

Date of issue: Friday, 8 September 2023

MEETING:	CABINET	
	Councillor Smith	Leader of the Council – Improvement & Recovery
	Councillor Chahal	Deputy Leader of the Council – Financial Oversight, Council Assets, Procurement and Revenue & Benefits
	Councillor I. Ahmed	Leisure, Community Cohesion, Regulation, Enforcement and Planning
	Councillor Bedi	Transport, Housing, Highways, The Environment and Environmental Services
	Councillor Kelly	Education, Children's Services, Lifelong Skills and Governance
	Councillor Muvvala	Public Protection, Customer Service, I.T and Young Futures
	Councillor Wright	Health, Social Care and Wellbeing
DATE AND TIME:	MONDAY, 18TH SEPTEMBER, 2023 AT 6.30 PM	
VENUE:	COUNCIL CHAMBER - OBSERVATORY HOUSE, 25 WINDSOR ROAD, SL1 2EL	
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER: (for all enquiries)	NICHOLAS PONTONE 07749 709 868	

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**

<u>AGENDA ITEM</u>	<u>REPORT TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>	<u>WARD</u>
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Apologies for absence.

1.	Declarations of Interest	-	-
	<i>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.</i>		
2.	Minutes of the Meeting held on 17th July 2023	1 - 8	
3.	Revenue and Capital Budget Outturn 2022/23	9 - 38	All
4.	Refresh of the Councils Finance Improvement Action Plan	39 - 68	All
5.	Approval of annual Business and Improvement Plan for Slough Children First Limited (SCF)	69 - 174	All
6.	Budget Monitoring - Quarter 1 2023/24	175 - 206	All
7.	Updated Corporate Plan	207 - 322	All
8.	Slough Adult Carers Strategy 2023-26	323 - 380	All
9.	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Update	381 - 410	All
10.	Update on Re-commissioning of Berkshire East Specialist Integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health Service	411 - 416	All
11.	Update on the procurement forward plan for services in excess of £180,000 and works in excess of £1 million	417 - 438	All
12.	Housing Service & Improvement Plan Proposals	To Follow	All
13.	Observatory House - Strategic Business Case	439 - 446	All
14.	Estate Strategy Update	447 - 454	All
15.	Asset Disposal Programme Update	To Follow*	All
16.	Slough Urban Renewal - Update	To Follow*	All
17.	References from Scrutiny	To Follow	All
18.	Exclusion of Press and Public	-	-

It is recommended that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the item in Part 2 of the Agenda, as it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding the information) as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (amended).

PART II

19.	Approval of annual Business and Improvement Plan for Slough Children First Limited (SCF) - Appendix	455 - 456	All
20.	Update on Re-commissioning of Berkshire East Specialist Integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health Service - Appendix	457 - 466	All
21.	Observatory House - Strategic Business Case - Appendices 1 and 2	467 - 488	All
22.	Estate Strategy Update	489 - 556	All
23.	Asset Disposal Programme Update - Appendices	To Follow*	All
24.	Slough Urban Renewal - Update - Appendices	To Follow*	All

Key decisions are shown in bold

* Reports marked with an asterisk are to follow subject to the recommendations of the Cabinet Committee meeting to be held on 14th September 2023. The reports are available to view on the agenda for that meeting.

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.

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Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 17th July, 2023.

Present:- Councillors Smith (Chair), Chahal (Vice-Chair), Bedi, Kelly, Muvvala and Wright

Also present:- Councillors E. Ahmed, Ajaib, Dhillon, Hulme, Mann, Matloob, Qaseem and Stedmond

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor I. Ahmed

PART 1

11. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

12. Minutes of the Meeting held on 19th June 2023

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th June 2023 be approved as a correct record.

13. Improvement & Recovery Update

The Leader introduced a report that provided the quarterly update to Cabinet on progress being made by the Council against the Secretary of State Directions issued in 2021 and the overall council recovery plan.

The report included detailed appendices of the progress reports to the Improvement & Recovery Board for March, April and May 2023 which were noted by Cabinet. The Best Value Commissioners had recently submitted their 3rd report to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC), which set out their views on the progress the authority was making. The Leader expressed gratitude to the Commissioners for the support they were providing to the Council and he summarised the Commissioners comments to the report which highlighted the scale of the challenges that the Council still faced.

The Cabinet noted the report.

Resolved –

- (a) That the progress made by the Council since the previous report in addressing the Directions of the Secretary of State be noted;
- (b) That the position regarding the Commissioners report and letters from the Secretary of State be noted;

- (c) That the next steps to deliver against the issues raised by Commissioners and the Secretary of State as set out in the action plans and other workstreams that had been developed to address the Directions be agreed.

14. Approval of annual business plan for Slough Children First Limited (SCF)

The Leader stated that the approval of the SCF business plan was to be deferred to September Cabinet to enable more background work to be done to support the proposals and secure the approval of the Best Value Commissioners.

A Member had submitted a question on the report under the Executive Procedure Rules and the Leader agreed that this could be put to the meeting despite the deferral of the report. Councillor Hulme asked the Lead Member for children's services about engagement with community organisations and how the effectiveness of partnership working would be measured. The Lead Member responded by listing examples of the organisations that would be engaged and confirmed there would be a set of outcome measures so that performance could be monitored.

Resolved - That the item be deferred to the September meeting of the Cabinet.

15. Early Help Partnership Strategy

The Cabinet considered a report that sought approval of the Early Help Partnership Strategy.

It was recognised that Slough needed to improve its approach to early help support through proactive, preventative partnership working. Improved early help support would reduce the requirement for more costly specialist services over time and enable communities to be build resilience. The strategy had been co-produced with partners and aimed to deliver a cohesive approach to early intervention and prevention for children, young people and families in Slough. The plan had been accepted by the Children and Young People's Partnership Board and presented to the Slough Wellbeing Board. The strategy addressed some of the recommendations in the People Scrutiny Panel report on Slough Children First's business plan, particularly its workforce strategy, including the need to develop a shared language and performance metrics across the wider 'children's workforce'.

Councillors Qaseem and Hulme were invited to address the Cabinet and they asked whether the service had adequately trained teams in place to deliver the service and how it would become more accessible to those that already struggled to engage with Council services. The Executive Director, People (Children) confirmed that all staff in the service had their training and development needs assessed through the 1-1 and appraisal processes. In relation to engagement, the Lead Member for children's services explained a

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range of steps that would be taken including a communications plan, events, updated Family Information Service directory, working with the community and voluntary sector and through the new family hub model.

Members of Cabinet welcomed the strategy and commented on the importance of performance monitoring and alignment to the Council's emerging Corporate Plan which was expected to include a focus on children's health.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Cabinet approved the strategy.

Resolved – That the adoption and implementation of the Early Help Partnership Strategy which would be overseen and implemented by the Children and Young People's Partnership Board (Appendix 1 to the report) be approved.

16. Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) updated Policy and Use

A report was considered that sought approval of the updated RIPA policy and guidance which covered covert surveillance and the acquisition and disclosure of communications data.

The use of powers under RIPA by the Council was rare, however, it was important that the Council had an appropriate and up-to-date policy in place. The Home Office Code of Practice required that the RIPA policy be subject to annual review and submitted to elected Members for approval. In addition to the operational need, the policy review provided assurance that the Council was complying with the RIPA legislation and provided the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) assurance that the Council was operating within the required legal parameters. The Council was required to submit a self-assessment of RIPA to IPCO by 31st July 2023 and this included confirmation that that policy had been reviewed. The policy that the Cabinet was asked to approve was set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

Councillor Mann was invited to address the Cabinet and she asked officers to explain why there had been a three-year gap between reviews of the RIPA policy given the stated requirement for an annual review. The Lead Member, Councillor Muvvala, stated that the 2020 policy refresh did not go through either Cabinet or the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee as it did not contain any significant changes and that many of responsible officers during that period had now left the authority. He highlighted that the policy as presented to Cabinet reset the commitment to effective governance of the RIPA policy. The requirements of the IPCO triennial inspection were summarised. It was noted that there had not been in any RIPA authorisations during the period.

At the conclusion of the discussion the revised RIPA policy was approved.

Resolved –

- (a) That the revised policy and guidance be approved,
- (b) That the RIPA applications and activity during 2022/23 be noted, and
- (c) That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to update the Policy as may be required, in consultation with the Lead Member, to reflect either changes in the Authorising Officers or relevant legislation.

17. Approval to Appoint Supplier(s) of DSO Vehicles

Further to the Cabinet decision of 17th April 2023 to test through competitive tender two methods of procurement of vehicles for the Council's Direct Services Organisation (DSO), the Cabinet considered a report that set out the outcome of the tendering process.

The DSO vehicle fleet was required to deliver a range of services including waste collection, waste disposal, grounds maintenance, street cleansing and minor highway repairs. The recommendation to Cabinet was that the best value option was to enter 5-year lease agreements for 32 diesel powered vehicles to commence in December 2023 and for 4 diesel powered vehicles to commence in December 2024. The current leasing contracts ended on 30 November 2023 and 30 November 2024 respectively. The cost of leasing the 32 vehicles from December 2023 was £368k per annum and for the 4 other vehicles it was £159k per annum. Details of the bids submitted was set out in the report and appendix, which contained exempt information and was considered in Part I of the meeting without disclosing any of the exempt information.

Councillor Mann was invited to address the Cabinet and she asked what savings the administration would be making to offset the cost pressures arising from the recommendation and what steps the Cabinet had taken to ensure best value. The Lead Member for procurement highlighted that the report had addressed this and confirmed that in 2023/24 the pressure would be mitigated by deleting an unfilled post within the DSO and in 2024/25 there were various options for savings or additional income that would be considered as part of the budget setting process. The Cabinet noted that market prices for specialist vehicles had risen in recent years and were satisfied that the proposal represented best value.

Lead Members discussed a range of issues including the alternative options such as purchasing the vehicles outright. It was considered that leasing provided the best value to the Council and whilst electric vehicles had been considered they were considerably more expensive and in some cases not as well suited operationally.

After due consideration, the recommendations were agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) Approved the leasing of 32 diesel powered vehicles from Company A for 60 months (5 years) at the new monthly rates set out in Appendix 1 from December 2023 at a total of £367,953 / annum.
- (b) Approved the leasing of 4 diesel powered vehicles from Company A for 60 months (5 years) at the new monthly rates set out in Appendix 1 from December 2024 at a total of £159,152 / annum.

18. Procurement of Temporary Labour Contract

The Cabinet considered a report that sought approval to commence the procurement process for a contract to supply temporary labour to the Council.

The current contract for temporary labour was due to expire on 24th March 2024 and a new contract was required to ensure there was no disruption to the provision of temporary staff. The Council was seeking to reduce spend on temporary workers, however, it did need a contract in place to ensure it had access to temporary labour to deliver projects which required specialist skills and experience as well as for roles where there were national skills shortages. The advantages of a contract included cost, efficiencies and access to a wider pool of workers with specialist expertise. The total value of the current contract for temporary labour was expected to exceed £70m over four years although the levels of agency spend should reduce over time as many areas were now able to recruit permanently to posts where appropriate. The contract had been included in the contracts list approved by Cabinet in April 2023 to be tendered in 2023/24, but this further detailed report was being brought to Cabinet due to the size of the contract.

Councillor Matloob was invited to address the Cabinet and he asked how the new contract would fulfil the new administration's election pledge to cut temporary agency staff by at least 30%. The Lead Member for HR confirmed that the Cabinet was committed to reducing the annual spend, which was currently circa £21m, and the Cabinet considered this to be too high. It was important to have a contract in place to access temporary labour to meet business needs, but Lead Members would be working with their Executive Directors to reduce the level of spend under the contract and bring it back under control.

After due consideration the Cabinet agreed the commencement of a procurement process for the provision of temporary labour.

Resolved – That authority to commence the procurement process for the provision of a Temporary Labour Contract, following the approval of the procurement forward plan submitted to April 2023 Cabinet, be confirmed.

19. Library 2023/24 Operating Model Performance Report

Further to the agreement by Cabinet in February 2023 that a new Library Operating Model be implemented on 1st April 2023 as part of the Council's 2023/24 savings plans, an update report on performance under the new model was provided to Cabinet.

The report demonstrated that the implementation of the new model had been successful and that the savings plan was on target to be achieved. All libraries had been open for their advertised times since the new model was introduced. There were a range of performance metrics and targets for the year, including the number of visitors to libraries, books issues, volunteers and events and these would be monitored closely. Library opening hours had reduced 36% compared to the pre-covid year of 2019/20. The targets reflected this figure, but the levels of activity had not yet returned to pre-covid levels. Lead Members commented that it was a positive start but that more time was needed to assess how the model operated over time.

Councillors Mann and Matloob were invited to address Cabinet and they asked questions about the statistics for broken self-service machines and whether future public consultations would use the model of that undertaken for libraries which had wide engagement with residents and a relatively long consultation period. The Lead Member for library services stated that all self-service machines were in operation as of last week and contingencies were in place in the event of breakdown. The lessons learned and good practice of the library consultation process had been shared across the Council and the Cabinet was committed to strong public engagement. The method, timescale and extent of future consultations would vary by the nature and purpose of the issue and any statutory requirements.

A question was asked about the accuracy of the attendance figure in the report for one of the events at Britwell library. The Executive Director for the service stated that the figure would be checked and Members present would be informed.

At the conclusion of the discussion the report was noted.

Resolved –

- (a) That the successful implementation of the new Library Operating Model be welcomed.
- (b) That the performance of the new Library Operating Model which was implemented on 1 April 2023 as set out in Appendix A to the report be noted.

20. A4 Cycle Lane (Huntercombe Lane to Uxbridge Road)

The Cabinet considered a report on the proposals for an off-road cycleway along the A4. Concept designs had been presented to Cabinet in November 2020 and the Council had subsequently been awarded a capital grant of £10.4m from the Department for Transport to fully fund the project.

The scheme would provide an important facility to encourage cycling and walking which would contribute to a wide range of positive outcomes including addressing health and obesity problems, improvements to air quality, sustainable travel and safety. The report set out preliminary designs for the proposed route to extend from Huntercombe crossroads to the Uxbridge Road junction. The Cabinet was asked to confirm support for the scheme and give delegated authority to undertake public and statutory consultations and make the necessary traffic regulation orders.

The Lead Member for transport summarised the scheme and highlighted the steps being taken to ensure it was delivered within the £10.4m capital grant that had been secured so there would be no impact on the Council budget. The costs had been carefully assessed and approximately £2.1m contingency was in place to mitigate the risks associated with any such highway construction scheme. A project board was in place to identify and mitigate risks through a value engineering process to ensure there was no budget overspend.

The Cabinet welcomed the potential benefits of the cycleway and discussed a number of issues including the public consultation process and steps to minimise any disruption to residents during construction. It was noted that the majority of the works were off the highway which would mean minimal disruption. Lead Members commented on a number of specific design issues such as at the Huntercombe roundabout. Officers commented that the designs in the appendices were preliminary and issues raised through the consultation could be properly considered. The Cabinet encouraged good and regular communication with Members and residents on both the consultation arrangements and the progress of the scheme.

At the conclusion of the discussion the recommendations were agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Council's support for the A4 Cycle Lane and agreement that the allocated grant funds of £10.4m to the proposed approach set out in the report be confirmed.
- (b) That delegated authority be given to the Director of Place & Communities, in consultation with the Lead Member for transport, housing, highways, the environment and environmental services, to approve the undertaking of a statutory and public consultation and following consultation, make the necessary traffic regulation orders;

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- (c) Where procurement is above officer delegation thresholds and is fully covered by the allocated grant, that delegated authority be given to the Director of Place & Communities, in consultation with the Lead Member for transport, housing, highways, the environment and environmental services, to approve the procurement and award of contract for traffic signals and design works.

