impact?	No specific impact	What will the impact be? If the impact is negative how can it be mitigated? (action)	What are the cumulative of effects
		Eliminate discrimination	Advance equality	Good relations				
Sexual Orientation	Lesbian, gay men, bisexual					✓		
Age	Older people (50+)				✓			
	Younger people (16 - 25)					✓		
	Children (under 16)					✓		
Gender Reassignment						✓		
Impact due to pregnancy/maternity						✓		
Groups with particular faiths and beliefs						✓		
People on low incomes						✓		

SECTION 4: ACTION PLAN

4.1 Complete the action plan if you need to reduce or remove the negative impacts you have identified, take steps to foster good relations or fill data gaps.

Please include the action required by your team/unit, groups affected, the intended outcome of your action, resources needed, a lead person responsible for undertaking the action (inc. their department and contact details), the completion date for the action, and the relevant RAG rating: R(ed) – action not initiated, A(mber) – action initiated and in progress, G(reen) – action complete.

NB. Add any additional rows, if required.

Action Required	Equality Groups Targeted	Intended outcome	Resources Needed	Name of Lead, Unit & Contact Details	Completion Date (DD/MM/YY)	RAG
Check with the RNIB on any associated risks	Visually impaired					
Check if this is a perception issue	Female groups					
Check likely percentage of elderly residents out and about during the hours of operation	Elderly					
<i>Enter additional rows if required</i>						

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

SUMMARY RAG RATING

The outcome of this EIA has been assessed to be:	
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SECTION 1:

Title	PL-2324-19 – 2023-24 Library Service Model
What are you analysing? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the policy/project/activity/strategy looking to achieve? • Who is it intended to benefit? Are any specific groups targeted by this decision? • What results are intended? 	<p>Four building(s) with a library area within them will be provided for 141 hrs per week (was 152 hrs/wk) but will be predominantly self-service so only be attended by Library staff some of the time. Facilities Officers and Customer Services staff will be present in when library staff are not in attendance to oversee library areas.</p> <p>This savings plan will need cabinet approval. A paper is being prepared for 27 February Cabinet which will include a full EIA</p>
Date sent to Finance	04/11/2022
Version number and date of update	V4 – 11/01/2023

SECTION 2: Do you need to complete a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)?

Not all proposals will require a full EIA, the assessment of impacts should be proportionate to the nature of the project/policy in question and its likely impact. To decide on the level of detail of the assessment required consider the potential impact on persons with protected characteristics.

2.1	<p>Please provide an overview of who uses/will use your service or facility and identify who are likely to be impacted by the proposal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>If you do not formally collect data about a particular group then use the results of local surveys or consultations, census data, national trends or anecdotal evidence (indicate where this is the case). Please attempt to complete all boxes.</i> <i>Consider whether there is a need to consult stakeholders and the public, including members of protected groups, in order to gather information on potential impacts of the proposal</i> 		
	Equality Characteristic	Current or expected make up of service users	Over-represented or Under-represented relative to overall size in local population?
	Gender	55% library members are female 45% of library members are male	No Slough population 49% female 51% male
	Ethnicity	No data collected. Anecdotal information from staff suggests most users are BAME and White British/White other.	No Slough population BAME 54%
	Disability	No data collected.	Unknown
	Sexual orientation	No data collected.	Unknown
	Age	Library members aged 0 – 10 y/o = 20.6% Library members aged 11 – 13 y/o = 9.2% Library members aged 14 – 17 y/o = 7.6% SUB TOTAL = 37.4% Library members aged 18 – 59 y/o = 58.7% Library members aged 60 y/o + = 3.6%	Young people are over-represented in library membership data. Slough population 0 – 17 = 29%
	Religion or belief	No data collected.	Unknown

	Gender Identity	No data collected.	Unknown		
	Pregnancy/Maternity	No data collected.	Unknown		
	Marriage/Civil Partnership	No data collected.	Unknown		
2.2 Are there any groups with protected characteristic that are overrepresented in the monitoring information relative to their size of the population? <i>If so, this could indicate that the proposal may have a disproportionate impact on this group even if it is a universal service.</i>	Children and young people aged under 18 are over-represented in library membership data compared to the general Slough population.				
2.3 Are there any groups with protected characteristics that are underrepresented in the monitoring information relative to their size of the population? <i>If so, this could indicate that the service may not be accessible to all groups or there may be some form of direct or indirect discrimination occurring.</i>	No, not from available data.				
2.4	Does the project, policy or proposal have the potential to disproportionately impact on people with a protected characteristic? If so, is the impact positive or negative?				
		None	Positive	Negative	Not sure
	Men or women	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
	People of a particular race or ethnicity (including refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and gypsies and travellers)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disabled ² people (consider different types of physical, learning or mental disabilities)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
	People of particular sexual orientation/s	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

² Disability discrimination is different from other types of discrimination since it includes the duty to make reasonable adjustments.

People in particular age groups (consider in particular children, under 21s and over 65s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
People who are intending to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process or part of a process of gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Impact due to pregnancy/ maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
People of particular faiths and beliefs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
People on low incomes*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>

***People with in some equality groups are more likely to be on low incomes (e.g. single parents (mainly women), people with disabilities, some ethnic minority groups etc). This is especially important when you are looking at fees, charges and access to services.**

If any of the answers to the questions above is, “negative” or “unclear” you will need to undertake a detailed impact assessment.

2.5	Based on your responses, should a full, detailed EIA be carried out on the project, policy or proposal
	Yes X No <input type="checkbox"/>
2.6	Provide brief reasons on how you have come to this decision?
	<p>Children and young people will be disproportionately affected as they are over-represented in the library membership data. Women predominantly take a caring role within families, including caring for children and heading lone parent households – the impact on children and young people will, therefore, have a disproportionate impact on women.</p> <p>Libraries are a universal service, free at the point of use. Although data is not collected on household income or claiming of welfare benefits for library users, there is a reasonable assumption made that low-income households would make more use of this free to use service than middle/high income households and BAME, lone parent and disabled people are disproportionately represented in lower-income households.</p>

If the answer in 2.5 above is “No” then sections 3 and 4 are not required to be completed.

SECTION 3: ASSESSING THE IMPACT

In order to be able to identify ways to mitigate any potential impact it is essential that we know what those potential impacts might be. Using the evidence gathered in section 2, explain what the potential impact of your proposal might be on the groups you have identified. You may wish to further supplement the evidence you have gathered using the table below in order to properly consider the impact.

Protected Group		Positive impact?			Negative impact? If so, please specify the nature and extent of that impact	No specific impact	If the impact is negative how can it be mitigated? Please specify any mitigation measures and how and when they will be implemented	What , if any, are the cumulative effects of this decision when viewed in the context of other Council decisions and their equality impacts
		Eliminate discrimination	Advance equality	Good relations				
Gender	Men					✓		
	Women				✓		<p><u>Impact:</u> Women are predominately primary paid and unpaid carers of others and are disproportionately over-represented in single parent households.</p> <p><u>Action:</u> Planning of community-based activity to promote literacy will take lone parents and carers into consideration. This will include times, locations of events and publicity.</p>	
Race	White				✓		See comments about low income	
	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups				✓		See comments about low income	
	Asian/Asian British				✓		See comments about low income	

	Black/African/Caribbean/ Black British				✓		See comments about low income	
	Gypsies / travellers				✓		See comments about low income	
	Other ethnic group				✓		See comments about low income	
Disability	Physical				✓		See comments about low income	
	Sensory				✓		See comments about low income	
	Learning Difficulties				✓		See comments about low income	
	Learning Disabilities				✓		See comments about low income	
	Mental Health				✓		<p><u>Impact:</u> Anecdotally, library staff advise that people with mental health issues (especially low level issues such as anxiety) make use of libraries as safe places to socialise and interact, reducing social isolation and loneliness.</p> <p><u>Action:</u> Library Service to work with partners to promote other services from operating from library buildings which may allow informal socialising to still take place. Recruitment of volunteers may also</p>	

							support activities that can reduce social isolation.	
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Protected Group		Positive impact?			Negative impact?	No specific impact	What will the impact be? If the impact is negative how can it be mitigated? (action)	What are the cumulative of effects
		Eliminate discrimination	Advance equality	Good relations				
Sexual Orientation	Lesbian, gay men, bisexual					✓		
Age	Older people (50+)					✓		
	Younger people (16 - 25)					✓		
	Children (under 16)				✓		<p><u>Impact:</u> 70% of all loans are from children’s library. Reducing physical access to these resources will negatively impact children and young people in relation to instilling a love of literacy at a young age.</p> <p><u>Action:</u> Library Service to develop events and activities attract children, young people and their carers, including working with early-years provision and schools.</p>	
Gender Reassignment						✓		
Impact due to pregnancy/maternity					✓		See impact on women and children.	
Groups with particular faiths and beliefs						✓		

<p>People on low incomes</p>				<p>✓</p>	<p>Library services are a universal statutory service free at the point of use. Although we don't collect evidence about socio-economic status of library users, we assume that with the impending cost of living crises, private, discretionary spending on books will reduce and if libraries are not easily accessible this may impact on the literacy levels of people on low incomes.</p>	
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DO NOT COPY

SECTION 4: ACTION PLAN

4.1 Complete the action plan if you need to reduce or remove the negative impacts you have identified, take steps to foster good relations or fill data gaps.

Please include the action required by your team/unit, groups affected, the intended outcome of your action, resources needed, a lead person responsible for undertaking the action (inc. their department and contact details), the completion date for the action, and the relevant RAG rating: R(ed) – action not initiated, A(mber) – action initiated and in progress, G(reen) – action complete.

NB. Add any additional rows, if required.