21. Exclusion of Press and Public

All business was conducted in Part I and it was therefore not necessary to exclude the press and public.

22. Approval to Appoint Supplier(s) of DSO Vehicles - Appendix

Resolved – That the Part II Appendix noted.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.00 pm)

Slough Borough Council

REPORT TO:	Cabinet
DATE:	18 September 2023
SUBJECT:	Revenue and Capital Budget Outturn 2022-23
CHIEF OFFICER:	Adele Taylor – Executive Director, Finance & Commercial (Section 151 Officer)
CONTACT OFFICER	Neil Haddock – Interim Strategic Finance Manager, Financial Planning & Reporting
WARD(S):	All
PORTFOLIO:	Councillor Smith – Leader of the Council Councillor Chahal – Lead Member Financial Oversight
KEY DECISION:	YES
EXEMPT:	NO
DECISION SUBJECT TO CALL IN:	YES
APPENDICES:	A Capitalisation Direction letter B Commissioner’s Instruction No 1 C Asset Sales D Capital Outturn

1 Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report sets out the draft revenue and capital outturn position for Slough Borough Council for the year 2022/23

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the carry forwards requested by departments as set in paragraphs 8.1 to 8.5 and Table 7
2. Approve the proposed additions and amendments to the Capital Programme as set out in paragraph 8.6 and Table 8

Commissioner comment

This report sets out the Council's draft financial position for 2022/23 after the end of the financial year. The position should be considered provisional until all years' accounts have been prepared and the audits signed off by the Council's external auditors which could be some way off. Associated issues may continue to be resolved or identified that could affect the financial position.

The Commissioners note the key elements of this report, summarised position for each of the ringfenced funds and refreshed assumptions relating to the capitalisation direction which at £301.9m to 31 March 2024 is higher than predicted in the budget approved by Council March 2023, which estimated a figure of £298.7m.

The capitalisation direction is based in part on assumptions, the external environment is challenging and inevitably the situation will change. The Council should take all reasonable action and necessary steps to minimise the risk to which it is exposed and mitigate pressures where possible, to remain within the original estimates and demonstrate an improving financial trajectory.

2 Report – Introduction

- 2.1 Effective management of Slough Borough Council's budget is critical to its financial recovery and the restoration of a balanced budget without the need for extraordinary use of capital receipts to support revenue expenditure. This report sets out the draft outturn position for the Council's budget in 2022/23 and makes recommendations to recognise and mitigate the risks arising from the underlying position reflected within the outturn position.
- 2.2 Slough Borough Council has been balancing its revenue budget via the support of capital receipts under a capitalisation direction authorised by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) since October 2021, as set out in the [letter](#) attached at Appendix A. In support of this approach, Slough Borough Council developed a capitalisation direction model to estimate the level of capital receipts that would be required to support the revenue budget, as part of a broader financial recovery plan.
- 2.3 In 2022/23 the original estimated level of capital receipts required to balance the revenue budget was £84.1m. This report indicates that the final estimated level of capital receipts required is £59.2m, £24.9m less than originally expected. This figure is based on a working assumption that carry forward requests are approved as part of this report.
- 2.4 The improved financial position in 2022/23, where additional grants and better than expected recovery of Council Tax produced an additional £3.6m of income, means that the requirement for support from capital receipts/the capitalisation direction has reduced by the same amount.

- 2.5 2022/23 was a challenging year for the Council, not only due to the actions, savings and transformation needed due to its unique circumstances arising from the issuing of a S114 notice in 2021. In addition, national economic factors have impacted local government, such as the rise in inflation and continuing increase in demand for services, in particular in relation to children's and adult's social care. These underlying pressures are anticipated to continue throughout 2023/24.
- 2.6 In terms of the financial management and associated financial controls and processes operating within Slough Borough Council, there continues to be a lot of work undertaken to establish a solid foundation of good practice and prudent financial management. Some progress has been made in finalising Statements of Accounts for prior years but further work is needed to ensure systems, reporting, risk management and effective outturn forecasting and budget management are fully embedded. The recruitment of a permanent Executive Director of Finance & Commercial, alongside recruitment campaigns to secure permanent appointments of Deputy Directors, Strategic Finance Managers and the teams that support them are anticipated to provide a valuable source of consistent and sustained financial management good practice, advice and leadership. This will be essential to the continued improvement of financial management practices within the Council.
- 2.7 In this context, the approach being taken in 2023/24 is building and improving upon the approach adopted in 2022/23, for example by ensuring that budget monitoring is undertaken and reported to CLT on a monthly basis, with formal reports submitted to Commissioners and Cabinet on a quarterly basis, reflecting best practice. The format of reporting is also being enhanced to support greater transparency and accessibility, providing a mixture of narrative reporting alongside graphical and tabular reporting. Key to effective decision making is the provision of relevant, reliable and timely information and the approach being proposed for 2023/24 is designed to enhance these requirements.

3 GENERAL FUND

- 3.1 The budget for 2022/23 required a Capitalisation Direction of £84.1m in order to balance. The draft outturn position indicates that the Capitalisation Direction actually needed is £59.2m, a reduction of £24.9m.
- 3.2 Within this overall position there are a number of significant variations. Service departments collectively overspent by £13.2m, and Corporate Budgets collectively underspent by £33.9m. In addition, the Collection Fund (which comprises Council Tax and Business Rate receipts) and Government Grants provided £4.1m more than had been budgeted for. This amounts to an outturn position that is £24.9m better than the original budget.
- 3.3 Table 1 shows the outturn in more detail, with commentary provided from 3.7 onwards.

Table 1 – General Fund Outturn

	Budget	Outturn	Variance	Requested c/fs	Revised Outturn	Revised Variance
ED People (Adults)	28,768	34,523	5,755	14	34,538	5,770
ED People (Children)	8,047	7,972	-75	0	7,972	-75
Slough Children First	32,950	34,289	1,339	0	34,289	1,339
ED Place & Communities	17,421	15,868	-1,552	0	15,868	-1,552
ED Monitoring Officer	2,140	1,945	-195	0	1,945	-195
ED Housing, Property & Planning	-869	7,725	8,593	0	7,725	8,593
ED Strategy	16,104	12,728	-3,376	2,182	14,910	-1,194
ED Finance & Commercial (S151)	7,569	7,679	110	433	8,112	543
Service Total	112,131	122,730	10,599	2,630	125,359	13,229
Corporate Budgets	77,279	41,532	-35,747	1,810	43,341	-33,937
Expenditure Total	189,409	164,261	-25,148	4,440	168,701	-20,708
Council Tax	-65,103	-69,179	-4,076	0	-69,179	-4,076
Business Rates - Local Share	-37,326	-40,168	-2,842	0	-40,168	-2,842
Collection Fund Deficit	8,151	10,611	2,460	0	10,611	2,460
Revenue Support Grant	-6,451	-6,451	0	0	-6,451	0
Other Grants	-4,626	-4,291	334	0	-4,291	334
Funding Total	-105,354	-109,479	-4,124	0	-109,479	-4,124
Capitalisation Direction	-84,055	-53,602	29,273	-4,440	-59,222	24,833

- 3.4 Having Service departments overspend significantly with a large underspend on a Corporate Contingency budget doesn't necessarily support understanding and transparency of reporting. Subject to further discussion with Commissioners, a different approach will be adopted for 2023/24 such that transparency and ownership of budgets is increased, for example by allocating funding to support contractual inflation, whilst ensuring that Corporate Budgets continue to be used prudently to drive improved budget management across the whole Council. A cabinet decision on the virements required to facilitate this is included in the Quarter 1 Budget Management Report.
- 3.5 Significant work is underway to review and refresh the budget information held within the Council's Enterprise Resource and Planning (ERP) system, such that budget managers are supported to undertake their roles and responsibilities effectively by providing access to timely, relevant and reliable information, that in turn will support effective operational and strategic decision making.
- 3.6 The Capitalisation Direction provides the balance of funding needed to support the level of expenditure required. Slough has been able to use capital receipts for revenue purposes, which is not normally allowed under accounting rules. In that context, it can also be seen that in 2022/23 Slough Borough Council controlled its finances better than originally anticipated resulting in a reduction in the level of potential support required by £24.9m, i.e. the sum of the underspend against the budgets and enhanced levels of income.
- 3.7 In conjunction with this proposal, it is also proposed that the allocation of Corporate Budgets be reviewed with CLT, Commissioners and Cabinet, to support improved transparency and accountability in budget management. This review would be

undertaken in the context of the [Commissioners Instruction Number 1](#) attached at Appendix B.

- 3.8 Service directorates were required to deliver savings in 2022/23, and progress against meeting the savings targets was monitored and reported on throughout the year. The total target was £20.0. Of this £13.5m was actually delivered, a shortfall of £6.5m. The details by Directorate are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Saving delivery Summary

Directorate	Target	Achieved	Gap
ED People (Adults)	5,900	4,243	1,657
ED People (Children)	1,109	832	277
Slough Children First	2,673	-64	2,737
ED Place & Communities	4,551	4,031	520
ED Monitoring Officer	0	0	0
ED Housing, Property & Planning	2,902	1,602	1,300
ED Strategy	1,772	1,772	0
ED Finance & Commercial (S151)	1,051	1,051	0
Total	19,958	13,467	6,491
Total excluding Slough Children First	17,285	13,531	3,754

Service Draft Outturn

- 3.9 ***People (Adults)*** – The overspend reported of £5.8m is principally driven by the increased demand for services to support vulnerable adults with learning disabilities and mental health challenges. The demand for these services is increasing nationally, in part due to the pandemic which reduced the availability of care and support during lockdown periods contributing to the further development of eligible care needs. This in turn put pressure on what continues to be a market of service provision with limited capacity.
- 3.10 This situation is exacerbated by the increasing complexity of the assessed eligible care needs of individuals and a shortage of suitably qualified staff to meet their needs. The combination of these factors is driving up the cost of care nationwide. Work is being undertaken within People (Adults) to develop alternative service delivery models that will support improved outcomes for individuals at lower cost to Slough Borough Council, linked to cost and budget improvements in 2023/24 and beyond.
- 3.11 Adults had a challenging savings target to meet in 22/23 of £5.9m and achieved £4.2m of that; the gap will have contributed to the forecast overspend. Areas where the savings target was not achieved include Reablement efficiencies, and savings from reviews within the Mental Health service area.
- 3.12 ***People (Children) excluding Slough Children First*** – There was an underspend of £0.1m, arising from a number of relatively small variations against budget. The directorate delivered £0.8m of their £1.1m savings target. The shortfall is caused by a delay on the project to reshape the Council’s children’s centres provision.

- 3.13 **Slough Children First** – The value of the contract with Slough Children First was increased during the year. Despite this the level of demand and complexity of needs drove costs up further, resulting in an overspend of £1.3m. The budget for Slough Children First has been increased by £4.6m in 2023/24 which, in part, addresses the budget pressures identified. A separate report on this agenda looks in more detail at the financial pressures impacting upon Slough Children First, the implications arising from the financial years 2021/22 and 2022/23 and the potential future pressures arising. The funding of prior year deficits is reflected in the separate Quarter 1 Budget Management also on this agenda.
- 3.14 Slough Children’s First were set a net savings target of £2.6m. This means were asked to absorb £2.1m of growth pressures as well as deliver gross savings of £4.7m. The shortfall of £2.7m is therefore greater than the savings target because they were unable to absorb all of the growth pressures. A significant element of this was due to legal costs arising from demand levels and court delays.
- 3.15 **Place and Community** – This department covers a wide range of services, which have seen a range of variations against budget. Overall the department delivered an underspend of £1.6m, primarily made up of underspends arising from vacant posts and the additional income generated by the introduction of garden waste collection charges. However, there are some underlying pressures that will need to be addressed in the longer term, recognising that in the event that the vacancies are recruited to the headroom reduces. In particular there are a number of pressures linked to challenging income targets, and increased contractual costs, e.g. the leisure management fee.
- 3.16 Place and Community delivered £4.0m of their £4.6m savings during the year, with a saving in respect of the Leisure Management fee not having been achievable following negotiations concluded in July 2022.
- 3.17 **Monitoring Officer** - Underspend of £0.2m, arising from a number of relatively small under and overspends.
- 3.18 **Housing, Property & Planning** – The outturn position is an overspend of £8.6m, which is in part driven by the implications arising from the establishment of this department part way through the 2022/23 financial year, and also from more fundamental cost drivers such as temporary accommodation demands and associated expenditure during the year and the impact of the rise in energy prices which overspent by £0.8m. As part of the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) covering the four years from 2024/25 through to 2028/29, it is planned to undertake a comprehensive review of these budgets.
- 3.19 Housing, Property & Planning met £1.0m of their £2.3m savings target in 2022/23. There was a saving requirement of £1.3 million in respect of renting out parts of Observatory House which was not met.
- 3.20 **Strategy and Improvement** – The underspend of £1.2m has been delivered mainly due to a number of vacant posts. The directorate delivered its savings target of £1.8m.
- 3.21 **Finance and Commercial** – The overspend of £0.5m has arisen primarily due to needing to clear a backlog of cases within the Revenue & Benefits service, which

required significant overtime but which has now been cleared. In addition there has been a significant increase in the insurance premium which reflects increases across the insurance market, partly arising from the pandemic and a re-evaluation of risks. A re-procurement of Slough Borough Council's external insurance is being undertaken in 2023/24, which will be underpinned by a review of the scale and scope of risks faced, alongside an assessment of the value of risks that should be self-insured, the outcome of which will be reflected in the 2024/25 budget build.

- 3.22 **Corporate Budgets** – The underspend of £34.0m has a number of different elements to explain it. The first and most significant is the Minimum Revenue Provision budget (MRP). This was set at £32.1m, but the outturn was significantly less than that at £17.7m, a one of underspend of £14.4m. This variance arose because at the time the MRP budget was set there was no expectation that capital receipts would be used to repay historical debt and thus reduce it. However, during the year we made debt repayments which significantly reduced the amount owed by the Council and thus the MRP that is required.
- 3.23 The second main variance in Corporate Budgets was with the contingency budgets, in line with the [Commissioners Instruction Number 1](#) attached at Appendix B. These amounted to £18.0m and the expenditure against them was only £5.3m, a one-off variance of £12.7m. This approach will be reviewed and discussed with the Commissioners and the outcome fed into the development of the MTFs as part of the preparation of the 2024/25 budget.

4 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)

- 4.1 The HRA accounts for revenue expenditure and income relating to the Council's housing stock and is ringfenced from the General Fund. It must include all costs and income relating to the Council's housing landlord role (except in respect of households owed a homeless duty and provided accommodation in accordance with Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996).
- 4.2 A prudent and pragmatic approach has been adopted to reflect the financial realities facing the Council, hence the HRA capital programme for the next five years has been reduced to £52.7m in comparison to £123.4m for the previous 5 year period.
- 4.3 The HRA saw an in-year surplus of £3.7m in 2022.23 with favourable variances on both the expenditure and income side. This is detailed in the table below. The surplus will be transferred to HRA general reserves at the end of the financial year.
- 4.4 Key areas of variance include –
- Repairs & Maintenance Services - £0.9m mainly due to reduced expenditure on voids, electrical works, and lift maintenance.
 - Rents and Rates and Other overspend of £1.0m which was principally caused by the increase in energy costs seen last year.
 - Supervision and Management, where there was an underspend of £1.9m.

- Rents – £1.5m over-recovery, due to annual rent increase and lower than expected rental loss from Voids and Right to Buy sales.