Action Required	Equality Groups Targeted	Intended outcome	Resources Needed	Name of Lead, Unit & Contact Details	Completion Date (DD/MM/YY)	RAG
Planning and timetabling of community events.	Women Children Low income Pregnancy/Maternity Mental Health	Ensure events are programmed at times/locations that are accessible to these groups.	Staff and volunteers	Liz Jones – GM Localities, Learning and Neighbourhoods	TBC	
Recruit volunteers to support programme delivery	All	Increase accessibility of library services to all sections of community.	Staff	Liz Jones – GM Localities, Learning and Neighbourhoods	TBC	
<i>Enter additional rows if required</i>						

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EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

SUMMARY RAG RATING

The outcome of this EIA has been assessed to be:	
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SECTION 1:

Title	PL-2324-46 - Stop SBC funded CCTV Monitoring of public spaces
What are you analysing? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the policy/project/activity/strategy looking to achieve? Who is it intended to benefit? Are any specific groups targeted by this decision? What results are intended? 	<p>Public facing CCTV will continue to be provided but it will become the responsibility of Thames Valley Police with effect from 1 April 2023. There may be an interim period where TVP pay for SBC to continue to provide public facing CCTV until they are ready to mobilise their new system.</p> <p>The service will continue so there is no impact on residents. CCTV is likely to support certain groups more than others for instance younger people may be at more risk of knife crime or gang crime, women and girls may be at more risk of violent crime and certain ethnicities may be more at risk of crime in a public place</p> <p>There may be a TUPE transfer of staff depending on the nature of the new service provided by TVP. If not, then CCTV staff will be at risk of redundancy and the SBC HR policies will be followed to bring about redeployment wherever possible.</p>
Date sent to Finance	6/10/2022
Version number and date of update	V4 – 05/01/2023

SECTION 2: Do you need to complete a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)?

Not all proposals will require a full EIA, the assessment of impacts should be proportionate to the nature of the project/policy in question and its likely impact. To decide on the level of detail of the assessment required consider the potential impact on persons with protected characteristics.

2.1	<p>Please provide an overview of who uses/will use your service or facility and identify who are likely to be impacted by the proposal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>If you do not formally collect data about a particular group then use the results of local surveys or consultations, census data, national trends or anecdotal evidence (indicate where this is the case). Please attempt to complete all boxes.</i> <i>Consider whether there is a need to consult stakeholders and the public, including members of protected groups, in order to gather information on potential impacts of the proposal</i> 		
	Equality Characteristic	Current or expected make up of service users	Over-represented or Under-represented relative to overall size in local population?
	Gender	There are no specific service users – CCTV monitors whomever passes through the areas of coverage	Slough population 49% female 51% male
	Ethnicity		Slough population BAME 54%
	Disability		9.9% of adult Slough residents report they live with a disability
	Sexual orientation		Slough population Heterosexual: 95.2% Homosexual: 0.6% Bisexual: 0.6% Other: 0.4% Don't know/refuse: 3.1%
	Age		Slough population 24% under 15 77% over 15
	Religion or belief		Slough population Buddhist 0.5% Christian 41.2% Hindu 6.2% Jewish 0.1% Muslim 23.3% Other religion 0.3% Sikh 10.6%
	Gender Identity		Unknown

	Pregnancy/Maternity		Unknown
	Marriage/Civil Partnership		Unknown
<p>2.2 Are there any groups with protected characteristic that are overrepresented in the monitoring information relative to their size of the population? If so, this could indicate that the proposal may have a disproportionate impact on this group even if it is a universal service.</p>	<p>Given that there will be a change in provider from SBC to TVP, there may be a perception amongst some of the protected characteristic groups that crime and being at risk may increase. This in current times may be particularly pertinent to women and girls and young people generally. A communications campaign will set out what we are doing and why and provide assurance that a public facing CCTV service will continue to be provided by the Police directly rather than via Slough Borough Council.</p> <p>Thames Valley Police remain of the view that CCTV coverage of public spaces within Slough is an essential tool in the prevention and detection of crime in the Borough. Information provided by Thames Valley Police indicates that whilst CCTV is a deterrent for crime to take place and provides public reassurance of safety in all areas, the evidence indicates that CCTV is most effective in car parks, housing complexes and residential areas. It is less effective in preventing crime in town or city centres.</p> <p>Live CCTV coverage can have a part to play in deploying police to prevent crime from occurring. Recorded CCTV footage is used as evidence to support the investigation of crime which has been committed and to help bring perpetrators to justice.</p>		
<p>2.3 Are there any groups with protected characteristics that are underrepresented in the monitoring information relative to their size of the population? If so, this could indicate that the service may not be accessible to all groups or there may be some form of direct or indirect discrimination occurring.</p>	<p>CCTV monitors whomever passes through the areas of coverage, no analysis is carried out as to which groups pass through the areas of coverage.</p>		
<p>2.4</p>	<p>Does the project, policy or proposal have the potential to disproportionately impact on people with a protected characteristic? If so, is the impact positive or negative?</p>		

	None	Positive	Negative	Not sure
Men or women	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People of a particular race or ethnicity (including refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and gypsies and travellers)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disabled ³ people (consider different types of physical, learning or mental disabilities)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People of particular sexual orientation/s	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in particular age groups (consider in particular children, under 21s and over 65s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People who are intending to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process or part of a process of gender reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Impact due to pregnancy/ maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People of particular faiths and beliefs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People on low incomes*	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.5	Based on your responses, should a full, detailed EIA be carried out on the project, policy or proposal
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2.6	Provide brief reasons on how you have come to this decision?
	<p>Public facing CCTV will continue to be provided but it will become the responsibility of Thames Valley Police with effect from 1 April 2023. There may be an interim period where TVP pay for SBC to continue to provide public facing CCTV until they are ready to mobilise their new system.</p> <p>Other CCTV monitoring is for Council buildings, depots, and on-board vehicle cameras. This will continue, with no material changes, but will be provided by individual Council services rather than through a central CCTV team.</p>

If the answer in 2.5 above is “No” then sections 3 and 4 are not required to be completed.

³ Disability discrimination is different from other types of discrimination since it includes the duty to make reasonable adjustments.

SECTION 3: ASSESSING THE IMPACT

In order to be able to identify ways to mitigate any potential impact it is essential that we know what those potential impacts might be. Using the evidence gathered in section 2, explain what the potential impact of your proposal might be on the groups you have identified. You may wish to further supplement the evidence you have gathered using the table below in order to properly consider the impact.

Protected Group		Positive impact?			Negative impact? If so, please specify the nature and extent of that impact	No specific impact	If the impact is negative how can it be mitigated? Please specify any mitigation measures and how and when they will be implemented	What , if any, are the cumulative effects of this decision when viewed in the context of other Council decisions and their equality impacts
		Eliminate discrimination	Advance equality	Good relations				
Gender	Men							
	Women							
Race	White							
	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups							
	Asian/Asian British							
	Black/African/Caribbean/ Black British							
	Gypsies / travellers							
	Other ethnic group							
Disability	Physical							
	Sensory							
	Learning Difficulties							
	Learning Disabilities							
	Mental Health							

Protected Group		Positive impact?			Negative impact?	No specific impact	What will the impact be? If the impact is negative how can it be mitigated? (action)	What are the cumulative of effects
		Eliminate discrimination	Advance equality	Good relations				
Sexual Orientation	Lesbian, gay men, bisexual							
Age	Older people (50+)							
	Younger people (16 - 25)							
	Children (under 16)							
Gender Reassignment								
Impact due to pregnancy/maternity								
Groups with particular faiths and beliefs								
People on low incomes								

SECTION 4: ACTION PLAN

4.1 Complete the action plan if you need to reduce or remove the negative impacts you have identified, take steps to foster good relations or fill data gaps.

Please include the action required by your team/unit, groups affected, the intended outcome of your action, resources needed, a lead person responsible for undertaking the action (inc. their department and contact details), the completion date for the action, and the relevant RAG rating: R(ed) – action not initiated, A(mber) – action initiated and in progress, G(reen) – action complete.

NB. Add any additional rows, if required.

Action Required	Equality Groups Targeted	Intended outcome	Resources Needed	Name of Lead, Unit & Contact Details	Completion Date (DD/MM/YY)	RAG
<i>Enter additional rows if required</i>						

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

SUMMARY RAG RATING

The outcome of this EIA has been assessed to be:	
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SECTION 1:

Title	PL-2324-59 – Delete Unneeded Vacant AD Post
What are you analysing? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the policy/project/activity/strategy looking to achieve? Who is it intended to benefit? Are any specific groups targeted by this decision? What results are intended? 	Consolidation and reduction of work within the Customer & Communities directorate means that we can operate with 2 Associate Director portfolios rather than 3. It was initially intended to have 3 ADs, namely: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AD Place Operations AD Place Regulation AD Community This proposal will merge the post of AD Place Regulation with the post of AD Community and rename the post AD Community & Public Protection. It follows that the Place & Communities directorate will now have 2 ADs, namely: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AD Place Operations AD Community & Public Protection
Date sent to Finance	17/01/2023
Version number and date of update	V1 – 17/01/2023

SECTION 2: Do you need to complete a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)?

Not all proposals will require a full EIA, the assessment of impacts should be proportionate to the nature of the project/policy in question and its likely impact. To decide on the level of detail of the assessment required consider the potential impact on persons with protected characteristics.

2.1	Please provide an overview of who uses/will use your service or facility and identify who are likely to be impacted by the proposal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>If you do not formally collect data about a particular group then use the results of local surveys or consultations, census data, national trends or anecdotal evidence (indicate where this is the case). Please attempt to complete all boxes.</i>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider whether there is a need to consult stakeholders and the public, including members of protected groups, in order to gather information on potential impacts of the proposal 																															
	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 30%;">Equality Characteristic</th> <th style="width: 30%;">Current or expected make up of service users</th> <th style="width: 40%;">Over-represented or Under-represented relative to overall size in local population?</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Gender</td> <td>N/A</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ethnicity</td> <td>N/A</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Disability</td> <td>N/A</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sexual orientation</td> <td>N/A</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Age</td> <td>N/A</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Religion or belief</td> <td>N/A</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gender Identity</td> <td>N/A</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pregnancy/Maternity</td> <td>N/A</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Marriage/Civil Partnership</td> <td>N/A</td> <td>No</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Equality Characteristic	Current or expected make up of service users	Over-represented or Under-represented relative to overall size in local population?	Gender	N/A	No	Ethnicity	N/A	No	Disability	N/A	No	Sexual orientation	N/A	No	Age	N/A	No	Religion or belief	N/A	No	Gender Identity	N/A	No	Pregnancy/Maternity	N/A	No	Marriage/Civil Partnership	N/A	No
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Gender	N/A	No																													
Ethnicity	N/A	No																													
Disability	N/A	No																													
Sexual orientation	N/A	No																													
Age	N/A	No																													
Religion or belief	N/A	No																													
Gender Identity	N/A	No																													
Pregnancy/Maternity	N/A	No																													
Marriage/Civil Partnership	N/A	No																													
<p>2.2 Are there any groups with protected characteristic that are overrepresented in the monitoring information relative to their size of the population? <i>If so, this could indicate that the proposal may have a disproportionate impact on this group even if it is a universal service.</i></p>	<p>No</p>																														
<p>2.3 Are there any groups with protected characteristics that are underrepresented in the monitoring information relative to their size of the population? <i>If so, this</i></p>	<p>No</p>																														

could indicate that the service may not be accessible to all groups or there may be some form of direct or indirect discrimination occurring.

2.4 Does the project, policy or proposal have the potential to disproportionately impact on people with a protected characteristic? If so, is the impact positive or negative?

	None	Positive	Negative	Not sure
Men or women	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People of a particular race or ethnicity (including refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and gypsies and travellers)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disabled ⁴ people (consider different types of physical, learning or mental disabilities)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People of particular sexual orientation/s	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People in particular age groups (consider in particular children, under 21s and over 65s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People who are intending to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process or part of a process of gender reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Impact due to pregnancy/ maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People of particular faiths and beliefs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People on low incomes*	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

***People with in some equality groups are more likely to be on low incomes (e.g. single parents (mainly women), people with disabilities, some ethnic minority groups etc). This is especially important when you are looking at fees, charges and access to services.**

If any of the answers to the questions above is, “negative” or “unclear” you will need to undertake a detailed impact assessment.

2.5 Based on your responses, should a full, detailed EIA be carried out on the project, policy or proposal

⁴ Disability discrimination is different from other types of discrimination since it includes the duty to make reasonable adjustments.

	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2.6	Provide brief reasons on how you have come to this decision?
	A detailed EIA is not required as there are no impacts on residents. This savings plan will simply delete an unneeded vacant Associate Director post

If the answer in 2.5 above is “No” then sections 3 and 4 are not required to be completed.

SECTION 3: ASSESSING THE IMPACT

In order to be able to identify ways to mitigate any potential impact it is essential that we know what those potential impacts might be. Using the evidence gathered in section 2, explain what the potential impact of your proposal might be on the groups you have identified. You may wish to further supplement the evidence you have gathered using the table below in order to properly consider the impact.

Protected Group		Positive impact?			Negative impact? If so, please specify the nature and extent of that impact	No specific impact	If the impact is negative how can it be mitigated? Please specify any mitigation measures and how and when they will be implemented	What , if any, are the cumulative effects of this decision when viewed in the context of other Council decisions and their equality impacts
		Eliminate discrimination	Advance equality	Good relations				
Gender	Men							
	Women							
Race	White							
	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups							
	Asian/Asian British							
	Black/African/Caribbean/ Black British							
	Gypsies / travellers							
	Other ethnic group							
Disability	Physical							
	Sensory							
	Learning Difficulties							
	Learning Disabilities							
	Mental Health							

Protected Group		Positive impact?			Negative impact?	No specific impact	What will the impact be? If the impact is negative how can it be mitigated? (action)	What are the cumulative of effects
		Eliminate discrimination	Advance equality	Good relations				
Sexual Orientation	Lesbian, gay men, bisexual							
Age	Older people (50+)							
	Younger people (16 - 25)							
	Children (under 16)							
Gender Reassignment								
Impact due to pregnancy/maternity								
Groups with particular faiths and beliefs								
People on low incomes								

SECTION 4: ACTION PLAN

4.1 Complete the action plan if you need to reduce or remove the negative impacts you have identified, take steps to foster good relations or fill data gaps.

Please include the action required by your team/unit, groups affected, the intended outcome of your action, resources needed, a lead person responsible for undertaking the action (inc. their department and contact details), the completion date for the action, and the relevant RAG rating: R(ed) – action not initiated, A(mber) – action initiated and in progress, G(reen) – action complete.

NB. Add any additional rows, if required.

Action Required	Equality Groups Targeted	Intended outcome	Resources Needed	Name of Lead, Unit & Contact Details	Completion Date (DD/MM/YY)	RAG
<i>Enter additional rows if required</i>						

Appendix A**Equality Impact Assessment Decision Rating Guide****PLEASE SEE PAGE 1 FOR THE RATING OF THIS PROPOSAL**

Decision	Action	Risk
As a result of performing the EIA, there is a risk that a disproportionately negative impact (direct, indirect, unintentional or otherwise) exists to one or more of the nine groups of people who share a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. It is not clear if mitigating actions are possible.	Further advice should be taken	Red 
As a result of performing the EIA, there is a risk that a disproportionately negative impact (as described above) exists to one or more of the nine groups of people who share a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. However, this risk may be removed or reduced by implementing mitigating actions.	Proceed pending agreement of mitigating action	Amber 
As a result of performing the EIA, the proposal does not appear to have any disproportionate negative impact on people who share a protected characteristics or anticipated impacts will be either positive or neutral.	Proceed	Green: 

BUDGET SCRUTINY 2023/24 HOUSING, PROPERTY & PLANNING DIRECTORATE

1ST FEBRUARY 2023

OVERVIEW

- In December 2022, Place Directorate presented savings for financial year 2023/24 of which £0.550m represented the portion to be delivered by Housing, Property & Planning Directorate.
- Following continued efforts to build upon these, the Directorate has subsequently identified a further £0.200m of savings to add to the above.
- Thus the total target for the Directorate in respect of 2023/24 savings is now **£0.750m**
- The following slides set out further detail on the additional savings identified since December's scrutiny sessions
- EIAs have been prepared and made available in respect of all proposals

2023/24 – BUDGET SAVINGS PROPOSALS

The following savings proposals have been put forward for delivery to further contribute towards the 2023/24 budget target:

Revenue running cost savings from asset disposals - £0.100m

- The planned disposal of some council owned buildings and vacation of some buildings prior to disposal will enable savings of circa. £0.100m. These savings will be delivered from reduced management, maintenance and utilities cost.

Additional Efficiencies - £0.100m

- The additional saving of £0.100m is to be delivered via the reduction in facilities management costs. It is expected that costs reductions will be achieved from direct contracting of specialist services such as lift maintenance and direct employment of cleaning staff. The reduction in the maintenance specification in a number of buildings and areas of floor space should also result in cost reduction.

2023/24 – BUDGET PROPOSALS SUMMARY

Ref. No.	Saving title	2023/24 Saving (£m)
	TOTAL VALUE OF PROPOSALS PRESENTED IN DEC 2022	0.550
HP-2324-12	Revenue running cost savings from asset disposals	0.100
HP-2324-64	Additional Efficiencies	0.100
	UPDATED TOTAL VALUE OF 2023/24 SAVINGS	0.750

None of the additional savings have been assessed to require a full EIA.

CONSULTATION

No consultations are deemed to be required for any of the additional savings proposals.

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**Consolidated Pack of EIAs
Housing, Property and Planning Directorate (HP&P)
Budget Savings 2023/24
Scrutiny Meeting 1/02/2023**

The following pages contain the EIA assessments of the proposals being put forward by the HP&P Directorate. Below is an index of each proposal and the pages on which the EIA for each proposal appears.

Proposal reference	Proposal name	Page number
HP-2324-12	Savings from reduction in building management costs	2 – 8
HP-2324-64	Savings from additional efficiencies in facilities management	9 – 15
	RAG rating guide	16

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

SUMMARY RAG RATING

The outcome of this EIA has been assessed to be:	
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SECTION 1:

Title	HP-2324-12 Savings from reduction in building management costs
What are you analysing? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the policy/project/activity/strategy looking to achieve? • Who is it intended to benefit? Are any specific groups targeted by this decision? • What results are intended? 	To reduce the costs to run buildings including repairs and maintenance costs, over-time and equipment used. The reductions will support savings through reduction in building management costs.
Date sent to Finance	28/11/2022
Version number and date of update	V2 – 28/11/2022

SECTION 2: Do you need to complete a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)?

Not all proposals will require a full EIA, the assessment of impacts should be proportionate to the nature of the project/policy in question and its likely impact. To decide on the level of detail of the assessment required consider the potential impact on persons with protected characteristics.

2.1	<p>Please provide an overview of who uses/will use your service or facility and identify who are likely to be impacted by the proposal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If you do not formally collect data about a particular group then use the results of local surveys or consultations, census data, national trends or anecdotal evidence (indicate where this is the case). Please attempt to complete all boxes.</i> • <i>Consider whether there is a need to consult stakeholders and the public, including members of protected groups, in order to gather information on potential impacts of the proposal</i> 																																
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<p>2.2 Are there any groups with protected characteristic that are overrepresented in the monitoring information relative to their size of the population? <i>If so, this could indicate that the proposal may have a disproportionate impact on this group even if it is a universal service.</i></p>	<p>N/A</p>			
<p>2.3 Are there any groups with protected characteristics that are underrepresented in the monitoring information relative to their size of the population? <i>If so, this could indicate that the service may not be accessible to all groups or there may be some form of direct or indirect discrimination occurring.</i></p>	<p>N/A</p>			
<p>2.4 Does the project, policy or proposal have the potential to disproportionately impact on people with a protected characteristic? If so, is the impact positive or negative?</p>				
	<p>None</p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>Negative</p>	<p>Not sure</p>
<p>Men or women</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>People of a particular race or ethnicity (including refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and gypsies and travellers)</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Disabled¹ people (consider different types of physical, learning or mental disabilities)</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>People of particular sexual orientation/s</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>People in particular age groups (consider in particular children, under 21s and over 65s)</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>People who are intending to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process or part of a process of gender reassignment</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Impact due to pregnancy/ maternity</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>

¹ Disability discrimination is different from other types of discrimination since it includes the duty to make reasonable adjustments.

People of particular faiths and beliefs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
People on low incomes*	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

***People with in some equality groups are more likely to be on low incomes (e.g. single parents (mainly women), people with disabilities, some ethnic minority groups etc). This is especially important when you are looking at fees, charges and access to services.**

If any of the answers to the questions above is, “negative” or “unclear” you will need to undertake a detailed impact assessment.