Table 3 HRA Outturn Position

Income/Expenditure Category	Budget £'000	Outturn £'000	Variance £'000
Expenditure			
Repairs and Maintenance	10,304	9,423	(881)
Supervision and Management	9,631	7,748	(1,883)
Rents, Rates, Taxes and Other Charges	521	1,490	969
Provision for doubtful debt	1,338	1,382	44
Interest payable and similar charges	4,593	4,608	15
Capital grants and contribution	656	609	(47)
Depreciation, Impairment and Revaluation losses	9,113	9,113	0
Transfer to / from Reserve	0	0	0
Total HRA Expenditure	36,156	34,372	(1,783)
HRA Income			
Dwellings Rents	(34,608)	(36,137)	(1,529)
Non-dwellings Rents	(1,628)	(1,253)	375
Charges for Services and Facilities	(2,495)	(2,705)	(210)
Contributions towards Expenditure	(86)	(114)	(28)
HRA Investment Income	(15)	(557)	(542)
Transfer to / from Reserve	0	0	0
Total HRA Income	(38,833)	(40,766)	(1,934)
(Surplus) or deficit for the year on HRA services	(2,677)	(6,394)	(3,717)

5 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG)

5.1 Dedicated schools grant (DSG) is paid in support of local authority schools' and education providers and covers four distinct funding blocks:

1. Early Years Block (EYB) – Funding for pre-school aged children
2. Schools Block (SB) – Funding for mainstream schools
3. High Needs Block (HNB) - Funding children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
4. Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) – Funding services provided by the Local Authority to support schools and education providers.

5.2 The outturn for the DSG in 2022/23 is a deficit of £0.1m. Table 3 below outlines the final outturn position for the 4 DSG blocks.

Table 4 Dedicated Schools Grant

Block	Budget	Outturn	Variance	Cumulative (Surplus)/ Deficit
Schools	37,960	37,975	15	134
High Needs	23,619	24,026	407	25,870
Early Years	14,461	13,746	(715)	(825)
Central School Services	1,024	1,414	390	388
Total	77,064	77,161	97	25,567

- 5.3 The overspend on the High Needs Block is principally caused by increased demand for in borough SEND placements and places at Special Schools. Although, due to tight financial management these overspends have come down considerably over the last 2 years. The underspend on the Early Years Block was due to lower numbers of pre-school children than expected.
- 5.4 The DfE have been tapering down the historic Central Schools Block (CSSB) spend by 20% for a number of years. Historic spend included in the CSSB DSG in 2022-23 was £40k or 4% of the total CSSB allocation of £1,024k. The reduction of 20% (£8k) of historic spend in future years will be managed by looking at savings in other areas during each year of the reductions. For 2023-24 the CSSB budget has been balanced and will be approved by schools forum in September. Note that the 2022-23 CSSB budget included a credit budget of £337k in error. Actual expenditure against the CSSB DSG allocation of £1,024 was an overspend of £53k. This has led to an overall overstated overspend of £390k. This budget anomaly has been corrected in 2023-24.
- 5.5 All local authorities with DSG deficits are required to prepare and implement a deficit management plan, although the Department for Education (DfE) recognises that in some cases it may take several years for the situation to improve.
- 5.6 Slough's original deficit management plan was shared with the DfE in July 2021. The plan indicated that the deficit could potentially grow to £43m by 2024/25 if no mitigating actions were taken. Action is now being taken to reduce this significantly and it is anticipated that the annual in year deficit will be eliminated by 2026/27.
- 5.7 To this extent the DfE agreed a safety valve management plan with Slough where it would write-off the historic deficit between 2022/23 and 2026/27. The first payment of £10.8m was made in March 2023 with further payments due as follows:

Year	Safety Valve funding
2022/23	10.800
2023/24	3.240
2024/25	3.240
2025/26	3.240

2026/27	6.480
Total	27.000

- 5.8 The estimated cumulative deficit when the Safety Valve was agreed stood at £27,600k. The provisional outturn deficit is £25,567k, a reduction of £2,033k. The High Needs deficit needs to reduce by £10.800k to £15,070k as the first safety valve payment of £10,800k was received in late March 2023. Therefore, the net DSG deficit reduces to £14,767 from the £25,567k stated in the table.
- 5.9 This is predicated on the authority undertaking to reach a positive in-year balance on the DSG by the end of 2025/26 and in each subsequent year.

6 ASSET SALES

- 6.1 The Council's financial recovery plan is heavily dependent on the delivery of the asset disposal strategy. The Asset Disposal programme yielded capital receipts of £195m in 2022/23 and is forecast currently to yield £383.9m in total. The level of capital receipts achievable from the Asset Disposal Programme will be kept under review reflecting due diligence and market conditions, which could alter the total achieved.
- 6.2 The receipts have been applied to pay down loans that were due which has had significant beneficial impact on the outturn for 2022/23, which also feeds through into 2023/24.
- 6.3 More detail on the asset sales is provided in Appendix C

7 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

- 7.1 The General Fund capital programme saw an underspend of £12.0m against the budget of £28.7m. There are carry forward requests amounting to £4.0m and if these are accepted then the final outturn is an underspend of £8.1m (small difference due to rounding).
- 7.2 There were significant variances in Capital Schemes in Children's Services, Housing, Property & Planning and in Place & Communities. The most significant of these were a £5.5m underspend on remedial works at Nova House, and £1.1m underspend on Langley High Street Improvements, which was due to the budget being overstated. £1.7m underspend on Zone 1 - Sutton Lane Gyrotory (MRT) which has been partially carried forward, and £1.3m overspend against budget related to Additional Transport & Highways Grant funded projects. The grant funding was received for this after the budget was set and has been further profiled into future years. Full detail is provided in Appendix D.

Table 5 General Fund Capital Outturn

Service Area	Budget £'000	Outturn £'000	Variance £'000	c/f Request £'000	Revised Variance £'000
General Fund:					
Adults	1,825	1,350	-475	475	0
Children Services	1,731	613	-1,118	100	-1,018
Housing, Property & Planning	11,084	4,166	-6,918	520	-6,398
Place & Communities	14,015	10,487	-3,528	2,859	-669
Finance & Resources	0	5	5	0	5
General Fund Total	28,655	16,621	-12,034	3,954	-8,080

- 7.3 The budget for HRA Capital schemes was £10.7m in 2022/23 and the outturn pending approval of carry forward requests was £9.3m, an underspend of £1.4m. This was mostly due to an underspend on the Affordable Homes project and the RMI Capital Programme. The summary is shown in the table below.

Table 6: Capital (HRA)

Service Area	Budget £'000	Outturn £'000	Variance £'000	c/f Request £'000	Revised Variance £'000
Housing Revenue Account:					
RMI Capital Programme	5,302	3,584	-1,718	1,022	-696
Planned Maintenance Capital	1,918	1,666	-252	245	-7
Affordable Housing	3,500	2,794	-706	0	-706
HRA Total	10,720	8,044	-2,676	1,267	-1,409

8 Carry Forward Requests (Revenue and Capital)

Revenue

- 8.1 There are 7 carry forward requests coming from service and corporate departments, amounting to a total of £4.4m. As a working assumption the reported outturn has assumed they will be approved. Of the 7 requests 2 are particularly significant. These are both Transformation budgets.
- 8.2 The first is the IT Transformation Fund. A budget of £3.5m for 2022/23 and £1.0m for 2023/24 was created during the 2022/23 financial year, a total of £4.5m for the programme as a whole. As of the end of the year only £1.6m of the fund had been spent as the programme was slower to start than the budget timetable had allowed for. The Transformation of IT is considered essential to Slough Borough Council's recovery and as such a carry forward of the balance is requested.

- 8.3 The second is also a Transformation budget, this one for the wider Transformation Programme. The budget was also created during the 2022/23 financial year, and is for £2.5m in each of 2022/23 and 2023/24, a total of £5.0m. The programme was slower to start than the budget timetable had allowed for and as at the end of the financial year there was a balance of £1.8m against this code. The programme remains a 2 year programme, and carrying forward the underspend from last year will allow it to continue.
- 8.4 The full carry forward request for revenue items is given in the table below. Other than the 2 mentioned above, 3 are requests to carry forward specific funding received, and the final two (Elections and Member laptops) are to carry forward a small element of underspend to cover anticipated additional costs in 2023/24. Lastly, there is a request to carry forward the 3 years of Matrix rebates paid at the end of 22/23. The rebate had not been accounted for in the budget and the services were recharged at cost. The rebate was intended to be used as a resource to provide effective contract management. The carry forward is necessary to provide the funding resources to procure and deliver a new temporary labour contract including any transition arrangements due this financial year 23/24.
- 8.5 The Proceeds of Crime Act carry forward request is in respect of ring-fenced income that was not fully spent in 2022/23.

Table 7: Revenue carry-forward requests

Carry Forward Requests - Revenue					
Directorate	Service Area	Heading	Description	Amount	Total
People (Adults)	Strategy & Commissioning	Drug and Alcohol Team	Underspend from Public Health funded detox/rehab budget	14,323	
	Total People (Adults)				14,323
Strategy & Improvement	Election	Elections	Election Cost	30,000	
	IT	Members support	Member Laptops	50,000	
	IT	IT Transformation Fund	Work programme for remediation and modernisation of service	1,881,591	
	IT	DLUHC - ICT GRANT	c/f of DLUHC grant to reduce Cyber Risks and attacks	200,000	
	Total Strategy & Improvement				2,161,591
Finance & Commercial	Finance	Matrix Contract Management	Matrix Rebate	281,115	
	Fraud	POCA	Proceeds Of Crime Activity Funds	152,362	
	Total Finance & Commercial				433,477
Corporate Budgets	Below the line	Transformation Fund	Senior Management and PMO Office fund	1,809,837	
	Total Corporate Budgets				1,809,837
Grand Total					4,419,228

Capital (General Fund)

- 8.6 The carry forward requests for Capital (General Fund) amount to £4.0m and are detailed in the table below. As a working assumption, as with the revenue carry forwards requested, the outturn figures are presented on the basis that the carry forward requests are approved.

Table 8 Capital (General Fund) carry forward requests

Capital SUMMARY - Carry Forward Request			
Directorate	Service Area	Description	Amount
People (Adults)	HOLD Ownership	HOLD grant to be carried forward	204,488
People (Adults)	Disabled Facilities Grant	Balance to be carried forward, grant funded	271,779
People (Children)	Schools Modernisation Programme	Fully grant funded, £750k received pa. Council agreed March 23. Request c/f to 24/25	90,000
People (Children)	Special School Expansion	Fully grant funded, slippage, £415k already slipped to 23/4, Council agreed March 23	10,000
Housing, Property & Planning	Corporate Assets Stock Condition Improvement	C/fs reqd for: soundproofing Cippenham contact centre, Westpoint Allotments, Defects	247,146
Housing, Property & Planning	Britwell Hub	Budget required to pay the outstanding balance of estimated final account sum for the GP Hub at Britwell.	272,617
Place & Communities	Refuse Fleet & Grounds Plant Maintenance	Slippage. Budget found to offset cost increase from underspent DfT Grant	114,000
Place & Communities	Flood Defence Measures	Grant funded (DEFRA), grant claimed by drawdown quarterly in advance	766,014
Place & Communities	Sutton Lane MRT	Snagging work on A4 London Soad / Sutton Road, delay to Foxborough cycle scheme	867,661
Place & Communities	Stoke Road	Delays caused by weather, NWQ junctions and Slough Station Northern forecourt	393,382
Place & Communities	Langley	Resurfacing works slipped due to low temperatures	510,878
Place & Communities	A4 Safer Road	Speed reduction measures slipped to 23/24	136,712
Place & Communities	Traffic Signals Maintenance Grant	Slippage. Budget found to offset cost increase from underspent DfT Grant	66,000
GRAND TOTAL ALL SERVICE DEPARTMENTS			3,950,676

8.6 The carry forward requests for Capital (HRA) amount to £1.3m and are detailed in the table below. All of them relate to ongoing works that have already been commissioned.

Table 9 Capital (HRA) carry forward requests

Capital (HRA) c/f Requests	
Service Area	Amount
Kitchen & Bathroom Replacement	31,297
Roof Replacements	136,383
Structural	108,593
Garage & Environmental Improvements	526,669
Capitalised Repairs	209,610
FRA & Asbestos Removal Works	173,295
Decarbonisation works	80,994
TOTAL HRA	1,266,841

9 FUNDING

9.1 Funding from Council Tax and Business Rates receipts and Government Grants was £4.1m in excess of that budgeted for, and this contributed to the Capitalisation Direction being less than had been expected when it was originally set. However, it should be noted that a review of the accounting treatment of the Collection Fund in previous years is underway that still may yet impact on this position, and therefore the Capitalisation Direction. The draft final position for the Capitalisation Direction is £59.2m against the original budget of £84.1m.

- 9.2 The first table below shows the budgets and outturn figures for the major funding stream blocks. The second table gives an update on the Capitalisation Direction.

Table 10 : Funding

	Budget	Outturn	Variance	Requested c/fs	Revised Outturn	Revised Variance
Council Tax	-65,103	-69,179	-4,076	0	-69,179	-4,076
Business Rates - Local Share	-37,326	-40,168	-2,842	0	-40,168	-2,842
Collection Fund Deficit	8,151	10,611	2,460	0	10,611	2,460
Revenue Support Grant	-6,451	-6,451	0	0	-6,451	0
Other Grants	-4,626	-4,291	334	0	-4,291	334
Funding Total	-105,354	-109,479	-4,124	0	-109,479	-4,124
Capitalisation Direction	-84,055	-53,602	29,273	-4,419	-59,202	24,853

Capitalisation Direction

- 9.3 The Capitalisation Direction (CD) model shows the annual budget gap in Slough's finances for a period projected forward until the year 2028/29.
- 9.4 The annual budget gap exists primarily because of the significant unfunded debt as well as other financial pressures that built up prior to 2017. The total deficit was originally estimated to be £782m. This was subsequently revised downwards and at the time of the last budget setting and period 9 budget management report was estimated to be £357m in total, and £57.0m for 2022/23. There were some minor adjustments that needed to be made to that published figure and the correct figure at that time was actually £60.5m for 2022/23 and a total of £361m. The actual draft outturn position shows a requirement for £59.2m.
- 9.5 The changes in the Budget Gap model from the time of budget setting to the end of the financial year is shown in the table below

Table 11 : Capitalisation Direction Summary

	Up to 2021/22 £'000	Forecast 2022/23 £'000	Budget 2023/24 £'000	Projected 2024/25 on £'000	Total £'000
Original submission	223.1	84.1	78.5	396.2	781.8
January 2023 submission	210.5	56.6	31.6	58.4	357.1
Jan 2023 post adjustments	210.5	60.5	31.6	58.4	361.0
Position after 2022/23 outturn	210.5	59.2	32.2	62.9	364.8
Change	0.0	(1.3)	0.6	4.5	3.9

- 9.6 The Budget Gap model is both a dynamic forward looking model and a look back to the past. This remains necessary as, with the accounts for the past not all having been closed, previous years' figures are still subject to change. Looking forward, it builds in assumptions as to what pressures and savings there might be on annual budgets.

- 9.7 It is therefore of note that the budget gaps shown in the table above are not budget gaps against which savings requirements are to be established, but gaps after assuming a level of growth and savings in each of the following financial years that are already extremely challenging. It is also worth noting that a reduction in the budget gap is therefore not an underspend, it is a reduction in the previously predicted shortfall of funding.
- 9.8 The budget gap needs to be funded. The gap changes in the light of changing circumstances; for example, control of in year budgets, delivery of savings, achievement of capital receipts and the optimal strategy for utilizing those capital receipts, linked to the Treasury Management strategy. On this basis the Budget Gap model will be maintained month to month and reported on as part of the budget management cycle.
- 9.9 Given the above it is worth emphasizing that none of the numbers are completely fixed; this is a dynamic and fluid environment that we are working in, and the model reflects that.
- 9.10 The 22/23 budget contained an assumption that capital receipts of £84.1m would be required to balance the budget. The total funding including capital receipts required was £189.4m. In relation to this the outturn expenditure was £168.7m with funding excluding capital receipts totaling £109.5m. Therefore the revised capital receipt requirement is £59.2m, a reduction of £24.9m for the year.

The Budget Gap Model revisions

- 9.11 The table below shows, at a very highly summarized level, the changes to the Budget Gap model brought about by the slightly better than expected outturn position.

Table 12 Detailed Summary of Budget Gap

Reason for capitalisation adjustment	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	2029/30 £'000	2030/31 £'000	Note
Roll forward of budget pressures	59,202	32,219	24,722	18,561	13,803	7,912	(2,056)	0	1
Forecast Outturn Position	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Emerging Pressures, Contingencies, and Provisions	10,935	(976)	400	2,100	(5,000)	0	0	0	3
Additional Growth for new years of MTFS	9,718	14,000	11,400	11,400	11,400	11,400	11,400	11,400	4
Companies	(3,352)	(1,230)	(700)	(1,113)	4,580	(5,000)	0	0	5
Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)	(3,895)	(2,871)	(745)	(434)	36	734	411	187	6
Fund Redundancy Costs for 2 years	(7,500)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Settlement	(4,067)	80	84	89	93	98	0	0	8
Council Tax	(6,400)	(3,600)	(3,700)	(3,900)	(4,100)	(4,300)	(4,600)	(4,800)	9
Savings required	(22,422)	(12,900)	(12,900)	(12,900)	(12,900)	(12,900)	(5,155)	(6,787)	10
Budget Gap	32,219	24,722	18,561	13,803	7,912	(2,056)	-	-	
Total all years	364,822								

- 9.12 The model has been reset to show the budget gap rolled forward from the 2022/23 financial year, and then adjusted for this and future years on the basis of a number of assumptions.

9.13 The figures are all incremental figures. This means they show they change year on year from today's base position. Using one figure as an example, in 2022/23 a £7.5m budget was to allow the creation of a reserve to meet redundancy costs. This was a one-off budget, it has been reduced in 2023/24 by £7.5m to become zero. The table therefore shows a reduction of £7.5m in that budget this year.

9.14 The model assumes the following:

1. The following year's budget gap rolls forward and is then subject to incremental changes.
2. It is assumed that every financial year balances against the assumptions made in the model, that there is no over or underspend.
3. The Emerging Pressures covers this year's contingency budget, the loss of income from assets as they are sold, the removal of time-limited Transformation budgets, and the transfer of debt from short to long term.
4. There is additional growth required every year to cover pressures from demography, inflation and other new pressures of £10m

In addition there is £1.4m per year included to reflect pay up lifts; this is higher (£2.8m) in 2024/25.

There is an additional pressure in 2024/25 of £1.2m to cover the costs of introducing the new senior management structure.

5. The Companies line is mostly in respect of the repayment of a loan to Slough Children First. Provision for repayment of the loan is not made within the Slough Children First business plan.
6. The Minimum Revenue Provision requirements will reduce every year as capital asset sales are used to pay down debt.
7. The creation of a reserve to fund redundancy costs.
8. The Settlement figure reflects the increase in Grant funding this financial year, offset by the costs of the Council Tax Support Scheme which is expected to increase slightly each year.
9. Council Tax has been assumed to increase by 4.99% every year from 2024/25 onwards.
10. Savings of £12.9m are required every year until 2028/29, the final year when a Capitalisation Direction would be needed.

10 RESERVES

10.1 The table below shows a summary of the reserves held by the Council. As there are several years of unaudited accounts prior to 2022/23 the figures as at 31 March 2022 (and therefore by extension at 31 March 2023) are subject to change. The table shows, subject to the caveat above, that there are £53.5m of reserves, of

which the largest item is the General Fund General Reserve, called the Budget Smoothing Reserve, which is £38.6m

Table 13 Summary of Reserves

	Balance at 31 March 2022	Movements in 2022-23	Balance at 31 March 2023
Budget Smoothing Reserve	-38,604,000	0	-38,604,000
Better Care Fund	-4,670,451	39,100	-4,631,351
Restructuring Reserve	4,153,647	-7,500,000	-3,346,353
Contain Outbreak Management Fund	-3,334,448	337,666	-2,996,781
Other	-1,859,693	542,891	-1,316,802
Public Health Reserve	-392,661	-862,378	-1,255,039
Slough Children's First Reserve	-609,945	-608,232	-1,218,177
Proceeds of Crime Reserve	-171,514	0	-171,514
	-45,489,064	-8,050,953	-53,540,017

11 IMPLICATIONS OF THE REPORT

11.1 Financial Implications

11.1.1 These are set out within the report.

11.2 Legal Implications

11.2.1 Section 31 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the Council to set a balanced budget at the start of each financial year. Section 28 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires all local authorities to review actual expenditure against this budget on a regular basis during the year. Where it appears that there has been a deterioration in the financial position, the local authority must take such action as is necessary to deal with the situation.

11.2.2 The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities made a direction under s.15 of the Local Government Act 1999 on 1 December 2021 (which has subsequently been updated). The Direction required an action plan to achieve financial sustainability and to close the long-term budget gap. This report contains significant information on the work undertaken to achieve financial sustainability and to close the long-term budget gap, although the Council will still need a capitalisation direction for some years to come. In addition, the appointed commissioners have reserve powers to exercise the function of proper administration of the Council's financial affairs and all functions associated with the strategic financial management of the Council, including providing advice and challenge of the budget and scrutinising all in-year amendments to annual budgets.

11.3 Risk Management Implications

11.3.1 The 2022/23 outturn is subject to External Audit which may lead to revisions to the numbers presented and a consequent impact on the Council's finances.

11.3.2 There are a number of significant variations to budget included in this report with the consequence being these could impact over more than one year. These are managed through the revised Budget Management process for 2023/24 and need to be considered as part of the Budget Setting process for 2024/25.

11.4 Environmental implications

11.4.1 There are no specific environmental implications arising from this report.

11.5 Equality implications

11.5.1 There are no specific equality implications from this report.

11.6 Procurement implications

11.6.1 There are no specific procurement implications arising from this report.

11.7 Workforce implications

11.7.1 There are no specific workforce implications arising from this report.

11.8 Property implications

11.8.1 These are set out within the report.

PROPOSED INTERVENTION PACKAGE

1. The Secretary of State is considering exercising his powers of direction under section 15 of the Local Government Act 1999 ("the 1999 Act") in relation to Slough Borough Council ("the Authority") to secure its compliance with the Best Value duty. He is doing so in circumstances in which he is satisfied that the Authority are failing to comply with their best value duty, having had regard to a range of evidence, including the reports produced by the Chartered Institute for Public Finance Authority (CIPFA) and Jim Taylor for the external assurance review commissioned by the then Secretary of State as a condition for an in-principle agreement to exceptional financial support.
2. The report of the governance review ("the Report") was submitted on 9 September 2021. The Report sets out a picture of serious failings by the Authority, particularly focussed in the three areas of administration of financial affairs and corporate governance, democratic services and scrutiny, and service reform, encompassing service transformation, IT, HR, procurement, internal audit and the revenues and benefits service, leading to the conclusion that the Authority has failed in compliance with its best value duty over a number of years.
3. The Report notes the concerted efforts from the Authority over recent months following the issuing of statutory recommendations by the external auditor in May and July, and the issuing of a Section 114 notice by the Interim Section 151 Officer in July. The significant indicators of poor culture and weak governance, however, are such that the Report concludes that the Authority has failed its best value duty and is "unable to respond to the difficulties on its own". The financial review undertaken by CIPFA confirms a budget shortfall identified for 2021-22 of £111m against a budget of £134m and concludes there is a need for ongoing oversight of SBC's financial plans.
4. The package outlined below is intended to oversee and support the Authority to deliver the significant rapid change that is required. This includes securing as soon as practicable that the Authority's financial management is exercised in conformity with the best value duty thereby delivering improvements in services and outcomes for the people of Slough. The Secretary of State has also considered that the Authority will soon be seeking considerable exceptional financial support from the Government.
5. In the light of the conclusions and evidence in the Report, including the recommendations made by Jim Taylor and CIPFA, the Secretary of State is minded to put in place the intervention package set out below.

6. The Report identifies three key areas where the Authority needs support, as the Authority is failing to deliver and which, together, have led to its failure to comply with its best value duty. Examples of the ways in which the Authority is failing to deliver in each of these areas are included, but not limited to, below:

a. Administration of financial affairs and corporate governance

The Authority's financial reporting and governance arrangements do not provide the overview and scrutiny or assurance necessary for the Authority leadership, both officers and members, to fulfil their responsibilities or have confidence in the evidence presented to them to support decision making.

This culminated on 2 July 2021 with a Section 114 notice being issued on the basis that the Authority could not meet its immediate liabilities. The Authority's "outstanding past liabilities of approximately £52.8m exceeded the usable reserves" and if the use of capital reserves to offset Minimum Revenue Provision had been known at the time, the Authority "would have had difficulty in setting a legal budget in the three financial years of 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22" (1.9).

The Report states: "The Council's financial accounts for 2018-19 had not been completed and signed off by external auditors. The Council has yet to prepare financial accounts for 2019-20 and 2020-21" (1.8) and "The auditors identified substantial weaknesses in the arrangements for preparing accounts and the financial information contained within them. This has resulted in Grant Thornton issuing four Section 24 statutory recommendations concerning the Council's arrangements for financial reporting and the management of its reserves. This was followed by two further Section 24 statutory recommendations in July 2021, due to inadequate arrangements in financial management and the capacity of the Council to manage its finances" (1.8).

Corporate governance processes are inadequate and poorly understood by officers and members. The Report states: "It has not been clear how capital projects have been prioritised or where the decision-making sits with these capital decisions" (6.31); "There are recent instances where the correct financial approvals have not been sought by officers and significant decisions have been taken with a confidential report, which has not aided transparency" (6.41); and "Some members feel let down by the information given to them by officers...some members now have limited confidence in officer reports due to the current situation" (5.2).

b. Democratic services and scrutiny

The necessary administrative functions to support a healthy democracy are not functioning in this Authority: reports to support decision making do not contain

key information, decisions are taken in the wrong meetings and decisions are not properly scrutinised. The interim Head of Democratic services left the organisation in July 2021 and the current Monitoring Officer has been available one day per week from the shared legal service “which is insufficient resource, considering the challenges” (4.24). “Some cabinet reports, often when the project is led by consultants, have not had comprehensive internal legal advice.” (4.59) “There are also vacancies for Scrutiny officers, democratic services officers and a new role of elected member business partner. In addition, service heads for finance and legal have left.” (4.26); “The scrutiny function is under resourced and there is no permanent statutory scrutiny officer. All seven meetings of Scrutiny Committees were cancelled in June and July of 2021.” (4.56); “Elected Members indicate they require additional scrutiny resource to carry out their function effectively... It is acknowledged that some reports have not been given enough scrutiny.” (4.56) “There is no scrutiny forward plan.” (4.56)

c. **Service Reform**

The transformation programme embarked on by the Authority in 2019, which was necessary to modernise service delivery, was executed poorly and has resulted in an Authority operating at a sub-optimal level as essential components necessary for effective service delivery are not present, and some services showing clear signs of failure: “The new structure has approximately 300 agency staff, many in critical areas such as social work and environment and approximately 300 substantive vacancies (4.11); “A phone system was not funded and there was no adequate digital solution in place” (4.12); “The Wifi and in some cases, phone signal, do not work effectively in the new council HQ; children’s social workers have been unable to work from the new building for many months”. “Whilst SBC are aware of most, if not all issues facing its Council Tax and Business Rates services, there is a considerable lack of resource, accountability and ownership required to address these issues. Resource issues are not limited to revenues services but include other internal departments such as IT or Logistics that revenues services are heavily reliant upon and who should be held more accountable for key activities and ensuring appropriate service delivery.” (7.17)

7. In light of the conclusions and evidence in the Report and the finance review the Secretary of State is minded to implement an intervention package with a particular focus on the above areas to address the circumstances of the Authority.

Overall purpose and approach

8. The Secretary of State’s proposals reflect the main findings of the Report: that there have been “years of inadequate corporate governance and action” and

“sustained and systematic failure across some functional processes, governance and certain services”.

9. The Secretary of State’s proposals for intervention are designed to make sure that the Authority has made sufficient improvement within the next three years to be able to comply with its best value duty on a sustainable basis. The Secretary of State is mindful of the scale of the financial challenge facing the Authority and considers it likely that financial sustainability will not be possible without more fundamental changes.

Commissioners

10. The proposed intervention package accordingly involves putting in place Commissioners who between them will have experience to work closely with the Authority on the functions within scope of the Report’s recommendations. The Secretary of State will also seek advice from the Commissioners to help determine whether financial sustainability is possible or if more fundamental changes will need to be considered.
11. The Secretary of State does not propose a wholesale transfer of functions at this stage. Nevertheless, he does propose that some functions, reflecting the failings outlined above, should be transferred to the Commissioners. Where functions have been transferred, the Secretary of State proposes that the Commissioners will act jointly or severally and that the Authority is to provide the Commissioners with such assistance and information, including any views of the Authority’s Members on the matter in question as the Commissioners may request. It is envisaged that, in exercising any function, the Commissioners will have regard to any views of the Authority’s Members and Officers arrived at through their normal processes of consideration. In particular, the Secretary of State is mindful that the Interim Section 151 Officer and his team have taken considerable steps to improve the finance functions and envisages that the Commissioners would be building on the work they have started.
12. The Secretary of State is also mindful of the arrangements that are already in place in relation to the Authority’s children’s social care functions, and the Children’s Services Commissioner whom the Education Secretary has appointed to oversee improvements in the delivery of children’s social care functions and to work with Slough Children First, the Children’s Trust that transferred into the ownership of the Authority in April 2021. The Secretary of State intends the Commissioners to work as a team to oversee and support the Authority.
13. The Secretary of State proposes that his Directions to the Authority should be in place for an initial period of 3 years. If the Secretary of State considers at any time that it would be appropriate to change the Directions or withdraw them, then he will do so. His concern will be to make sure that the Directions operate for as long,

but only as long, and only in the form, as he considers they should operate in order to secure stability for the Authority.

Functions to be exercised by the Commissioners

14. For the reasons set out above, the Secretary of State considers that the proposed intervention includes the transfer to the Commissioners of the following functions:

- a. All functions associated with the governance and scrutiny of strategic decision making by the Authority;
- b. The requirement from section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 to make arrangements for the proper administration of the Authority's financial affairs, and all functions associated with the strategic financial management of the Authority, to include:
 - i. providing advice and challenge to the Authority on the preparation and implementation of a detailed plan to close its short and long-term budget gap in response to the section 114 notice;
 - ii. providing advice and challenge to the Authority in the setting of annual budgets and a robust medium term financial strategy (MTFS) for the Authority, limiting future borrowing and capital spending;
 - iii. scrutiny of all in-year amendments to annual budgets;
 - iv. the power to amend budgets where Commissioners consider that those budgets constitute a risk to the Authority's ability to fulfil its best value duty; and
 - v. providing advice and challenge to the Authority on the preparation of an outline asset disposal plan.
- c. All functions associated with the oversight of collection of revenues (council tax and business rates) and the distribution of benefits (housing benefit and council tax support) by the Authority; and
- d. All non-executive functions relating to the appointment and dismissal of persons to positions the holders of which are to be designated as statutory officers, and the designation of those persons as statutory officers. For this purpose –
 - i. "statutory officer" means any of: the head of paid service designated under section 4(1) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989; the chief financial officer designated as having responsibility for the administration of the Authority's financial affairs under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972; the monitoring officer designated under section 5(1) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989; and the scrutiny officer designated

under section 9FB of the Local Government Act 2000 (and the expressions “statutory officer” and “statutory office” are to be construed accordingly); and

- ii. for the avoidance of doubt, the following are included: the functions of (a) designating a person as a statutory officer and removing a person from a statutory office; (b) the functions under section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972 of (a) appointing and determining the terms and conditions of employment of an officer of the Authority, insofar as those functions are exercised for the purpose of appointing a person as an officer of the Authority principally in order for that person to be designated as a statutory officer; and (b) dismissing any person who has been designated as a statutory officer from his or her position as an officer of the Authority.