2.5	Based on your responses, should a full, detailed EIA be carried out on the project, policy or proposal
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2.6	Provide brief reasons on how you have come to this decision?
	As building maintenance requirements are being met for all empty buildings and those that are occupied ensuring all regulatory planned preventative maintenance for gas, electric, water and fire are being delivered and as sufficient budget has been retained for overtime payments (where necessary) and equipment needs there will be no impact on any group.

If the answer in 2.5 above is “No” then sections 3 and 4 are not required to be completed.

SECTION 3: ASSESSING THE IMPACT

In order to be able to identify ways to mitigate any potential impact it is essential that we know what those potential impacts might be. Using the evidence gathered in section 2, explain what the potential impact of your proposal might be on the groups you have identified. You may wish to further supplement the evidence you have gathered using the table below in order to properly consider the impact.

Protected Group		Positive impact?			Negative impact? If so, please specify the nature and extent of that impact	No specific impact	If the impact is negative how can it be mitigated? Please specify any mitigation measures and how and when they will be implemented	What , if any, are the cumulative effects of this decision when viewed in the context of other Council decisions and their equality impacts
		Eliminate discrimination	Advance equality	Good relations				
Gender	Men							
	Women							
Race	White							
	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups							
	Asian/Asian British							
	Black/African/Caribbean/ Black British							
	Gypsies / travellers							
	Other ethnic group							
Disability	Physical							
	Sensory							
	Learning Difficulties							
	Learning Disabilities							
	Mental Health							

Protected Group		Positive impact?			Negative impact?	No specific impact	What will the impact be? If the impact is negative how can it be mitigated? (action)	What are the cumulative of effects
		Eliminate discrimination	Advance equality	Good relations				
Sexual Orientation	Lesbian, gay men, bisexual							
Age	Older people (50+)							
	Younger people (16 - 25)							
	Children (under 16)							
Gender Reassignment								
Impact due to pregnancy/maternity								
Groups with particular faiths and beliefs								
People on low incomes								

SECTION 4: ACTION PLAN

4.1 Complete the action plan if you need to reduce or remove the negative impacts you have identified, take steps to foster good relations or fill data gaps.

Please include the action required by your team/unit, groups affected, the intended outcome of your action, resources needed, a lead person responsible for undertaking the action (inc. their department and contact details), the completion date for the action, and the relevant RAG rating: R(ed) – action not initiated, A(mber) – action initiated and in progress, G(reen) – action complete.

NB. Add any additional rows, if required.

Action Required	Equality Groups Targeted	Intended outcome	Resources Needed	Name of Lead, Unit & Contact Details	Completion Date (DD/MM/YY)	RAG
<i>Enter additional rows if required</i>						

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

SUMMARY RAG RATING

The outcome of this EIA has been assessed to be:	
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SECTION 1:

Title	HP-2324-64 Savings from additional efficiencies within facilities management
What are you analysing? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the policy/project/activity/strategy looking to achieve? • Who is it intended to benefit? Are any specific groups targeted by this decision? • What results are intended? 	To reduce the costs of facilities management in council owned building by direct contracting of specialist services such as lift maintenance and direct employment of cleaning staff. Direct contracting of specialist services will support savings through reduction in facilities management costs.
Date sent to Finance	24/01/2023
Version number and date of update	V1 – 24/01/2023

SECTION 2: Do you need to complete a full Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)?

Not all proposals will require a full EIA, the assessment of impacts should be proportionate to the nature of the project/policy in question and its likely impact. To decide on the level of detail of the assessment required consider the potential impact on persons with protected characteristics.

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	Younger people (16 - 25)							
	Children (under 16)							
Gender Reassignment								
Impact due to pregnancy/maternity								
Groups with particular faiths and beliefs								
People on low incomes								

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NB. Add any additional rows, if required.

Action Required	Equality Groups Targeted	Intended outcome	Resources Needed	Name of Lead, Unit & Contact Details	Completion Date (DD/MM/YY)	RAG
<i>Enter additional rows if required</i>						

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Appendix A**Equality Impact Assessment Decision Rating Guide****PLEASE SEE PAGE 1 FOR THE RATING OF THIS PROPOSAL**

Decision	Action	Risk
As a result of performing the EIA, there is a risk that a disproportionately negative impact (direct, indirect, unintentional or otherwise) exists to one or more of the nine groups of people who share a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. It is not clear if mitigating actions are possible.	Further advice should be taken	Red 
As a result of performing the EIA, there is a risk that a disproportionately negative impact (as described above) exists to one or more of the nine groups of people who share a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. However, this risk may be removed or reduced by implementing mitigating actions.	Proceed pending agreement of mitigating action	Amber 
As a result of performing the EIA, the proposal does not appear to have any disproportionate negative impact on people who share a protected characteristics or anticipated impacts will be either positive or neutral.	Proceed	Green: 

Overview and Scrutiny SBC HRA 30 Years Business Plan

4th February 2023

Purpose

- ❑ The purpose of this presentation is to enable Scrutiny to consider and comment on the HRA Business Plan which sets out the Council's strategy for spending and borrowing to maintain its stock, operate services for its tenants and leaseholders, design and build new homes where applicable
- ❑ The business plan projections reflect the income and expenditure required to manage the landlord function
- ❑ Though the business plan is based on 30 years projection, the focus is on the medium term period (five years).

HRA Funding

- ❑ The HRA covers revenue expenditure and income relating to the Council's own housing stock and is ringfenced from the Council's General Fund as required by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
- ❑ The HRA is funded primarily by rents received from tenants. Local authority rents are regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing and annual rent increases must comply with the Government rents policy for Social Housing.
- ❑ Where a deficit is anticipated, the HRA can draw down from its Reserves as the Council is required to set a balanced budget.
- ❑ Where the HRA intends to take on major redevelopment schemes / projects, these can be funded from Government grants, borrowing subject to affordability tests and/or Right to Buy (RtB) income

Business Planning Assumptions

- ❑ Slough Borough Council owns and manages over 7,633 properties, of which there are 6,035 HRA social and affordable rented properties
- ❑ No new acquisition or new build assumption is made in this business plan
- ❑ General inflation: CPI of 10.1% in 2023/24, 5% in 2024/25 and 2% thereafter
- ❑ Social Rent: 7% increase in 2023/24, 5% in 2024/25 and 2% thereafter. Re-let at 5% of formula rent
- ❑ Supervision and Management: Employee cost element inflated by 4% while other S&M costs inflated by RPI of 12.6%
- ❑ Bad debt: Bad debt provision set at £1.5m which represents circa. 4% of Dwelling Rents
- ❑ Service Charge Income: Matched to 7% increase offered for social rent in 2023/24
- ❑ Voids: Voids assumed to be 1.5% of council dwelling rents

Business Planning Assumptions (ii)

- ❑ Energy cost is assumed to rise by circa. £0.9m in 2023/24 and expected to reduce to normal price level over the next 3 years
- ❑ Right to Buy (RtB) Sales: 50 RtB sales assumed for 2023/24 and 2024/25. 25 RtB sales estimated annually thereafter
- ❑ HRA Minimum Working Balances: £4m is assumed which represents circa. 10% of gross rent
- ❑ Repair and Maintenance Major Works: 11.1% is assumed in 2023/24 and 5% thereafter
- ❑ Debt Management: Maturing debt refinanced throughout Plan. No additional borrowing is envisaged as no new housing developments are expected

HRA Medium Term Plan (i)

	2023.24 £000	2024.25 £000	2025.26 £000	2026.27 £000	2027.28 £000
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT					
Income					
Dwelling Rents	36,907	39,689	39,997	41,158	42,346
Non Dwelling Rents	1,835	1,945	2,004	2,064	2,126
Charges for services and facilities (net of voids)	2,670	2,830	2,915	3,002	3,092
Total Income	41,412	44,464	44,915	46,224	47,564
Expenditure					
Repairs and maintenance	(13,377)	(14,180)	(14,605)	(14,410)	(14,843)
Supervision and management	(10,471)	(11,044)	(11,320)	(11,605)	(11,898)
Special services	(217)	(230)	(237)	(244)	(251)
Rents, rates, taxes and other charges	(1,582)	(1,334)	(1,027)	(747)	(770)
(Increase)/decrease in provision for bad debts	(1,500)	(1,500)	(1,545)	(1,591)	(1,639)
Depreciation and impairment of fixed assets	(8,859)	(8,785)	(8,711)	(8,674)	(8,637)
Total Expenditure	(36,007)	(37,073)	(37,445)	(37,272)	(38,037)
Net Cost of HRA Services	5,405	7,391	7,470	8,952	9,526
Interest payable incl amortisation	(4,620)	(4,620)	(4,620)	(4,620)	(5,359)
HRA investment income	15	15	15	15	15
Surplus / (deficit) for the year	800	2,787	2,865	4,348	4,182

HRA Medium Term Plan (ii)

- ❑ Dwelling rents in 2023/24 is estimated as £36.9m. This represents an increase of £2.3m when compared to 2022/23
- ❑ The average weekly rent for 2023/24 is reported at £117.80
- ❑ The average weekly service charge for 2023/24 is £14.80
- ❑ Non-dwelling rent is estimated at £1.84m and consists mainly of garage rents, shops and ground rent
- ❑ Total income of £41.4m is projected in 2023/24 with total expenditure of £36.01m
- ❑ The net cost of HRA services of £5.4m less interest payable and HRA investment income results in a surplus of £0.8m in 2023/24.
- ❑ The HRA is expected to report surpluses in the five year medium term period.