Directions to the Authority

15. The proposed Directions also set out actions which the Authority must undertake in order to effect the changes which are needed as well as supporting and facilitating the work of the Commissioners.

- a. Within three months from the date of these Directions undertake an assessment of the **functional capability** of all service areas identifying the gaps in capacity and capability, and within six months from the date of these Directions prepare and agree action plans to the satisfaction of the Commissioners.
- b. To undertake in the exercise of **any of its functions** any action that the Commissioners may reasonably require to avoid so far as practicable incidents of poor governance or financial mismanagement that would, in the reasonable opinion of the Commissioners, give rise to the risk of further failures by the Authority to comply with the best value duty.
- c. Within three months from the date of these Directions prepare and agree an **Improvement Plan** to the satisfaction of the Commissioners (which may include or draw upon improvement or action plans prepared before the date of these Directions), with, resource allocated accordingly, and as a minimum, the following components:
 - i. An action plan to deliver **financial sustainability** and to close the long-term budget gap.
 - ii. An action plan to achieve improvements in relation to the proper functioning of **democratic services**, to include rapid training for council officers, a revised term of reference for the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee, and the agreement of an Annual Governance Statement for 2020-21.

- iii. An action plan to achieve improvements in relation to the proper functioning of the **scrutiny** function, to include a review of the Council strategic risk register to make it fit for purpose.
 - iv. An action plan to achieve improvements in relation to the proper functioning of **internal audit**, which addresses outstanding management actions and includes the commissioning of an independent review of the internal audit contract and a fully costed plan for establishing an internal audit function that reflects best practice.
 - v. An action plan to achieve improvements in relation to the proper functioning of the **procurement and contract management function**, which includes an independent review.
 - vi. An action plan to achieve improvements in relation to the proper functioning of the Authority's **IT**.
 - vii. A suitable **officer structure** and scheme of delegation for the Authority which provides sufficient resources to deliver the Authority's functions in an effective way, including the Improvement Plan and its monitoring and reporting, prioritising permanent recruitment and/or longer term contract status of interim position.
- d. During the Direction Period report to the Commissioners on the delivery of the Improvement Plan at six monthly intervals, or at such intervals as the Commissioners may direct, and adopt any recommendations of the Commissioners with respect to the Improvement Plan and its implementation.
- e. Within six months devise and then implement a programme of cultural change to rebuild trust between officers and members, to the satisfaction of the Commissioners. This should make sure both Members and Officers understand the scale of the challenge and their respective roles in driving improvement and the way in which the Authority and its activities are regulated and governed and the way in which this is monitored, and breaches rectified.
- f. Following the review of Council companies within six months consider the roles and case for continuing with each subsidiary company of the Authority (except Slough Children First through which the Authority delivers functions under Direction, and therefore is outside the scope of this work). For those companies that it is agreed to continue, make sure that the Directors appointed by the Authority are appropriately skilled in either technical or company governance matters to make sure each Board functions effectively under the terms of an explicit shareholder agreement and a nominated shareholder representative. For those companies which it is determined not to continue with in this form, to establish a plan to internalise, close or sell as appropriate.

- g. Within six months take steps to enable better and evidence-based decision making, including enhancing the data and insight functions to enable better evidence-based decision making.
- h. To allow the Commissioners at all reasonable times, such access as appears to the Commissioners to be necessary:
 - i. to any premises of the Authority;
 - ii. to any document relating to the Authority; and
 - iii. to any employee or member of the Authority.
- i. To provide the Commissioners, at the expense of the Authority, with such reasonable amenities and services and administrative support as the Commissioners may reasonably require from time to time to carry out their functions and responsibilities under these Directions;
- j. To pay the Commissioners' reasonable expenses, and such fees as the Secretary of State determines are to be paid to them;
- k. To provide the Commissioners with such assistance and information, including any views of the Authority on any matter, as the Commissioners may reasonably request; and
- l. To co-operate with the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in relation to implementing the terms of this Direction

Duration of intervention

16. The Secretary of State proposes that the Commissioners will be in place for an initial period of three years, only be extended if the Authority fails to make satisfactory progress in implementing and embedding the changes necessary to deliver Best Value in its governance and operations.

Appendix B : Commissioner's Instruction 1

Slough Borough Council Best Value Commissioners

Letter to Steven Mair S151 Officer SBC

Commissioner's Instruction no 1

Dear Steve,

Instruction under powers provided by the Best Value Directions

As you know, the current Directions imposed on Slough Borough Council contain provisions to enable Commissioners to intervene in matters relating to the approved budget.

Commissioners are aware that there are corporate budgets which now provide more resources than was anticipated when the budget was set. I am writing to require that no action is taken to allocate any of these unplanned additional resources to services unless specifically agreed by Commissioners.

It may be that towards the year end it would be appropriate to use this money to offset increases in energy costs which are running far above predicted levels and potentially to offset national pay awards that are agreed above provision but only to the extent that it supports increased payments to permanent directly employed staff in post and not temporary, agency or contract staff.

Commissioners remain concerned that the council, at service level, is forecasting overspends in year with no sign of mitigating savings being created and that the forecast budget gap for next year is not covered by deliverable proposals. Acceleration in the delivery of capital receipts is not a tool to close this gap as this needs to be used to reduce the overall time and amount that Slough requires government support, and this also does nothing to reduce the base expenditure requirements to affordable levels.

This Instruction will be published on the SBC Commissioners web pages, and you may also want to report it to Cabinet.

Commissioners will keep this matter under review and will update this Instruction as appropriate.

Yours sincerely



Max Caller CBE
Lead Commissioner



Margaret Lee FCPFA
Finance Commissioner

Max Caller CBE
Lead Commissioner
Slough Borough Council

Margaret Lee FCPFA
Finance Commissioner
Slough Borough Council

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Appendix C: Asset Sales

Asset Disposals Programme - 2022/23

Property	Completion Date	Acquisition Price	Net Book			
			Value 31st March 2022	Capital Receipt	Costs of Disposal	Profit / (loss) on disposal
21 Roydsdale Way Euroway Bradford	15-Nov	12,746,000	13,518,700	14,476,630	49,896	908,034
Akzo Nobel (Unconditional Sale)	24-Nov	40,900,000	23,856,000	143,737,616	99,192	119,782,425
Odeon, Churchill Way West, Basingstoke	25-Nov	8,480,000	3,940,600	3,565,133	19,880	-395,347
Wickes Wolverhampton	9-Dec	6,959,000	7,150,200	6,774,612	18,540	-394,128
Lavender Farm	15-Dec	N/A	6,325,000	1,775,000	20,871	-7,986,371
129 Stoke Road, Gosport, Hampshire	16-Dec	3,710,000	2,884,700	1,889,041	35,406	-1,031,064
SUR - North West Quadrant site (former Thames Valley University) P1	17-Mar	28,092,000	20,548,349	22,820,327	541,512	1,593,065
Totals		100,887,000	78,223,549	195,038,359	785,297	112,476,614

Appendix D – Detailed Capital Outturn

General Fund Capital Programme	Budget	Spend	Variance	c/f	Comment
Care Act: Social Care IT	0	8	8	0	
Learning Disability Change	7	0	(7)	0	Project completed
Ownership for people with /t Disabilit	224	20	(204)	(204)	Carry Over £204k
Disabled Facilities Grant	1,594	1,322	(272)	(272)	Carry Over £272k
Adults TOTAL	1,825	1,350	(475)	(476)	
Primary Expansions	172	0	(172)	0	To address H&S issues with playground surface after completion of an expansion project. SBC considering how to proceed. Aim was to complete work this year but unable to start due to timing around school holidays. Required budget already included in 23/24 so no c/f reqd
Schools Modernisation Programme	900	587	(313)	(90)	Delay in annual programme of conditions work in Schools due to staff shortage in Highways, budget re-profiled to future years
SEN Resources Expansion	0	11	11	0	This is the final payment for works at Marish Primary School.
Special School Expansion	400	8	(392)	(10)	Carry Over £10k to complete works
Secondary Expansion Programme	150	7	(143)	0	This funding is for s278 highway works to support DfE expansion of the school. Works delayed by resource pressures in Highway team (already 2 years late). Budget has already been included in future needs, no requirement for carry forward.
Schools Devolved Capital	80	0	(80)	0	This has been charged direct to 87000 ZBAL A6110 so not required
323 High St/Haybrook	29	0	(29)	0	This spend is committed within lease provided to the school. It is hoped it won't be claimed given other investments being made by SBC at school's other sites. Project delayed til 23/24 - already included in future budget, no requirement for carry forward.
Children's Services TOTAL	1,731	613	(1,118)	(100)	
Loan to GRES-for Nova House remedial work	8,500	3,023	(5,477)	0	Final costs for Nova House for the cladding (delete reference to Nova House). Delay in project included in 23/24 budget (£1.6m). Funding will come from insurance repayments in 23/24.
Works following Stock Condition Survey	737	284	(453)	(247)	Carry Over £247k for: soundproofing Clippenham contact centre, Westpoint Allotments, Defects
Localities Strategy North (Britwell)	1,047	774	(273)	(273)	Budget required to pay outstanding balance of estimated final account for GP Hub at Britwell approved by ECP. Includes estimated cost to NHSE of £249,982 to be reimbursed to SBC. Through negotiation hopeful of reducing these sums. The retention held on agreed final account sum due for payment in 23/24 after completion of Defects Liability Period. Carry over £273k Kier
Localities Strategy Sth (Chalvey)					
Localities Strategy Cent (SMP)					
Thames Valley University Site	104	0	(104)	0	Ongoing security costs£36,680+ legal fees pending demolition, full amount committed as project spend; included in 23/4 - no c/f
Leisure Centre Farnham Road	100	0	(100)	0	Set aside for works to Centre to replace water supply, pushed to 23/24 due to delays with Thames Water. No need for slippage.
St Martins Place	20	19	(1)	0	
Urban Tree Challenge Fund	185	0	(185)	0	To be moved revenue-not a capital cost therefore no carry forward required.
CPO Reserve	391	66	(325)	0	Completing Dawes Moor and Elliman Ave and final costs to be confirmed. Budget included in 23/24 - no slippage required.
Housing, Property & Planning TOTAL	11,084	4,167	(6,917)	(520)	
Wheeled Bins & Containers	40	0	(40)	0	Included in 23/24 budget - no carry forward required.
Refuse fleet & Grounds Plant	582	468	(114)	(114)	Redesign of the DSO
LTP Implementation Plan	0	15	15	0	Reduce 23/24 budget to cover overspend
LED Upgrade	103	0	(103)	0	Budget included in 23/24 - no carry forward required.
Colnbrook By-pass	115	0	(115)	0	Budget included in 23/24 - no carry forward required.
Flood Defence (Sponge City)	1,000	223	(777)	(766)	With no contracts in place in 2021/2, spend of grant was limited (<£15k). Project delayed since Sept 21 due to difficulty in procuring project partners under Council procurement rules. Contract for technical consultancy (with Atkins) was not entered into til April 22. The Atkins contract & specific work with other partners in preparation of an OBC formed most spend in 2022/3. Total grant is £7,902k but funding is drawn down as spend occurs. Further claims to be made 2023/4
Zone 1 - Sutton Lane Gyrotory	3,800	2,113	(1,687)	(868)	Carry forward £868k aligned with LEP business case.
Zone 2 - Foxborough (MRT)	980	0	(980)	0	Design work on cycle lane in this year Foxborough combined with (Zone 1) as it's MRT project and costs of cycleway also
Zone 3 - Park & Ride (MRT)	0	(85)	(85)	0	Budget / forecast reprofiled to nil. Currently working on an alternative project as the Park & Ride is not going ahead
Zone 4 - Stoke Rd (Stoke Rd TVU Jn)	2,500	2,424	(76)	(397)	Budget for Stoke Rd should have been £2.82m (actual grant value) which would have resulted in variance of £397k - this needs c/f
Zone 7 - Off Road Cycle Route	150	0	(150)	0	Completed budget not required
Burnham Station LEP	50	0	(50)	0	Completed budget not required
Langley High St Improvements LEP	2,809	1,671	(1,138)	(511)	To be completed end of December 2023
A4 Safer Roads	200	63	(137)	(137)	Carry forward required to complete works due to delayed start.
A4 Cycle	0	54	54	0	Overspend to be covered by 23/24 budget
Carbon Management - Public Sector Decarb. Scheme	619	587	(32)	0	The scheme was £1.076m project funded by grant from Salix (on behalf of BEIS) for heat decarbonisation measures e.g. solar panels, air source heat pumps & building insulation. Project originally planned for 6 sites, replacement 6th site was required as scope of works at this site was less than original site resulting in £131,067 underspend. Funding window closed June 2022, and terms of grant required the underspend to be returned. £900,867 was spent on project (excl underspend). As per contract with main contractor, a 5% retention has been kept back from payments to cover any defects that need remedying in the 12 months post completion. The £44,395 retention will become due in 2023/24
Development Old Library Site	185	0	832	0	Two potential costs retention and operator an amount of money 489k. Income from the hotel will be used to plug the gap in future years potentially in revenue.
A4000 General		545		0	outstanding monies due to Cycas are required as set out in c/f of £185k
Old Library Site (Residential)		473		0	Costs to be funded by sale of Novus apartments
Bridge Capital Works	0	8	8	0	Overspend due to salary recharge in 21/22 not accounted for. Covered by DfT grant
Reading Archives - Extension	200	12	(188)	0	£188k has been slipped into 23/24 to complete works
Community Investment Fund Cabinet	0	25	25	0	DMA parks signage which was committed
Traffic Signals Maintenance	475	409	(66)	(66)	Project underway and works commissioned
Cemetery Extension	207	115	(92)	0	Further emergency cost (ground caving in at graveyard) come to light so budget fully spent. Is included in 23/24 so no c/f
Transport & Highways Grant funded	0	1,367	1,367	0	Fully grant funded but grant received after budget had been set.
Place & Communities TOTAL	14,015	10,487	(-3,528)	-2,859	
IT Infrastructure Refresh	0	5	5	0	Library final kiosk costs
Finance & Commercial TOTAL	0	5	5	0	
GRAND TOTAL	28,655	16,621	(12,034)	(3,955)	

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL
HRA Fund Capital Expenditure
Tracker 2022/23

HRA Capital Programme	Revised Budget	Spend	Variance	Carry Forward	Comment
RMI Capital Programme					
Boiler Replacement and heating	447	378	(69)		Carry forward not required sufficient budget in 2023/24
Kitchen & Bathroom Replacement	478	447	(31)	(31)	Kitchen and bathroom replacement programme 2022/23 ongoing and carry forward required for 2023/24
Electrical Systems	195	257	62		Overspend funded from P409 (Boiler replacement and heating project - above)
Garage & Environmental Improvements	1,085	560	(525)	(527)	De-designated improvements at Kennedy and Apsley. Stratfield Road security works. Clarendon Court security upgrade. Brammas Close and Spackmans Way.
Capitalised Repairs	422	212	(210)	(210)	Provision for other issues which come from repairs/disrepairs
FRA & Asbestos Removal Works	1,884	1,711	(173)	(173)	Ongoing FRA works programmes
Major Aids & Adaptations	691	0	(691)		Carry forward not required sufficient budget in 2023/24
Decarbonisation Works	100	19	(81)	(81)	Carry forward required for 2023/24 to complete works
RMI Capital Programme	5,302	3,584	(1,718)	(1,022)	
Planned Maintenance Capital					
Windows and Door Replacement	181	173	(8)		Carry forward not required sufficient budget in 2023/24
Roof Replacement	796	660	(136)	(136)	Roof replacement at Kendal Close
Structural	115	6	(109)	(109)	Structural works from voids and repairs
Security & Controlled Entry Modernisation	766	769	3		Overspend funded from P433 (Capitalised Voids - below)
Capitalised voids	60	58	(2)		Underspend used to offset Security & Controlled Entry Modernisation - above
Planned Maintenance Capital	1,918	1,666	(252)	(245)	
Tower and Ashbourne	2,500	212	(2,288)		£800k allowed for Tower & Ashbourne in 2023/24 already built into budget, no carry forward required
Akzo Nobel	0	2,191	2,191		Overspend funded from capital receipt from sale of asset (143m)
RMI Remodelling and Investment	0	91	91		Overspend to be covered from P575 (Affordable Homes) see below
Affordable Homes	1,000	300	(700)		No carry forward allowed as no new Housing projects.
Total Affordable Homes	3,500	2,794	(706)	0	No carry forwards required as £800k budget built into 2023/24
HRA GRAND TOTAL	10,720	8,044	(2,676)	(1,267)	

Slough Borough Council

REPORT TO:	Cabinet
DATE:	18 th September 2023
SUBJECT:	Refresh of the Councils Finance Improvement Action Plan
CHIEF OFFICER:	Adele Taylor – Executive Director of Finance and Commercial (S151)
CONTACT OFFICER:	Adele Taylor – Executive Director of Finance and Commercial (S151)
WARD(S):	All
PORTFOLIO:	Lead Member for Financial Oversight, Council Assets, Procurement and Revenues & Benefits – Councillor Chahal
KEY DECISION:	No
EXEMPT:	No
DECISION SUBJECT TO CALL IN:	No
APPENDICES:	'A' - Finance Improvement Action Plan

1 Summary and Recommendation

- 1.1 To provide an update on the consolidation of improvement activity within Finance and Commercial Services and a refreshed improvement action plan.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- (a) Review the proposed finance vision and the subsequent action plan for finance and commercial services.

Reason

- 1.2 To ensure that Cabinet has proper oversight of the planned activities allowing the Finance and Commercial services to evidence that the way in which it operates and delivers necessary actions to meet the Directions that have been placed on the Council. In addition, to consolidate the improvement activity that is being undertaken to allow Councillors, residents and external stakeholders to understand the steps that are being taken to address concerns around the openness and transparency of financial practices at the council and ultimately build trust in the organisation.

Commissioner Review

Strong financial management practice across the whole of the Council is essential, with everyone clear about why finance matters, what good financial management for the Council looks like and what needs to be done to meet that standard.

This report provides a progress update on recommended actions and milestones. The commissioners are pleased to note that good progress is being made in several areas. The Council will need to keep improving to meet the financial challenges they will face over the coming years.

2 Report

Introduction

- 2.1 This report is written during the first six months of the financial year 2023/24 and the first six months of a new, permanent, Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services at Slough Borough Council. Given the focus and attention on immediate actions for Slough and the intervention in place since 2021, this is the good opportunity for a reset and refresh of the improvement journey and ensure that these meet the needs of a renewed vision for the way finance and the financial framework operates at Slough Borough Council.
- 2.2 By consolidating the remaining outstanding actions in one place, this allows a more streamlined view of the improvement journey and provides an opportunity to focus on broader evidence of transforming the service. It allows a chance to not only consider what is good enough, but focusses on how finance needs to operate at the heart of the organisation and support the council's overall corporate plan objectives.
- 2.3 This action plan, although a key part of the way the Council will evidence how it has met the necessary objectives to evidence improvement allowing an exit from intervention, is also fundamental to the way in which we reconnect with our residents and other key stakeholders in rebuilding trust that we are financially sustainable.
- 2.4 Clearly stating our vision for the way we operate our financial framework also builds a strong brand about how we conduct business, make decisions and supports our efforts to recruit a stable workforce who can share the vision we have described, a key foundation to making all of the work happen.

Options considered

Option 1: To consider the new finance vision and action plan and agree the proposed actions.

This is the recommended option.

Option 2: To consider the new finance vision and action plan and not agree the proposed actions.

This is not the recommended option. The proposed actions pick up on themes highlighted in guidance addressing failings in local authorities subject to intervention.

3 **Background**

- 3.1 In 2021, Central Government intervened at the Council and published the following Directions:
[Slough Borough Council: Directions made under the Local Government Act 1999 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/slough-borough-council-directions-made-under-the-local-government-act-1999)
- 3.2 The specific directions relating to Finance and Commercial Services are all included under direction 2, 3 (a,c, d and e) and 6 as well as oversight of the functions associated with collection of revenues (Council Tax and Business Rates) and the distribution of benefits (Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support) by the Authority.

Direction Number	Detail
2	To undertake in the exercise of any of its functions any action that the Commissioners may reasonably require to avoid so far as practicable incidents of poor governance or financial mismanagement that would, in the reasonable opinion of the Commissioners, give rise to the risk of further failures by the Authority to comply with the best value duty
3	<p>In the first three months prepare and agree an Improvement Plan to the satisfaction of the Commissioners (which may include or draw upon improvement or action plans prepared before the date of these Directions), with, resource allocated accordingly, and as a minimum, the following components:</p> <p>a) An outline action plan to achieve financial sustainability and to close the long-term budget gap identified by the Authority across the period of its Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)</p> <p>c) An action plan to achieve improvements in relation to the proper functioning of the scrutiny function, to include a review of the Authority’s strategic risk register to make it fit for purpose. (note only the risk element relates to this directorate)</p> <p>d) An action plan to achieve improvements in relation to the proper functioning of internal audit, which addresses outstanding management actions and includes the commissioning of an independent review of the internal audit contract and a fully costed plan for establishing an internal audit function that reflects best practice.</p> <p>e) An action plan to achieve improvements in relation to the proper functioning of the procurement and contract management function, which includes an independent review.</p>

6	Following the review by the Authority of their companies within six months consider the roles and case for continuing with each subsidiary company of the Authority (except Slough Children First). For those companies that it is agreed to continue, make sure that the Directors appointed by the Authority are appropriately skilled in either technical or company governance matters to make sure each Board functions effectively under the terms of an explicit shareholder agreement and a nominated shareholder representative. For those companies which it is determined not to continue with in this form, to establish a plan to internalise, close or sell as appropriate
Functions to be exercised by the Commissioners item 3	All functions associated with the oversight of collection of revenues (Council Tax and Business Rates) and the distribution of benefits (Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support) by the Authority;

- 3.3 The statutory direction arose following two key reviews commissioned by DLUHC:
- CIPFA review (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy)
 - DLUHC governance review (Department of Levelling up, Housing and Communities)
- 3.4 In addition, Grant Thornton, the Council's external auditors have issued statutory recommendations relating to financial management through its work around external audit of the accounts for 2018/19 reported to full council in March 2023.
- 3.5 At the full council meeting on 9th March 2023, an update was provided on the progress against each of the actions from these reviews on a separate basis, as well as to the Directions detailed above. A Finance and Commercial Services Improvement Plan was also included in that report, although many of the actions were short term in nature to reflect the fact that a new Executive Director of Finance and Commercial would be starting by the end of March 2023 and would want to review requirements on their arrival.
- 3.6 In addition to the external reviews that were undertaken, there is a rich source of evidence from internal audit reviews over several financial years that have been considered in putting together this action plan and will continue to be an important part of the control framework going forward.
- 3.7 The improvement plan will continue to evolve as there is always room to consider how to make better use of our resources, learning from others best practice and transforming the way work is undertaken. As such, internal audit as a function are an important part of monitoring not just adherence to basic controls to mitigate our risks, but look to ensure that we operate in a Best Value way, fundamental to any public sector body.
- 3.8 Another way in which this plan will continue to develop is the fact that several years of our Statement of Accounts for prior financial years remain outstanding. (2019/20 through to 2022/23). The work that external audit will undertake to audit those accounts may identify further areas that we need to respond to, including if any national legislation changes. This action plan will be an important part of the way in

which they make their Value for Money judgements about Slough so ongoing monitoring of the actions is also important.

- 3.9 The starting point for reviewing a refreshed action plan has been to put together a new vision for finance, so that there is clarity over who we want to be and allow us to build the steps that will take us there.
- 3.10 Developing a finance improvement action plan is not just about an exit strategy for the future from government intervention, this is about setting a direction and vision for the way in which the finance framework and function works and exists at Slough. We are not there yet but this is the vision that we are striving for.

3.11 **A new vision for finance**

Ultimately this is about Slough learning to live within it's means, delivering value for money services but underpinning all of this in an open, transparent, and understandable financial information that is relevant whether you work, live or are another interested party with Slough Borough Council.

In essence, a strong link between our financial commitments and our community. Our resources will underpin the corporate plan and our ambitions as an authority. We will operate in a way that takes the very best practice and not just uphold financial rules and regulation. We can demonstrate that we follow that best practice whether you are internal audit, external audit, a councillor or a member of the public. Finance will be seen as being at the heart of the organisation, working closely with all departments and will be a visible partner to others as well as undertaking necessary assurance for others.

For those who rely on our services you will know what things cost and how they are funded. We will have a strong culture of honest and transparent commissioning and contracting services that makes the best of the resourcing available to us.

Finally, financial sustainability isn't just about Slough Borough Council, it is also important to recognise that this is a key theme for those who work and live in our borough. We want to ensure that we have transactional services whereby if you rely on us for payment, we do so as easily, safely and efficiently as possible.

Where we are collecting money we will do so efficiently and effectively. If you are able to pay us we will make it smooth and easy for you to deal with us. If you should pay us and can afford to do so, but choose not to, we will deal with you fairly but firmly as you are affecting other taxpayers by choosing not to do so.

If you are in a position where you cannot afford to pay us and are in a position where you are financially vulnerable, we want to work with you and support you to ensure that you are getting all of the support and advice you are entitled to. We want to focus our efforts and support around those who need our help and not those who choose not to pay what they owe.

Underpinning all of this is a strong culture of protecting the public purse. We are custodians of taxpayer money that needs to be spent wisely and well. For every £1 we spend and every £1 we collect we treat it like our own and have a strong anti-fraud ethos.

3.12 **Emerging Themes**

- 3.13 In refreshing the action plan, consolidation of any actions remaining outstanding from across all of the different reviews is important. A significant number of those actions had been marked as complete in Match 2023 although work to ensure that progress continues is important.

- 3.14 Through discussion with the interim Finance Commissioner and the Executive Director of Finance during May and June 2023, six themes emerged rather than continuing to monitor actions by the route that they had been identified. This had previously meant that actions were duplicated or expressed in slightly different ways depending on who had first identified them.
- 3.15 Having a thematic approach also makes it easier to take a more holistic view of complying with our overall vision.
- 3.16 The six themes identified are as follows:
1. **Getting the Basics Right** – the failures the council experienced in terms of financial management point towards the fact that the council wasn't getting the basics right. External audit of the 2018/19 accounts showed that basic supporting evidence, working papers, reconciliations etc. just didn't exist, leading to a disclaimed audit opinion. Reviews by CIPFA and the actions with the Directions themselves also point to the fact that just getting things done in the right order, in the right way needs to continue to be considered. The ultimate aim is to move from the disclaimed opinion to an unqualified opinion as soon as is practicably possible given the historic nature of the outstanding accounts.
 2. **Governance and decision-making support** – for a Council to be open and transparent in the way it conducts its business, everyone needs to understand their responsibility in the way decisions are made. Decisions need to be made on sound evidence, with appropriate professional advice from a properly resourced and skilled officer team. This picks up on the statutory recommendations made by Grant Thornton in relation to the purchase of Observatory House, which related to the need for "important (in financial and strategic terms) decisions, sufficient and adequate information is made available to members within the formal governance processes to support the decisions made, including a comprehensive business case." These recommendations were reported to Full Council on 9 March 2023.
 3. **Financial culture and awareness** – it is a very simple thing to say in that "finance is everyone's business" in any organisation, but to demonstrate that this is the case can be more challenging. This particular theme of the action plan will focus on the way in which we "do" finance at Slough. The financial capacity, skills and training available to finance and non-finance officers is important as well as the training provided to councillors to ensure that financial best practice is embedded throughout the organisation.
 4. **Medium Term Planning** – due to the financial position that the Council has found itself in, having to issue a S114 notice (a way in which the council declared that it's outgoings outweighed the income it relies on), short-term actions and decisions had to be taken to bring the council back to being able to manage its finances and live within its means. The Council has had to receive exceptional finance support (by means of using its capital receipts to fund revenue and the ability to raise council tax by an additional 5% for 2023/24) and operate in a way in which means it needs to focus on managing its resources tightly. That will continue to be required over the medium to long term and mustn't lose focus on achieving financial sustainability. However, now the most immediate and short term issues have been identified, focus needs to move to evidencing how it will manage its resources over more than just one year. The Council's financial strategy and budgets must be clearly aligned with

its strategic priorities and there must be a robust process for reviewing and setting the budget and medium term plans.

5. **Transformation and automation** – to truly ensure that the council operates in a Best Value way, the Council needs to also focus on the way in which it does things. No council would be able to be sustainable without focussing on how it can harness available technologies, using our tools more efficiently and transforming the way we do things not just for financial gain, but also to focus our resources where they are most needed. Financial management and reporting should be supported by robust financial systems, record keeping and quality assurance, with appropriate use of specialist expertise when needed. All of this is underpinned by clear business planning with delivery against milestones monitored on a regular and timely basis.
6. **Deep Dive Projects** - this is a really important aspect of any improvement plan. This will be a list of areas where the council needs to really focus time and effort on particular areas, using cross-cutting resources to make change happen. It is likely that these deep dive areas will be identified through the combination of risk management, internal audit and external review but may also be identified through other parts of the action plan.

3.17 The detailed action plan is included at Appendix A.

3.18 An action plan is only as good as the way in which it is monitored and managed.

3.19 The action plan will be monitored on a day to day basis by the Finance and Commercial Services departmental management team. Regular reporting through to the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and internal boards will be undertaken through existing reporting mechanisms including “RAG” rating of delivery and clearly reporting delivery risks to the plan, and any alterations, changes to delivery timescales or capacity issues. Mitigations to those risks will also be highlighted.

3.20 This action plan will also be monitored through existing mechanisms of the Commissioner chaired Finance Board and also the Improvement and Recovery Board. Reports will be brought to Cabinet on a six monthly basis and more detailed information will be available for the lead member and to scrutiny members to assist the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee to undertake its functions.

4 Implications of the Recommendation

4.2 Financial implications

4.2.1 Whilst there are no specific financial implications arising from developing the action plan, this is fundamental to the way in which we operate as a Council. The action plan is concerned with ensuring that we are not just meeting basic requirements, but are able to demonstrate that we are operating in a way that is Best Value and using our resources wisely.