HRA Capital Programme (i)

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EXPENDITURE	2022/23 Projected Outturn	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total
RMI Capital Programme	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Commissioning of Repairs Maintenance and Investment Contract		250	250	0	0	0	500
Boiler Replacement and heating	355	317	618	840	1,037	1,371	4,182
Kitchen & Bathroom Replacement	750	415	689	1,731	1,770	2,966	7,571
Electrical Systems	400	138	328	675	732	1,162	3,034
External rendering, repairs and redecoration of housing block	700	2,134	985	1,006	1,296	1,511	6,932
Capitalised Repairs	422	100	103	105	108	110	526
FRA & Asbestos Removal Works	1,884	2,000	2,000	250	256	263	4,769
Major Aids & Adaptations	691	300	308	315	323	331	1,577
De-Carbonisation Works	100	500	513	525	538	552	2,628
Windows and Door Replacement	181	842	328	673	1,116	1,688	4,647
Roof Replacement	796	1,726	1,447	2,925	2,454	4,311	12,863
Structural	115	211	83	108	178	213	793
Security & Controlled Entry Modernisation	766	300	308	315	323	331	1,577
Capitalised voids	60	60	62	63	65	66	672
Total	7,220	9,293	8,019	9,531	10,196	14,875	51,914
Affordable Homes	3,500	800	0	0	0	0	800
HRA GRAND TOTAL	10,720	10,093	8,019	9,531	10,196	14,875	52,714

HRA Capital Programme (ii)

- ❑ Housing stocks owned by the Council must meet the present Decent Homes Standard.
- ❑ The capital programme represents major works and planned maintenance to improve the condition of the existing stock.
- ❑ The planned works include: central heating and boiler upgrades, replacement of external doors and windows, renewal of roofs and soffits, external lighting upgrades, garage improvements, de-carbonisation and external environmental improvements, kitchen and bathrooms, and thermal insulation.
- ❑ The proposed cumulative capital programme cost across the next five years is £52.714m.
- ❑ The proposed capital programme is to be funded from Right to Buy Receipts and Major Repairs Reserve

Business Plan Risks

- ❑ Uncertainties around Government's regulated rent policy
- ❑ Changes to right to buy rules
- ❑ Impact of cost of living crisis on tenants and leaseholders resulting in poor collection of rent
- ❑ Inflation level
- ❑ Net zero decarbonisation commitment by Government
- ❑ Potential penalties of non-compliance with addressing damp and mould issues
- ❑ Welfare and benefit reforms

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel

DATE: 1st February 2023

CONTACT OFFICER: Vijay McGuire

WARD(S): All

PART I**FOR DECISION****TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT – COMPLAINT HANDLING REVIEW****1. Purpose of Report**

Complaints are an essential element in maintaining the council's reputation and provides a valuable way to understand customers' expectations of service delivery. Data and customer insight provided through the Councils complaints process is an essential part of identifying service improvements and promoting good practice across the council.

In good councils, robust complaints processes put public concerns at the heart of their corporate governance to ensure that the voice of the resident is firmly embedded into all risk management and accountability systems and processes.

In line with the council's focus on strengthening the organisations approach to governance, the Customer and Community Scrutiny meeting held on the 20th of October 2022, approved the creation of a Task and Finish group centred on complaint handling

The purpose of the Task and Finish group was to review the council's complaints process and make recommendations for improvement which would build on the work already reported to the Audit and Governance Committee on 28 September 2022.

The findings and recommendations of the Task and Finish Group are set out in (Appendix 1) and this report requests approval of the five recommendations as set out below.

2. **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Panel is recommended to:

1. Review and comment on the report attached at Appendix 1.
2. Agree the recommendations within the report for submission to Cabinet.

Recommendations contained within the report (Appendix 1) are:

Recommendation one

Move to a 2-stage corporate complaint process with extended timescales at each of the two stages

Recommendation two

Introduce accessibility of different languages on the council's website reflective of the ethnic makeup of the borough, to make it easier for customers to access service and navigate information relating to service requests

Recommendation three

Make the online complaint page more robust

Recommendation four

Encourage officers to use various communication methods when investigating complaints

Recommendation five

Strengthen the learning and improvements captured through complaints and ensure that these are incorporated in all future complaints' reports

Commissioner's Review

"This is a well-researched and documented report and those involved should be commended. It would be helpful to extend the recommendations to deal with a process to ensure that once a complaint has been upheld the action required to remedy the failure is monitored to completion. Many Ombudsman references arise because once a Council accepts that it is at fault, it takes too long to undertake the rectification, thus compounding the original failure. In due course Scrutiny may want to review how their recommendations were implemented. It may be useful as part of that review to look at the areas that generate the most complaints and how these are dealt with."

3. **Slough Corporate Plan**

The Corporate plan includes the following strategic objectives:

- A council that lives within our means, balances the budget, and delivers best value for taxpayers and service users
- An environment that helps residents live more independent, healthier, and safer lives
- A borough for children and young people to thrive
- Infrastructure that reflects the uniqueness of Slough's places and a new vision for the town centre

The corporate complaints governance framework supports all the above objectives by learning from issues raised, using key customer insight to improve standards of service, accessibility and focusing on being more responsive to people's needs.

4. **Implications of the recommendations**

(a) Financial

None – support to the Task and Finish Group was drawn from the existing staff involved with complaints. The recommendations are seeking to ensure that the Council's limited resources are used to best effect. At present the system for recording complaints is under review, and recommendations for reviewing the accessibility on the council's platform may require investment and will therefore be subject to a business case for approval

(b) Risk Management

The provision of a refreshed approach, and updated Complaints procedure reduces the Council's risks of

- Failing to meet resident expectations
- Inconsistent application of the complaints policy by staff
- Ombudsman cases found against the council
- Loss of reputation

(c) Legal Implications

Councils must provide a clear and transparent opportunity for residents to express concerns regarding the services they receive, the recommendations contained within this report, as set out by the Task and Finish Group will meet these obligations. If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the Council's response, they can complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) or the Housing Ombudsman dependent on the nature of the complaint. The LGSCO publishes annual report on local authority performance, as well as issues good practice guides both on complaints handling and on suggested remedies for specific complaints. These include guidance relating to council housing repairs, neighbour nuisance, council housing management, benefits, school admissions, special educational needs, environmental health, planning and social care. The Council should regularly review and take account of this guidance and should ensure it has effective systems in place to respond to queries from the LGSCO in relation to individual cases. The LGSCO has powers to make findings of maladministration and issue a public interest report.

(d) Equalities Implications

Learning from complaints also assists the Council in fulfilling its statutory duty under s149 of the Equality Act.

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 sets out the Public-Sector Equality Duty which requires a public authority (or those exercising public functions) to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not.

A number of the recommendations relate to ensuring the Council meets the needs of its diverse communities, including using different communication methods and making information accessible to individuals for whom English is not their first language.

5. Supporting Information

Work is underway to review the Council's approach to the management of complaints. This includes

- the introduction of statutory reporting at Audit and Governance committee,
- quarterly reporting at CLT Assurance board,
- weekly report monitoring of all outstanding cases
- a review of the procedure from a three stage to a 2-stage process as detailed in the statutory report to Audit and Governance in September 2022 to encourage greater consistency in handing, monitoring, and reporting.

However, fundamental to the Council's approach will be the Complaints Policy itself and ensuring that is accessible and easily understandable by our residents and which can be implemented effectively by our staff.

At the October 2022 meeting of Customer and Community Scrutiny, approval was sought to establish a Task and Finish panel to review the current process co-chaired by Cllr Brooker and Cllr Kaur. The Task and Finish panel have met four times to consider the process in detail and recommend a series of changes.

The Group agreed to meet with relevant officers and refer to the effective complaint handing guidance from the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman with a view to reporting back to the Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel within three months, subject to the discretion of the Panel Chair.

Appendix 1 sets out the detailed findings and recommendations of the Task and Finish Group. The report focuses on several key recommendations which focus on:

- **Getting it right** – by complying with the law, and following the councils' policies and procedures – by allowing a longer timeframe to focus on the quality of the response through a revised two stage process
- **Being customer focused** by being clear on acknowledgement, clarity and action being taken.
- **Being open and accountable** – by ensuring that dialogue is maintained with the resident whilst dealing with their case
- **Acting fairly and proportionately** – through clarity, simplicity, and improved accessibility
- **Putting things right** - through the quality of the response, apologising and taking the necessary steps to put right any injustice caused

- **Seeking continuous improvement** - improvements informed by the valuable customer insight / complaints data and embedding learning and continuous improvement through reporting, responses, and thematic reviews

The report highlights how the move from a 3-stage process to a 2-stage process will be advantageous to staff and residents alike as it allows for a stronger emphasis on the quality of response and underpinning the process with a stronger emphasis on learning and continuous improvement. Meetings held with the London Borough of Hounslow and Liverpool City Council were key for the group to feel confident in their recommendations

The Group would like to express their thanks to staff and teams within the Council who investigate and deal with complaints. They recognise their commitment to offer excellent customer service with the aim of resolving and learning from complaints against various day to day working challenges such as resourcing.

6. **Comments of Other Committees**

Cabinet will be asked to consider the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group when deciding of a 2-stage complaint process.

7. **Conclusion**

The Task and Finish Group welcome feedback on its report and would request that the themes and recommendations will be considered by the Council, and wider partnership.

8. **Appendix Attached**

Appendix 1 – Complaint handling review – Report by the People Scrutiny Panel Task and Finish Group

9. **Background Papers**

None

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Complaint Handling Review

Findings and Recommendations

**Report by the Customer and Community
Scrutiny Panel Task and Finish Group**

January 2023

Contents

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1. Chairman's forward

The complaints procedure has been looked at recently by the Audit and Governance Committee and the Customer and Community Scrutiny panel. It was decided to have a Task and Finish group to look at the system. It was clear through our investigations that it needed revising. This is particularly the case when there is confusion between what is a complaint and what is a request for service for example asking for a fly tip removal is not really a complaint but a request for service. If it is accepted as a complaint, it creates extra paperwork and delays the fly tip removal. The same applies to Councillors submitting the matter as case work.

The joint chairs would like to thank the officers from other local authorities who took time to explain how their complaints are dealt with and the help and guidance of the Slough officers.

Councillor Preston Brooker and Councillor Kamaljit Kaur

2. Executive Summary

A Customer and Community Task and Finish centred on complaint handling was convened in November 2022 following approval at the Customer and Community Scrutiny meeting held on the 20th October 2022.

The purpose of the Task and Finish group was to review the council's complaints process and make recommendations for improvement which would build on the work already reported to the Audit and Governance Committee on 28 September 2022.

The main objectives of the Complaints team are to:

- Provide a framework for raising complaints which is simple for customers to use and is equally accessible to all
- Give customers confidence that their comments are listened to, and that their complaints are being dealt with effectively
- Ensure action is taken to solve problems and approach complaints with a positive attitude, in that complaints provide an invaluable rich source of feedback to our organisation
- Learn from complaints and prevent the recurrence of problems – with a focus centred on continuous improvement
- Generate a consistent approach to feedback and complaints throughout the Council

The Task and Finish Group have concluded their review and made the following five key recommendations to improve the organisations approach to complaint handling:

Recommendation 1

Move to a 2-stage corporate complaint process with extended timescales at each of the two stages

Recommendation 2

Introduce accessibility of different languages on the council's website reflective of the ethnic makeup of the borough – to make it easier for customers to access service and navigate information relating to service requests

Recommendation 3

Make the online complaint page more robust

Recommendation 4

Encourage officers to use various communication methods when investigating complaints

Recommendation 5

Strengthen the learning and improvements captured through complaints and ensure that these are incorporated in all future complaints' reports.

The recommendations highlighted above will lead to an improved, streamlined, and accessible complaints process for residents. For the organisation the recommendations will ensure that we distil a culture of learning and continuous improvement from complaints.

The Customer and Community Scrutiny panel are asked to review and endorse the recommendations from the Task and Finish group.

3. Group membership and Terms of Reference

The group was jointly chaired by:

- Councillor Preston Brooker and Councillor Kamaljit Kaur

Attendees invited on request:

- Co-opted member Trevor Pollard (Resident's Panel Board)
- Lead Officers-Vijay McGuire; Associate Director - Business & Customer Services, Finbar McSweeney; Complaints, Casework & FOI Lead
- Scrutiny Lead Officer – Alexander Polak – Head of Governance and Scrutiny
- Democratic Services – Manize Talukdar

Terms of Reference

The Aim of the Task and Finish Group were to

- Provide constructive 'critical friend' challenge
- Amplify the voices and concerns of the public
- Be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role
- Drive improvement in public services

The objectives of the group set out in the terms of reference were to:

- Ensure residents had an easy and accessible method to submit any formal dissatisfaction about Council services and staff
- Consider the processing of complaints and determine if sufficient methods were in place to monitor performance and collate real time reports
- Understand what actions were taken where the level of service provided was less than expected
- Determine what learning was being carried out and being shared to avoid complaints of a similar nature being submitted

The Board would:

- Review the complaints process and make recommendations, building on the work already reported to the Audit and Governance Committee.
- Meet with relevant officers and refer to the effective complaint handing guidance from the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman; and

- Report back to the Customer and Community Scrutiny Panel within three months, subject to the discretion of the Panel Chair.

4.Context

Why did we set up the group?

On 28 September 2022 the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee received the annual statutory complaints report. The report included:

- A summary of decisions upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (i.e., where an independent body has upheld a complaint about The council)
- A summary of complaints received by the Council
- A thematic summary of the nature of the complaints and the actions taken to demonstrate improvement and learning arising from the complaints received

One of the actions from section 3 of the report to Audit and Corporate Governance Committee (Appendix A) advised.

Officers are liaising with scrutiny members in relation to setting up a task & finish group to look at best practice guidance and the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's training programme to enable recommendations to be made to cabinet on improving the complaints process.

Councillors have an important dual role signposting complaints on behalf of members of the public and scrutinising the delivery of local services. Councillors therefore have a unique perspective on the Council's complaints process, and many reasons to want to make sure it works effectively.

It is critically important that Councillors have confidence in the arrangements which their own council has in place for handling residents' complaints on their behalf, as well as understanding the system and feeling an ownership of it. Furthermore, there is an opportunity to learn about the Council's performance in numerous areas by looking at trends and themes in the complaints it receives.

This demonstrates the importance of complaints in the overarching governance of the Authority and provides a valuable source of data insight & information for Overview and Scrutiny.

What was the methodology?

On 2 November 2022 a meeting with the co-chairs was held to scope the Task & Finish review.

The agreed scope of the task and finish group was to:

- Define what is a complaint and what isn't a complaint

- Understand the complaints process itself - with a view to making recommendations on how to improve the process
- Understand service-by-service performance on complaints – and propose recommendations to help improve performance and how to respond to a complaint

Research conducted by the group included

Definition

Online searches to determine the various definitions of a complaint which included:

- Reviewing the Council's current corporate complaint process and its Tenant and Leaseholder complaints policy
- Reviewing the external review of Liverpool City Council's complaint procedure carried out by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)
- Reading the Local Government Association (LGA) and the LGSCO websites for information on complaints

Understand the complaints process

- Referring to documentary evidence received from officers. Please see the list on page 8 titled **What Did We Read?**
- Communication and engagement with officers responsible for complaint management within directorates to understand the issues, challenges, and current processes in place at directorate level
- Reading and reviewing examples of (redacted) repeat complaints – to ascertain the root cause of the issue which would then seek to identify improvements to eradicate repeat contact, reduce demand levels and ultimately improve the resident experience
- Networking with other authorities to understand their processes, for comparison and context to inform the Task and Finish Review
- Researching how to handle complaints - and identifying good practise to inform the recommendations of this Task and Finish Group

Understand service-by-service performance on complaints and identify recommendations to help improve performance including how to respond to a complaint

- Reading the annual and quarterly complaint reports, to inform the current baseline position
- Reviewing the number of complaints received by type, service, and issue
- Understanding why complaints responses miss deadlines and reading policies and case studies of issues. With a view to determining if provided any insight as to the process. In addition conversations with lead officers from various departments to deep dive into service specific issues and challenges relating to complaint handling and management.

Who Did We Speak To?

Between November and December 2022, the Group convened meetings and interviews to gather as much information to inform the current baseline position of handling and management of complaints. Members were keen to hear from other local authorities to compare how their complaints were being handled and managed. The Group were also keen to speak with officers responsible for complaint management within directorates. The Group spoke to the following people:

- Tina Dunkin, Acting Director Customers, Culture, Libraries and Registration
London Borough of Hounslow

Andrea McGuire Customer Feedback Manager, Liverpool City Council

Slough Council officers responsible for complaint management within directorates

- Corrine McNeal – Council Tax
- Jamal Imam-Customer services
- Kingsley Yirenyi-Customer services
- Tony Turnbull-Housing Neighbourhood services
- Vikki Swan – Housing repairs (Osborne)
- Kam Hothi- Parking, Highways & Street works

How Did We Engage With People?

The Task and Finish Group carried out virtual interviews with the London Borough of Hounslow, Liverpool City Council and held a virtual round table session with internal officers responsible for managing complaints within directorates

Email correspondence and telephone calls were undertaken with the Complaints team

What Did We Read?

The Group was provided with a large amount of background information to assist with their discovery phase of the review. The documents that were used included :

- Definition of a complaint examples taken from the website [Corporate complaints – Slough Borough Council](#) and the Housing policy [Complaints and neighbourhood services – Slough Borough Council](#)
- Content of an Adult Social Care complaint originally logged in August 2021 which took over 100 days to be responded to
- Housing Repair related complaint determined in October 2022 and outcome included repeat concerns
- Housing Ombudsman complaint handling code and link for the complaint handling self-assessment which the Council completed; [Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code - self assessment – Slough Borough Council](#)
- Number of complaints responded to within the relevant timescales

- Quarterly report and reference to Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Public Interest Report [Slough woman unable to access upstairs because of council grant delay - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)
- Templates for complaint replies
- Open letter in November 2022 from the Housing Ombudsman about handling damp and mould complaints; [Ombudsman writes open letter to social landlords urging renewed focus on damp and mould approach - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#)

5. Key themes which determined the Recommendations

These include learning from London Borough of Hounslow and Liverpool City Council

Quotes from the officers responsible for complaint management within directorates are shown in speech bubbles.

Recommendation 1

Move to a 2-stage corporate complaint process with extended timescales at each stage.

- Websites from Buckinghamshire Council, Royal Borough of Windsor, Liverpool City Council, Maidenhead and London Borough of Hounslow were reviewed. The group noted their 2-stage process and the benefits of the process change
- Conversations with Hounslow and Liverpool councils confirmed that over a period of one year, a reduction in stage 2 complaints had been seen,



- LGSCO complaints and guidance were reviewed– their advice is the number of stages should be minimised; [Guidance on Effective Complaint Handling for Local Authorities - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)
- An FOI request was sent by the Complaints team to various local authorities of a similar population size, requesting information on their approach to complaints. A summary of the responses received are shown below:

20 Local Authorities responded, of these 15 currently have a 2-stage complaint process.

Table 1.1 shows the timescales allotted to each stage of the complaint process by each Authority.

10 of those who responded have a 10-day response timescale at stage 1 and the remaining 15 days or more.

Of all councils who responded 17 have a response timescale of 15 days or greater at stage 2, with 5 of these allocating a 15-day response time and the remaining authorities 20 days or more.

One local Authority Bracknell Forest who has a stage 3 process has a response time of 10-20 days for each stage of their process.

Table 1.1 Local Authorities Complaint process by stages and number of working days required to respond at each stage.

Local Authority	Number of Councillors	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Test Valley	36	10	15	
Halton	54	10	28	
Bracknell Forest	42	10-20	10-20	10-20
Thanet	56	10	20	
Malvern	45	15	15	15
Teignbridge	46	20	20	
Preston	48	20	35	
Epping Forest	58	10	15	
Blackpool	42	10	15	Undefined
North Herts	49	10	10	
Lancashire	84	20	20	
Ipswich	46	10	20	20
Horsham	48	20	20	
East Lindsey	54	15	20	
Waverley	57	10	15	
Tendring	48	15	20	
Hillingdon	53	10	10	15
Reading	48	20	30	
Warwick	44	20	20	
Nuneaton	34	10	Undefined	

Recommendation 1

After speaking with Hounslow and with Liverpool councils and noting the Complaint teams' findings, a 2-stage process is preferable to allow more time for a robust and quality of response to be sent.

The recommendation therefore is for stage 1 complaints to be answered within 15 working days. This allows officers more time to produce a thorough and qualitative response with the aim of mitigating complaints escalating to stage 2. This acknowledges the challenges the organisation has in terms of resource and capacity in departments to give them the time to deal with a complaint under stage 1.