4.2.2 Delivery of the action plan will be within existing resources.

4.3 Legal implications

- 4.3.1 Section 31 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the Council to set a balanced budget at the start of each financial year.
- 4.3.2 Section 28 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires all local authorities to review actual expenditure against this budget on a regular basis during the year. Where it appears that there has been a deterioration in the financial position, the local authority must take such action as is necessary to deal with the situation.
- 4.3.3 The Secretary of State for Education made a direction under s.15 of the Local Government Act 1999 on 1 December 2021 (which has subsequently been updated). The Direction required an action plan to achieve financial sustainability and to close the long-term budget gap. The finance action plan was first reported to cabinet in September 2021 and has been regularly updated since. This report contains significant information on the work undertaken to achieve financial sustainability and to close the long-term budget gap, although the Council will still need a capitalisation direction for some years to come. In addition, the appointed commissioners have reserve powers to exercise the function of proper administration of the Council's financial affairs and all functions associated with the strategic financial management of the Council, including providing advice and challenge of the budget and scrutinising all in-year amendments to annual budgets. The finance commissioner has been fully involved in the preparation of this action plan.
- 4.3.4 DLUHC has consulted on updated guidance on the best value duty and the draft guidance has highlighted seven best value themes of Continuous Improvement, Leadership, Governance, Culture, Use of Resources, Service Delivery and Partnerships and community engagement. The most relevant of these themes have been picked up in the themes identified in the Finance Action Plan. The draft guidance particularly emphasises the importance of the Council's strategic priorities being aligned with its financial strategy, that strong financial management and reporting runs throughout the whole organisation and that there is a robust system of financial controls and reporting and collective accountability.

4.4 Risk management implications

- 4.4.1 Risk management activity underpins the work contained within the finance action plan itself and is fundamental part of the overall way in which we operate.

Risk	Summary	Mitigations
Financial	<p>Failure to identify weaknesses in the way we operate could lead to financial resources not being properly utilised</p> <p>Failure to address the council's financial position and ability to live within its means leading to council becoming financially unsustainable without further exceptional support</p> <p>Failure to identify and address historical issues in the outstanding statement of accounts leading to further financial pressures</p>	<p>This action plan addresses issues raised through a variety of sources and provides mitigations against those.</p> <p>One of the six themes addresses improving the medium-term financial planning process and addressing the ability of the council to reduce its need for exceptional support as agreed with central government</p> <p>A significant part of the improvements required are to bring up to date the historical information regarding the statement of accounts of the council and to bring back on track reporting to meet statutory deadlines in the future.</p>
Governance	<p>Failure to address governance arrangements could lead to decisions</p>	<p>This action plan is based on evidence from a number of sources including internal and external audit, reviews by professional bodies and other stakeholders that have identified specific actions that need to be addressed. The action plan will continue to be refreshed and has a specific theme relating to governance and decision-making to address those concerns.</p>
Legal	<p>Failure to adhere to legislative changes promptly</p>	<p>The action plan has a theme to address decision-making which should identify areas that need to be addressed. In addition, a theme around financial culture and awareness seeks to ensure that the council remains up to date in it's view around best practice, financial legislative change</p>
Timeliness	<p>Failure to make change within sufficient time to positively influence financial sustainability</p>	<p>By setting out an action plan to address these issues, this should set a solid framework to build financial sustainability in a timely way</p>

Reputational	Failure to build trust with external partners and residents	The action plan recognises that there needs to be improved public and stakeholder engagement which will be undertaken to begin to build trust through providing sound advice but also doing so in a way that recognises that providing information in an understandable way is as important as the numbers themselves
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4.5 Environmental implications

4.5.1 There are no specific environmental implications arising directly from this report.

4.6 Equality implications

4.6.1 The action plan does not specifically have equality implications.

4.7 Procurement implications

4.7.1 There are specific actions in relation to procurement and contract management contained within the action plan.

4.8 Workforce implications

4.8.1 A fundamental part of the action plan is ensuring that there is a sufficiently trained and aware workforce around financial matters. This is not just within the finance and commercial teams themselves but also across the whole council. Actions within the action plan itself identify the importance of this work.

4.9 Property implications

4.9.1 There are no specific property implications arising from this report. Although asset sales underpin the financial model for the Council, those are dealt with at a detailed level through other financial reporting such as budget monitoring reports and specific asset management reports.

5 **Background Papers**

5.1 The following link provides access to the 9th March Council papers on previous financial action plan: [AGENDA ITEM \(slough.gov.uk\)](https://www.slough.gov.uk/agenda-item)

5.2 [The following links provide access to statutory recommendations made by Grant Thornton, our external auditors in 2021 and 2023](#)

[Microsoft PowerPoint - Slough BC - S24 statutory recommendations 09052021 Cabinet Report template 2022.23 \(slough.gov.uk\)](#)

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Appendix A: Finance Improvement Action Plan

Identified Issue	Actions to be taken	Timescales	Latest update	Responsible Officer/Group	Review(s) that identified issue
Getting the Basics Right					
Review finance procedures to determine if they remain fit for purpose, with external support as required	Review of current financial procedures within the constitution to be undertaken. Annual review is usual best practice so this will be undertaken to ensure ready for financial year 2024/25.	Feb 2024	Annual review not yet due but also awaiting start of permanent new Director and team to lead this process	Dir Corp & Strat finance (team)	CIPFA
Completion of statement of accounts for all outstanding years including Value for Money (VFM) judgements	Financial year 2018/19 is awaiting final sign off with external auditor. 2019/20 complete and with GT. Audit to be completed. 2020/21 accounts to be completed and audited. 2021/22 accounts to be completed and audited. 2022/23 accounts to be completed and audited.	Aug 2023 Oct 2023 Dec 2023 Feb 2024 Sept 2024	Following changes to national statutory deadlines (in draft) then the following deadlines have been provisionally agreed with external auditors The dates provided would ensure statutory deadlines are met. The plan for completion of statement of accounts is well underway and will be discussed with GT once further national framework is confirmed in Oct 23. In completing statement of accounts working papers, supporting evidence and explanatory notes will show year on year improvement where possible, with the Council targeting a non-qualified set of accounts for the earliest	Dir Corp & Strat finance	GT
PLEASE NOTE THESE ARE INDICATIVE DATES UNTIL FORMAL AGREEMENT WITH EXTERNAL AUDITORS AS AWAITING NATIONAL GUIDANCE					

	<p>2023/24 accounts to be completed and audited with council publishing unaudited accounts by 31st May 2024 deadline</p> <p>Value for Money work for 2021/22 and 2022/23 to be completed</p>	<p>Dec 2024</p> <p>Dec 2023</p>	<p>possible opportunity (likely to be 22/23 accounts)</p>		
<p>Ensuring that financial and commercial services has the capacity, skills and capability to support the financial recovery journey at Slough (general council finance skills covered under another theme)</p>	<p>Recruitment to the agreed structure for all service areas within finance including corporate and service finance, procurement and commercial, insurance, risk and internal audit</p> <p>Restructure of transactional services under consideration linked to the revenues and benefits automation programme</p>	<p>Mar 2024</p> <p>Mar 2024</p>	<p>Appointments been made for roles at Exec Dir, Director level.</p> <p>Recruitment underway at SFM and FM level</p> <p>Consultation commenced on new role of Director of Transactions. Recruitment to commence w/c 2 October 2023</p> <p>Work commenced on structural redesign of layers beneath the Director role. Will agree roles required and develop new JDs in advance of Director appointment</p>	<p>Exec Dir Finance and Commercial (S151)</p> <p>Dir Corp & Strategic Finance and Dir Financial Mgt</p> <p>Exec Dir Finance and Commercial (S151)</p> <p>Interim Head of Transactions</p>	<p>DLUHC FIN DIR CIPFA</p>

Financial reporting and budget monitoring (revenue, capital, general fund, HRA, DSG and other financial metrics) needs to be undertaken on a regular basis and to best practice standards	Revenue outturn for 22/23 to be presented at cabinet in September.	Sept 2023	Outturn report to be presented to cabinet in September.	Dir Corp & Strat finance	GT
	Monthly budget monitoring timetable, including meetings with services to sign-off their forecasts to be agreed and aligned to corporate reporting requirements	June 2023 (Month 2 monitor)	Period 2 internal monitoring undertaken with Period 3 (Qtr 1) presented to cabinet in September.	Dir Corp & Strat finance	
	Action plans to be put into place where any significant deviation from balance will need to be identified to ensure that the council lives within its means	As need arises	Deep dive/line by line reviews of all service budgets taken place between Month 3 and Month 4 to identify actions to live within our means. Actions will be followed up on a risk and exemption basis as required and the consequences on the council's financial position included in budget cabinet reports.	Dir Financial Mgt	
	Alignment of reporting with companies to the Council	Sept 2023	Cabinet papers for companies being presented to Sept cabinet meeting	Lead by ED Housing and Property	

Savings had been identified for the year 2023/24 but these need to be monitored, managed and the business cases behind these monitored for delivery	Savings delivery and reporting to be mainstreamed into the regular financial reporting processes	May 2023	Complete – this is now included as a specific monitoring item within regular financial reporting. Any savings that are not achieved in-year or on-going are identified and the service they originated from needs to seek alternative savings to compensate for non-delivery and identify actions within budget management reporting	Dir Financial Mg	GT
Up to date reconciliations of key systems, creditors and debtors balances and regular review of the balance sheet needs to be undertaken and regularly reported on.	Key reconciliations need to be brought up to date with sufficient supporting paperwork and reviewed and signed off. A process needs to be put in place to ensure that backlogs do not arise and performance information included in management information dashboard for senior officers to review.	Feb 2024 (to tie in with SOA) As per SOA schedule Feb 2024	Interim resource secured to bring all reconciliations up to date and setting up a new sustainable business process. Balance sheet reconciliation being undertaken as part of the updating of the statement of accounts work. Appropriate use of balance sheet coding planned within use of Agresso system (referred to under automation theme)	Dir of Corp & Strat Finance Dir of Corp & Strat Finance Dir of Corp & Strat Finance	GT
The raising of debtors invoices needs to be monitored to ensure that there is sufficient audit trail to support the raising of income and to allow proper debt collection to take place.	Deep dive reviews of key risk areas for income to be identified (see deep dive Project 1) that can then be used to improve overall processes	Commenced	3 areas picked (Commercial property, TA as part of wider review and social care income)	Service Exec directors	GT

Original issues were raised specifically in social care but this is an issue that needs to be addressed across the organisation.	From Qtr2 there should be strengthened reporting on key income measures including debt measures Improved Agresso reporting to provide management information on debt for budget managers	Sept 23 for Nov reports Oct 23	Reporting will be developed ahead of Qtr2 monitoring Work has commenced on developing reports	Dir Financial Management Interim Head of Transactional Services and transactions team	
The Fixed Asset register needs to be reviewed and regular monitoring of the asset disposals programme needs to be undertaken.	Full review of the asset register in line with work required for Statement of Accounts Review CIPFA asset register arrangement to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clear and that the arrangements are fit for purpose Asset disposal reporting to finance board from May 23 and internal officer Capital Board from Sept 23	Linked with SOA timetable Commence June 23 May 23	Specific team has been put together in finance to review available information and linking in with property colleagues to ensure information is fit for purpose Reviewing arrangements on roles and responsibilities has commenced Reports now being provided on a regular basis	SFM Corp fin SFM Capital SFM Capital	GT

<p>Consideration needs to be given to the way in which the Treasury management function works including cash management to ensure that we are providing adequate oversight and reporting on our activities.</p>	<p>Day to day practices reviewed by additional interim resource and processes documented</p>	<p>Aug 23</p>	<p>Complete by end August</p>	<p>SFM Treasury</p>	<p>N/A</p>
	<p>The Treasury Management annual report for 22/23 to Audit and Governance in November 23 and standard performance reporting improved</p>	<p>Nov 23</p>	<p>Will be presented in November 23 and adhere to best practice. Performance monitoring cycles for in-year performance to be considered with the aim that these will be aligned to best practice as soon as possible.</p>	<p>SFM Treasury</p>	
	<p>Ensure Treasury management and cashflow activity reflected in budget monitoring</p>	<p>Nov 23</p>	<p>Although the budget monitoring for Quarter 1 reflects the current activity level, more detailed reporting will be included at Quarter 2</p>	<p>Dir Corp & Strategic Finance</p>	
<p>The time taken to process change of circumstances and new claims in Housing Benefits is excessive and needs to be addressed.</p>	<p>The length of time taken to process new claims and change in circumstances far exceeds acceptable levels and national averages. The service therefore needs to ensure that processes and practices are changed to reduce waiting times</p>	<p>Sept 23</p>	<p>The team are automating processes that will reduce the amount of time taken to process claims and are already seeing reductions in the time taken for these activities.</p> <p>DWP have been working with the council to provide guidance on improving practices and will be on-site during September 2023 to review updated practices to help identify any further actions that could be made</p>	<p>Interim Head of Transactions</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Governance and Decision Making Support					
Company Governance including monitoring and commercial sub committee and reporting needs to be addressed. The number of dormant companies has already been reduced and action now needs to be focussed on resolving issues within current companies	Now lead by ED Housing Need to ensure company accounts are received in timely fashion to be able to complete group accounts	From 23/24 In line with SOA timetable	Cabinet reports in September	Housing	FIN DIR GT
The risk management system of the council and its oversight of risk actions needs to be strengthened and underpin the decisions the council makes in terms of prioritising its resources alongside performance and finance information	The system of reporting risk needs to be embedded across the council through departmental and corporate management teams. Development of risk registers at departmental level and not just corporate level needs to be put in place and regular discussion on risk at management teams	From May 23 June 23	Representatives from the risk and internal audit team now attend DLT's, CLT assurance and finance board, Complete - Departmental risk registers are now in place for each Directorate. The assurance CLT considers the risk register on a monthly basis	Head of Fin Gov, Risk and Internal Audit All Exec Directors	FIN DI R

	<p>Quarterly risk reports need to be considered by the Audit and Governance committee to ensure that there is member oversight on risks</p> <p>All committee reports should show clear consideration on risks, issues and mitigations to allow decision-makers to have full understanding of the implications of decisions they are making</p> <p>Need to consider whether the current tools for monitoring risk are sufficiently efficient and effective</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>March 2024</p>	<p>First risk report was not of sufficient quality but reports for Sept committee have been refreshed and improved sign off process now in place</p> <p>All report authors need to consider risk within their report and report template includes a risk section</p> <p>Business case for support system for risk management to replace use of standard office systems to be considered</p>	<p>Head of Fin Gov, Risk and Internal Audit</p> <p>All report authors</p> <p>Head of Fin Gov, Risk and Internal Audit</p>	
<p>The number of internal audits with actions still outstanding from prior financial years needs to be addressed. (Open actions date back to 2021/22).</p>	<p>The Internal Audit team need to co-ordinate work with internal audit action owners to ensure that outstanding actions from prior years are dealt with</p> <p>A number of open audits remain from 2022/23 where there have been</p>	<p>Dec 2023</p> <p>Aug 2023</p>	<p>Regular reporting at assurance CLT as well as finance board now in place. Actions where movement is not happening quick enough and audits not closed off to be called in to meet with Internal Audit Manager and S151 officer</p> <p>Attendance at DLT's now in place</p>	<p>Internal Audit Manager and Exec Dir Fin & Commercial</p> <p>Internal Audit Manager and</p>	<p>DLUHC FIN DIR</p>