A recommendation that Stage 2 be extended to 20 working days – in line with other local authorities. This will allow a thorough final investigation and reply. This timing also considers allocating a senior manager to investigate and respond.

Holding replies should only then be used sparingly and when needed. The ending of the Stage 2 will refer the complainant to the relevant Ombudsman if they remained dissatisfied.

Recommendation 2

Introduce accessibility of different languages on the council's website reflective of the ethnic makeup of the borough.

- Some case studies highlighted that customer sometimes have difficulty explaining what outcome they seek and it is therefore important for officers to fully understand what points are within a complaint.

After the group spoke with Hounslow Council and viewed their website [London Borough of Hounslow Website homepage](#) they thought it would be beneficial for Slough's website to be explore and consider opportunities similar to that of Hounslow to improve accessibility. There is a translation function on Hounslow's website home screen which allows the whole website to be available in languages that are reflective of the ethnic makeup of the borough. In turn, this would improve ease of access to help customers raise complaints and access other services. The recommendation is for the Council's website to be accessible in different languages therefore making it reflective of the ethnic makeup of the borough.

Recommendation 3

Make the online complaint page more robust.

After reading local authorities' websites mentioned in Recommendation 1, the group were impressed with the layout and simplicity of their respective complaint information contained within their web sites. The Group therefore felt that information relating to complaints must be easy to understand, and which explains what constitutes a complaint, the stages involved, what is and is not a complaint and

how to submit a complaint. The group further noted that some customers complain when they are refused service for which there are existing appeal processes already in place.



We have to quantify what is a complaint - Could a matter be an appeal or request for service instead?

The recommendation deduced from this discovery stream is to update the Council's website page to:

- Ensure the new 2 stage complaint process is thorough and clearly available on the website once formally approved.
- Define and make clear the differences between complaint and service request.
- Include a Report It button at the top of the complaint page – like the website of Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead. This would assist customers in realising that they do not need to submit a complaint when asking for action to take place e.g., remove litter, fix a non-working streetlight.
- Ensure information on how to Appeal a decision is highlighted on the complaints page e.g., Benefit appeal, Penalty Charge Notice, Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) appeal. This would allow customers to make the distinction between an appeal against a decision and a valid complaint relating to dissatisfaction of services received

Recommendation 4

Encourage officers to use various communication methods when investigating complaints.

The group noted that officers currently communicate with customers predominantly by email when complaints are investigated. Contacting customers via telephone could eliminate confusion on points contained within the original complaint and could be used when providing progress on their complaints



Pressure on teams can delay responses and this affects the quality of the response

The recommendation proposed by the group is for officers to wherever possible or appropriate contact customers via telephone to provide clear explanations, progress updates and to be more accessible which in turn will improve times



Clarifying concerns with the complainant by telephone is often beneficial

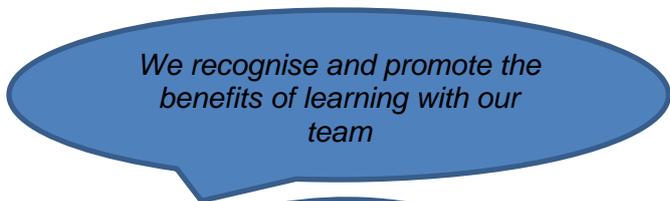
Calling customers will provide them with the assurance that their complaint is receiving attention.

By keeping the customer informed throughout an Investigation and providing timely updates/holding replies, customers will have reassurance that their concerns are being taken seriously and help to mitigate complaints moving to the next stage of the process

Recommendation 5

A greater emphasis on enhanced learning themes with appropriate improvement action which will be reported through quarterly and annual reports.

After speaking to Housing and to Liverpool Councils and reading various complaint related literature, the group understood it is not possible to embed an effective complaint process if the Council does not have a robust mechanism by which improvements can be made to service delivery informed by feedback and data from our residents.



We recognise and promote the benefits of learning with our team



We discuss complaints/learning in monthly departmental meetings and where we can improve



Currently it takes a while to implement changes but we realise learning from complaints does need to happen

The group acknowledged that

- Complaints attributed to service departments must be used to recognise and improve service provision, ensuring accountability and ownership of cases
- Departments have continued to work well against the backdrop of challenges relating to capacity and depleted resources
- Departments must improve their approach to learning and embed continuous improvement through the findings of their complaints and for the complaints team to continue to request learning / improvements implemented resulting from upheld complaints.
- Ensure that learning and improvements are embedded as part of business as usual when complaints are being investigated and for these to be appropriately recorded and shared through the suite of governance complaint reports to provide assurance and compliance
- Identifying improvements and learning is the responsibility of the service areas
- All complaints reporting should include detailed learning themes by directorate. This highlights what service improvements have been made because of a complaint investigation and should seek to identify and measure the impact of proposed improvements to see if there is a reduction of cases or whether further changes need to be implemented
- As part of reporting improvements resulting from complaints, services should be held accountable if there are re-occurring themes against which they have previously reported improvements. Furthermore, if reports continue to highlight the same themes - despite improvements being identified service areas will be formally reminded to review and evidence effective implementation of improvements

As a Council, we must.

- Actively listen, understand, and read all correspondence from the resident
- Acknowledge in writing or telephone to confirm receipt, seek clarity, and advise of steps being taken to resolve their complaint
- The tone and language in a response is integral to the customer experience and must be clear, concise, jargon free and in plain English. Follow up communication asking if the resident is satisfied with the final outcome of the complaint is essential to the resolution / closure of each complaint with a specific emphasis on next steps that can be taken if they still remain dissatisfied.

The Task and Finish Group requested that a full review of the complaints procedure be undertaken after 2 years to analyse how effective these recommendations have been and whether data is showing improvements across all departments' council wide.

Recommendations

The Task and Finish Group have made the following five key recommendations to improve complaint handling along with proposed completion dates;

Recommendation 1

Move to a 2-stage corporate complaint process with extended timescales at each stage. **Completion by September 2023**

Recommendation 2

Introduce accessibility of different languages on the council's website reflective of the ethnic makeup of the borough. **Completion by end of February 2023**

Recommendation 3

Make the online complaint page more robust. **Completion by September 2023**

Recommendation 4

Encourage officers to use various communication methods when investigating complaints. **Commence immediately and will be continual**

Recommendation 5

Strengthen the learning and improvements captured through complaints and ensure that these are incorporated in all future complaints' reports.

Commence immediately and will be continual

The Task and Finish Group propose that the recommendations highlighted above will lead to a much improved, more streamlined, and accessible complaints process for residents and staff which will ensure that as an organisation we distil a culture of learning from complaints. This in turn will demonstrate our commitment to continuous improvement. Customer and Community Scrutiny panel are asked to review and endorse the recommendations from the Task and Finish group.

7. Appendix

LGSCO and Complaints Report - Audit and Corporate Governance Committee.

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Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Audit and Corporate Governance Committee
Date:	28 th September 2022
Subject:	Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) upheld complaints. Statutory & corporate complaints summary of 2021-2022
Chief Officer:	Stephen Brown – Corporate Operations Officer Sarah Wilson – Monitoring Officer
Contact Officer:	Finbar McSweeney - Complaints, Casework & FOI Lead
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	NO
Appendices:	Appendix A – Summary of upheld LGSCO complaints received 1 April 2020- 31 March 2022 Appendix B – LGSCO Annual Review Letter July 2021 Appendix C – LGSCO Annual Review Letter July 2022 Appendix D – Statutory and Corporate Complaints Report 2021-22

1. Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out a summary of the upheld complaints determined by the LGSCO in 2020-22 and a summary of statutory & corporate complaints during 2021- 2022.

Recommendations:

Committee is recommended to:

- (a) Note the summary of upheld decisions by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman during 1st April 2020 - 31 March 2022 (Appendix A).
- (b) Note the summary of statutory and corporate complaints during 1st April 2021 – 31 March 2022.
- (c) Note the themes identified and the actions being taken to respond to these themes.

Reason:

- 1.1 Complaints are a free and valuable source of information and insight to enable the Council to focus on improvements to our processes and service delivery. This reports provides the Committee with information on complaints received in the past two years. In future the Council will report to the Committee at least annually.

1.2 Where complaints are upheld by the LGSCO, they recommend ways for authorities to put things right when faults have caused injustice. Their recommendations try to put individuals back in the position they were in before the fault. The LGSCO also monitor authorities to ensure compliance with their recommendations. Appendix A includes LGSCO recommendations for each upheld complaint.

1.3 In 2020-21, the LGSCO were satisfied that the council had successfully implemented agreed recommendations.

1.4 In 2021-2022, the LGSCO were again satisfied that the council had implemented agreed recommendations.

1.5 During the reporting period 2021-22, the LGSCO determined three cases of injustice regarding Slough Children First not investigating complaints on behalf of 3 young persons which were more than a year old from a 3rd party.

2 Alternative options considered and not recommended

2.1 The council could report individual findings of maladministration on a case by case basis. This is not recommended as it does not provide an opportunity to identify themes and learn from complaints, even when they are not upheld by the LGSCO.

2.3 By publicly reporting on complaints data and learning, the Committee has an opportunity to scrutinise how this data is used to inform the Council's risk management procedures and to ensure continuous improvement. This option is recommended as it allows the council to learn from complaints to continuously improve its services and increase resident satisfaction.

Commissioner Review

The report was reviewed by Commissioners who had no observations to make.

3 Background

LGSCO data

3.1 The Council currently operates a three-stage corporate complaints procedure:

- At Stage 1 the departmental manager deals with the complaint with the aim of resolving the complaint.
- At Stage 2 complaints which are not resolved at Stage 1 are reviewed by the relevant Head of Service or above.
- At Stage 3 complaints which are not resolved at Stage 2 are reviewed by the chief executive. This is the final stage of the corporate complaints process.

3.2 If the complainant remains dissatisfied after going through the Council's corporate complaints procedure, they may escalate the matter to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). Where the matter relates to complaints about social housing then it falls under the jurisdiction of the Housing Ombudsman rather than LGSCO.

- 3.3 There are separate statutory processes in relation to social care complaints for Adult's and Children's services (termed 'statutory social care complaints'). Once the statutory procedure is exhausted the complainant has the right of recourse to the LGSCO.
- 3.4 The LGSCO reserves the right to accept and investigate a complaint even if it has not been through either our corporate or the statutory complaints procedures. This can occur when there are urgent issues (such as imminent homelessness), vulnerability, or if the complainant shows that they have complained to the council but have not received a response. However, in general the LGSCO expects complainants to utilise the internal complaints process first to give local authorities the opportunity to resolve the matter directly.
- 3.5 This report covers two reporting periods:
- 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021; and
 - 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022
- 3.6 Every July the LGSCO writes an annual review letter to every local authority which outlines the complaints and enquiries they have dealt with during the previous financial year. The annual letters received by Slough Borough Council for 2020-21 and 2021-22 can be found in Appendix B and C.
- 3.7 Officers have reviewed the annual letters from the LGSCO and noted that;
- In 2020-21, 1 of 2 investigations conducted by the LGSCO were upheld. Whilst the letters refer to percentages, the figures are based on a very small number of cases and therefore using percentages is potentially misleading. The figure compares well against the average figure of 63% (see appendix B) for similar authorities, but again the small number of cases makes this comparison potentially misleading.
 - In 2021-22, 4 of 5 investigations conducted by the LGSCO were upheld. This compares to an average of 64% in similar organisations. Three of the investigations related to one complaint concerning three individuals. The complaint related to services delivered by Slough Children First.
 - In all 5 cases over the two year period the LGSCO was satisfied that the council had successfully implemented agreed recommendations.
 - Since 2021-22 the LGSCO noted general concerns across all local authorities regarding the erosion of effective complaint functions. The Ombudsman noted that they are working to develop a new programme of work that will utilise complaints to drive improvements in both local complaints systems and services. This is something Slough Borough Council will be concentrating on starting with a review of the complaint process with a view of changing from a 3 stage to a 2 stage corporate complaint process as well as improving the internal reporting to CLT to ensure corporate leadership of complaints.
- 3.8 The table below shows the full breakdown of the outcomes of LGCSO complaints received during these two reporting periods (2020-21 and 2021-22) and comparison against the previously reported year (2019-20). Note: this includes cases where the LGSCO determined there was no further action and they chose not to progress the

complaint to an investigation as, for example, the complaint has not been through the corporate or statutory process, or the matter is outside the jurisdiction of the LGSCO.

LGSCO decision	Number of Complaints (% of total)							
	2019-20		2020-21		2021-22			
Investigated - Upheld	5	9%		1	4%		4	8%
Investigated –Not upheld	5	9%		1	4%		1	2%
No further action	45	82%		25	92%		46	90%
Total number of LGSCO complaints reported	55	100%		27	100%		51	100%

3.9 There was a significant increase in the number of Ombudsman cases received from 2021-22 compared to 2020-21. In March 2020 the LGSCO suspended casework for approximately three months due to the pandemic. This is likely to have impacted the number of cases and decisions they were able to reach and cases that they were able to fully investigate, and the data should be interpreted with this in mind.

Of the upheld complaints received by the LGSCO in 2021-22, three were in relation to Children’s Services (1 complaint in relation to 3 individuals) and the other a Planning matter. Further detail is provided in Appendix A.

3.10 This trend appears in-line with the national picture; the LGSCO’s [Review of Local Government Complaints 2020-21](#) the LGSCOs Review of Local Government Complaints 2020-21 noted that there was an increase in the uphold rate of all categories of complaint, other than environmental services and protection, which typically include complaints about refuse and recycling, noise, pollution and licensing.

Internal complaints data

3.11 In the period 1st April 2021- 31st March 2022 the council received and investigated 898 complaints at stage 1, 74 at stage 2 and 3 at stage 3. Of the stage 1 complaints received 44 were investigated under the statutory adult social care complaints process. The table below shows a breakdown of the number of complaints received by stages over the last 2 financial years. (Please refer to Appendix D for a detailed analysis of the Council’s Statutory and Corporate Complaints 2021-22).

	2020/21	2021/22
Stage 1	701	898
Stage 2	62	74
Stage 3	7	3
Total Complaints handled	770	975

3.12 42% of the complaints received were in relation to Osbornes our Housing Repairs Management partners, 15% were for Revenues and Benefits, 7% for Customer Services, 5% for Adult Social Care and 4% for Environmental services, the remaining were widely varied.

3.13 The main root causes for complaints were largely related to capacity and broadly centred on;

- Delays & Timeliness- This category relates to the time taken to carry out a service. The Council always seeks to avoid delays in service delivery however as many of the services we undertake are demand led, this is not always possible. Although each service would seek to prioritise more urgent areas or ensure the most urgent cases and people with the highest levels of need are prioritised, this can understandably still be dissatisfying for members of the public whose concerns are not prioritised.
- Communication- Lack of communication- these are generally between officers, teams or departments within the Council. Where it is established, the council accepts fault and both acknowledge and apologise for any inconvenience caused.
- Quality- These complaints relate to services provided directly by Council staff or relate to the quality or conduct of staff employed by service partners. Quality issues within any area services are addressed through the relevant line managements. Quality issues with provider services are addressed through the Council's contract management procedures.

3.14 65 % of all complaints were partially or fully upheld, this is in line with the percentage of upheld cases investigated by the LGSCO countrywide for 2020-21, and their report for 2021-22 has not yet been published. Where time delays or lack of communication were established these were mostly upheld.

3.15 Some of the learnings we derived from complaints resulted in; changes to processes and procedures, additional training where a need was identified, feedback to staff individually and in team meetings, reminders to staff and partners (Enforcement agents, Osbornes, e.g.) of Standard Operation Procedures, adjustments to working practices, improvements to contract management, and more transparency and management of customer expectations around service delivery and capacity.

Learning and improvements

Complaints operate a 3 stage process and will be looking at reducing this to 2 stage. The LGSCO complaints highlight the need for quality of complaints instead of time being spent on various stages. Officers are liaising with scrutiny members in relation to setting up a task & finish group to look at best practice guidance and the LGSCO's training programme to enable recommendations to be made to cabinet on improving the complaints process.

Whilst data has been reported previously, this has sometimes focused on the number of complaints and timeliness of responding as opposed to focusing on capturing learning and trends. The Monitoring Officer is responsible for reporting maladministration to members and the post holder has taken a lead on reviewing all cases which have been referred to the LGSCO to ensure the Council responds in an open and transparent manner and that options for early resolution is explored.

4. Implications of the Recommendation

4.1 *Financial implications*

Payment of compensation is made on individual cases as directed by the LGSCO. Below shows the compensations awarded by the LGSCO.

2020-21 Planning - £2,150

2021-22 Planning - £2,000

4.2 *Legal implications*

4.2.1 The LGSCO is the independent body responsible for investigating complaints made against local authorities where it is alleged that there has been maladministration causing injustice. Under the Local Government Act 1974, the LGSCO is responsible for investigating complaints against council and some other authorities, investigating complaints about adult social care providers from people who arrange or fund their own adult social care and for providing advice and guidance on good administrative practice.

4.2.2 The expectation is that a complainant will utilise a local authority's complaints process prior to referring the matter to the LGSCO, although the LGSCO can dispense with this requirement in specific cases. Complaints can be made by a member of the public, their authorised representative, a personal representative of a deceased person or a person deemed suitable to act on behalf of a member of the public if that person is unable to authorise them.

4.2.3 The LGSCO has the power to make recommendations to a local authority following a complaint on how to improve its services and to put things right for the complainant. The recommendations are not mandatory and the local authority does not have to accept or follow them. Remedies recommended by the LGSCO can include an apology, financial compensation, a review of procedures, staff training, and reconsideration of a decision and payment of money where this should have been paid.

4.2.4 Maladministration is not defined in the legislation, however case law has held that it includes bias, neglect, inattention, delay, incompetence, ineptitude, perversity, turpitude and arbitrariness. Examples of maladministration include excessive or unreasonable delay, making misleading or inaccurate statements, failing to follow a specified procedure, failing to consult or liaise, failing to provide information when requested to do so, not keeping adequate records and failing to investigate or reply to a query from a member of the public. The LGSCO is concerned with the manner in which the decision was reached, as opposed to the actual decision.

4.2.5 Personal injustice can include the time and trouble involving in pursuing a complaint against a public body, the loss of a right or service, costs associated with pursuing the complaint and inconvenience, worry, distress and hurt feelings.

4.2.6 Certain matters are outside the remit of the LGSCO. These include decisions where there is a statutory right of appeal, situations where the complainant has had a remedy by way of court proceedings and where the complainant has failed to make a complaint within 12 months of the matter complained of (although there is discretion to extend this time limit).

4.2.7 The LGSCO regularly publishes good practice guides both on complaints handling and on suggested remedies for specific complaints. These include guidance relating to council housing repairs, neighbour nuisance, council housing management, benefits, school admissions, special educational needs, environmental health, planning and social care.

4.3 *Risk management implications*

4.3.1 Complaints can be an essential means by which the Council assures the quality of council service. By listening to complaints and looking at learning, taking improvement action where necessary, the Council minimises the risk of non-compliance with legal requirements as well as financial loss and ensures improved customer satisfaction.

4.4 *Environmental implications*

4.4.1 None

4.5 *Equality implications*

4.5.1 Learning from complaints also assists the Council in fulfilling its statutory duty under s149 of the Equality Act.

4.5.2 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 sets out the Public-Sector Equality Duty which requires a public authority (or those exercising public functions) to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not.

5. Background Papers

None.

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MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE RECORD 2022/23
CUSTOMER & COMMUNITY SCRUTINY PANEL

	COUNCILLOR	6 July 2022	7 September 2022	20 October 2022	7 December 2022
1.	Begum (Chair)	P	P	P	P
2.	Muvvala (Vice-Chair)	P	P	P	P
3.	Ali	P	P	P	P
4.	Brooker	Ap	P	P	P
5.	Hussain	Ap	Ap	Ab	P
6.	Kaur	P	P	P	P
7.	M Malik	P	P	P	P
8.	S Malik	P	P	P	Ap

MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE RECORD 2022/23
CUSTOMER & COMMUNITY SCRUTINY PANEL

9.	Mohammad	P	P	P	P

P = Present for whole meeting P* = Present for part of meeting Ap = Apologies given Ab = Absent, no apologies given