	<p>Independent review was undertaken by Local Partnerships and actions included in specific procurement plan.</p> <p>Next steps are to respond to upcoming Procurement Bill changes, Head of Commercial services is working with colleagues in the London Procurement Network to ensure compliance as well as continue to embed contract management best practice across the council</p>				
<p>There needs to be a process put in place to bring the development of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) back in line with completion of the Statement of Accounts. The AGS will also be monitored for actions undertaken to improve the overall</p>	<p>AGS approved at Audit and Governance committee for 22/23 and arrangements in place to monitor during year</p> <p>Arrangements for AGS for next year to be agreed</p>	<p>July 2023</p> <p>March 2024</p>	<p>AGS approved at Audit committee</p> <p>Agreement on completion for future years to be discussed</p>	<p>Head of Legal</p> <p>Statutory Officers Group</p>	<p>GT</p>

governance framework and culture at the Council.					
Financial Culture and Awareness					
Training programme Developed for officers and members to improve financial awareness	For officers:				
	Review existing induction training for officers	Sept 2023	Induction training being refreshed and updated for finance and non finance officers	Exec Dir Fin & Commercial	CIPFA DLUHC FIN DIR GT
	Revise budget manager training as well as system training	TBC (to be developed alongside Agresso system work)	Included within Agresso work	Dir Corp & Strat fin	
	Berkshire finance collaboration and other networking	Commenced May 2023	Through Berks S151 network, the Slough S151 has developed a collaborate network for training, support and development across Berkshire. (Initiated when she worked at RBWM) Slough officers are included but this will grow as the network develops	Exec Dir Fin & Commercial	
For members:					
	Member induction training on local government finance	May 2023	Induction sessions delivered	Finance team	
	Specific training programme for Audit and Corporate Governance committee developed (to	Sept 2023	Initial programme topics discussed with committee and will be agreed at next meeting	Dir Financial Mgt	

	<p>be delivered over financial year with support from external bodies)</p> <p>Bespoke topic training to be identified that can be delivered to all members</p>	TBC	As identified	TBC	
The finance business partnering offer needs to be strengthened to support the council in undertaking its duties and ensuring sound decision-making can take place.	<p>All DLT's to have a relevant representative of the finance team in attendance to provide knowledge sharing, advice and guidance and early input into financial implications of work of services</p> <p>A review of the business partner offer and behaviours to be developed with new permanent team</p>	<p>Commenced April 2023</p> <p>Commence Nov 2023</p>	<p>CLT agreement for finance reps at all DLT meetings</p> <p>New permanent Director of financial management to undertake a review of the finance business partnering offer</p>	<p>CLT</p> <p>Dir of Financial mgt (Perm)</p>	N/A
The general awareness of our financial sustainability and everyone's part in management of our resources needs to be considered.	Finance team will undertake appropriate briefings for staff through staff roadshows, briefing through DLT's and through business partnering approach	Delivered as necessary	Staff roadshow briefings undertaken	Exec Dir Fin & Commercial	N/A

<p>Resident and stakeholder engagement around financial matters needs to be strengthened to ensure that there is better understanding of how the council demonstrates its use of public funds to build trust with our communities.</p>	<p>The team need to focus on the way financial information is presented in reports to ensure that key messages are able to be understood by a wide audience</p> <p>There will be a focus on public engagement as part of budget setting for 2024/25 and then improved year on year (aligned with MTFS actions)</p> <p>The Statement of Accounts narratives will ensure there is a summary of what the more technical information in the accounts mean (focus on 22/23 given the backlog of accounts)</p>	<p>Commenced April 2023 with new team</p>	<p>The team have been reviewing and refreshing available finance information and making best use of charts, tables and pictorial information alongside reducing the use of overly technical language.</p> <p>The team will seek feedback after all reports are produced, from key officers and members</p>	<p>Exec Dir Finance & Commercial</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>We will ensure that we have a strong anti-fraud and corruption culture to demonstrate we are using our public resources wisely</p>	<p>Included in the training and development for officers and members will be anti-fraud and anti-corruption training.</p> <p>Policies will be reviewed on a regular basis and an anti-fraud charter updated</p>	<p>TBC</p> <p>TBC</p>	<p>Included as part of the training actions but specific to this area</p> <p>Timing to be agreed with Audit and Governance committee and align with mandatory officer training</p>	<p>Head of Fin Gov, Risk and Internal Audit</p>	<p>N/A</p>

	to ensure we adhere to best practice				
CIPFA financial management code and other legislative changes need to be considered to ensure technical knowledge is up to date	The team need to ensure that there is a systematic review of codes as issued including awareness of legislative changes and best practice (finance and service) The team will seek to have an external Finance peer review in the second half of 2024/25 to ensure that the actions in this plan are effective	Commenced Sept 2023 From Sept 2024	Identified a lead within the corporate team to co-ordinate updates but also build on business partner knowledge with services To be arranged at the appropriate time	Dir Corp & Strat Fin Exec Dir Fin and Commercial	N/A
Medium Term Planning					
Identifying future liabilities to understand the scale of financial risks over the Medium Term (for 24/25 – 26/27)	Review the Capitalisation Directive model (CD) following outturn 22/23	Aug 2023	CD model updated for outturn which will then lead onto revising MTFS model	Dir Corp & Strat Finance	CIPFA FIN DIR
	Identify pressures arising during 23/24 that will continue into 24/25	Aug 2023	Identified pressures as part of Qtr1 budget monitoring	Dir Financial Mgt	
The Council needs to address its medium term planning and ensure that a balanced MTFP is agreed by full council for 2024/25 - 2026/27 when setting the	A detailed timetable needs to be produced to ensure that a fully evidenced MTFP, that is balanced, for agreement by full council	Aug 2023	Timetable for completion presented to finance board in Aug 2024	SFM Financial planning and reporting	FIN DIR

council's budget in March 2024	Build on public and member engagement during the setting of 2024/25 budget but look to further enhance this for future budget setting years	Mar 2024	Meeting with Chair of Scrutiny to agree approach to public and member engagement throughout MTFS development for 2024/25 budget	Exec Dir Finance & Commercial	
The Council had low levels of reserves particularly for the level of financial risk that the council is carrying given the number of financial years of accounts that remain outstanding. This needs to be addressed.	The low level of reserves was addressed in 23/24 setting but need ongoing reserve strategy alongside agreement of the MTFS	Mar 2024	Reserves strategy will be included as part of the overall Medium Term Financial Strategy to be signed off in March 2024	Exec Dir Finance and Commercial	GT
Transformation and Automation					
Revenues and Benefits Transformation work	The service needs to modernise by implementing software applications that automate high volume transactions leaving experienced officers to target recovery for those who can but choose not to pay and intensive support to those who cannot pay and require help.	Mar 2024	For Revenues we are automating: Moves in/out DDs Refunds Arrangements Discount reviews Unpaid DDs Emails SPD Applications EA Returns Historic Credits Student Discounts Write-offs	Interim Head of Transactions	FIN DIR CIPFA

	To improve collection rates the service needs to implement proactive means of contact using text, email, and voice early in the recovery cycle to proactively help and support residents to pay	Mar 2024	<p>For Benefits we are automating: UC – Complete Emails – Complete VEP CTS New Claims Rent Increases Interventions/Suspensions/Terminations Changes in Circumstances</p> <p>Contract awarded to TelSolutions and development work commenced on revenues recovery processes.</p>	Interim Head of Transactions	
Development of Agresso system to be fit for purpose and support the council to make decisions	Programme board established in July 23 and will develop system improvement roadmap	Commenced July 23	Further updates in future updated plan	Dir Corp Fin/SFM systems	N/A
The transactional service (including Revenues & Benefits, Social Care Finance, Sundry Debt and other debt collection) will move to a model where we use data and insight to support a single view of debt	Use data and insight to provide a holistic view of the resident/household to enable proactive joined up collection to drive up collection rates and the early provision of welfare support to those who need it	Mar 2025	Not yet started	Interim Head of Transactions	N/A

and adopt a model where we maximise collection and proactively provide support to those who need it.					
DEEP DIVE PROJECTS					
Deep Dive Projects	<p>First identified projects:</p> <p>Management of Income and Debt Processes within the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Commercial Property 2) Housing Benefit Overpayments 3) Temporary Accommodation and wider Housing transactions 4) Adult Social Care Income 	<p>4 separate officer task and finish groups being set up with cross cutting representation from relevant service areas, transactional finance and other relevant depts.</p>	<p>Further actions to be identified following officer task and finish groups findings.</p> <p>These actions will be reviewed for progress through the finance board and recovery boards</p>	<p>Exec Dir Finance and Commercial plus service leads</p>	N/A

Key:

CIPFA = CIPFA governance review actions

DLUHC = DLUHC governance review

FIN DIR = Finance specific directions

GT = actions arising from external auditors Grant Thornton

N/A = either no specific individual action from previous reviews or activity identified since reviews

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SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO:	Cabinet
DATE:	18 September 2023
SUBJECT:	Approval of annual Business and Improvement Plan for Slough Children First Limited (SCF)
CHIEF OFFICER:	Stephen Brown – Chief Executive
CONTACT OFFICER:	Sarah Wilson – Head of Legal
WARD(S):	All
PORTFOLIO:	Councillor Smith – Leader of the Council Councillor Kelly – Lead Member Children’s Services
KEY DECISION:	YES
EXEMPT:	NO, with the exception of Appendix 9 to the SCF Draft Business Plan
DECISION SUBJECT TO CALL IN:	YES
APPENDICES:	Appendix A - SCF Draft Business and Improvement Plan 2023 to 2026 Appendix B – In-year change requests for deficits arising from 2021/22 and 2022/23.

1 Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report seeks approval of the Slough Children First (SCF) Business and Improvement Plan for 2023 to 2026 (Appendix A), on an interim basis as well as seeking approval for retrospective in-year change requests for the previous two financial years to fund historic deficits. As SCF is wholly owned by the Council, it is bound by its Articles to submit its draft Business and Improvement Plan for approval by the Council. The Business and Improvement Plan is a critical document governing how SCF conducts its business, and it is not permitted to enter into transactions, agreements, or contracts unless they are in accordance with its Business and Improvement Plan.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to:

- Approve the SCF’s Business and Improvement Plan for 2023 to 2026 at Appendix A.

- Approve the requests for funding of deficits from 2021/22 and 2022/23 at a total of £5.312m from the budget equalisation reserve
- Approve the increase in the contract sum for 2023/24 of £4.447m, taking the total contract sum to £40.514m using in-year contingency budgets.
- Note the plan for future cabinet reports as follows:
 - December 2023 – approve the 2024-2027 Business and Improvement Plan with details of the requested contract sum for 2024/25 and the updated contractual key performance indicators and formally note the SCF Annual Report for 2022/23.
 - February 2024 – contract sum to be formally approved as part of the Council’s budget setting process.
 - June / July 2024 – note the Annual Report for 2023/24 and an update on progress against the approved Business and Improvement Plan.

Reason:

SCF requires a high quality, long-term Business and Improvement Plan setting out its strategic priorities and financial strategy. The previous year’s plan was only approved on an interim basis and the re-submitted plan was subject to a review by Mutual Ventures with Cabinet agreeing not to approve it in February 2023 and to require an updated version to be submitted in July 2023. Further work was required on the financial strategy resulting in this being delayed until September 2023. SCF has a new executive leadership team, new Chair and non-executive director on the Board and the Council has new DLUHC commissioners. There has therefore been enhanced scrutiny of the to support SCF to deliver high quality and cost-effective services. This plan requests further significant financial support for the financial year 2023/24 over and above what was agreed by Cabinet in February 2023. In approving this additional amount for SCF it needs to be recognised that this places an additional burden on the council to manage the rest of it’s resources within it’s means. Although this is proposed to be funded from contingency budgets, that reduces the ability to deal with any other in-year pressures identified.

The Council is also asked to approve significant historic deficits arising from the two previous financial years. SCF is relying on its loan to fund these and this is creating cashflow issues. Detailed information has been submitted on the reason for the deficits. In future SCF needs to submit and the Council consider in-year change requests promptly to allow decisions to be made on whether an increased contract sum is justified.

The Council must continue to monitor SCF’s performance to ensure that limited available funding is directed to the right place and supporting the Council’s improvement journey. For this reason, Cabinet is requested to note the future reports throughout the year on various aspects of governance of SCF.

Commissioner Review

Children services nationally are operating in a complex and challenging environment, balancing the tension between delivering essential improvements and financially constrained budgets. The business and improvement plan sets out the vision for how Slough Children First, plan to improve the quality-of-service delivery to children, young people and their families and the key priorities for 2023/24.

The report and business and improvement plan, outline the increased financial risk to the Council, and it is important that the operating and reporting arrangements, derived through close working relationship, engagement with key stakeholders, sound corporate governance arrangements within the company and Council and regular reports to the Board and Council with strengthened financial oversight, are effective in managing the risks.

The commissioners are content with the recommendations in this report.

2 Report - Introduction

- 2.1. SCF became wholly owned by the Council on 1 April 2021, with new articles of association setting out its governance arrangements. The Articles of Association set out a list of reserved matters, which must be approved by the Council, as the sole owner of the Company.
- 2.2. SCF delivers prescribed statutory and discretionary children’s social care functions under a direction of the Secretary of State and in accordance with a service delivery contract between SCF and the Council. Improvement activity across children’s services is a critical part of the Council’s improvement journey and the Council should work with the new SCF executive leadership team, board of directors and DfE commissioner to ensure that the services can be delivered in a cost-effective way, contributing to the delivery of required financial savings to enable the Council to become financially sustainable within the medium term.
- 2.3. A new Chief Executive for SCF (also the Executive Director of People – Children / statutory director of children’s services) commenced in role in January 2023. On the day of her arrival Ofsted commenced its inspection of children’s services and found that overall the service ‘requires improvement to be good,’ but the impact of leaders is ‘inadequate.’ The People Scrutiny Panel task and finish report recommended an enhanced focus on partnership working, alongside other recommendations for SCF which have been incorporated into the Business and Improvement Plan. The submitted draft Business and Improvement Plan is a significant improvement on the previous plan, with clear and focused improvement plans linked to savings, however it also requires significantly more funding than the Council has budgeted for, which puts pressure on other council services and on the Council’s long-term viability. Many of these financial pressures are related to national factors and replicated in local authorities across the country.
- 2.4. The Department of Education (DfE) has appointed a Commissioner, Paul Moffat to oversee Children’s Services improvement who has had oversight of this plan.

Options Considered

- 2.5. The following options were considered:

Option	Pros	Cons	Recommended
Option 1: Approval of business and improvement plan and historic deficits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures compliance with Articles of Association. • Ensures SCF has a longer-term business strategy to manage its services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The plan assumes funding that has not been agreed by the Council and will put pressure on other services. 	Recommended

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new plan will be owned by new Chief Executive and Board of SCF. • The payment of historic deficits and increased contract sum will enable SCF to operate on a solvent basis in the medium term. 		
Option 3: Do not approve the Business and Improvement Plan or historic deficits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council does not approve the business and improvement plan and requires an updated version to be prepared in a new timetable. • The business and improvement plan can set out a more realistic and affordable medium term financial strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The previous interim Business and Improvement Plan will apply, which does not address how SCF will seek to deliver financial savings in the current context. • SCF is not able to demonstrate improvement in its Business and Improvement Planning processes, an issue that was flagged in the governance review. • Time and resource will be put into updating the plan which may not result in an approved medium term position and this effort would be better put into effective delivery plans. 	Not recommended

Background

2.6. SCF's objects are set out in its Articles of Association. These are clearly set out in the Business and Improvement Plan.

2.7. SCF has sets out a vision and ambition for children, priorities, and enablers. The enablers form the basis of the Director of Children's Services report to the Getting to Good Board chaired by the DfE Commissioner. There is a financial focus to the plan, including savings targets for 2023/24 and 2024/25 as well as a 12-week improvement plan and the subsequent continuous improvement plan.

2.8. As part of ensuring appropriate scrutiny and challenge, the draft of the previous plan was reviewed by Mutual Ventures, who were commissioned by the DfE, and by a task and finish group of members from the People Scrutiny Panel. Key findings from these reviews are set out below:

Affordability of services

2.9. Mutual Ventures made it clear that both the Council and SCF need to be clear about the affordability of services and have full confidence in the proposed plans, given the Council's tightening financial envelope. Mutual Ventures assessed that SCF's previous business plan under-estimated the cost of invest to save proposals and

inflationary pressure and was potentially over-ambitious regarding placement rates and vacancy factor. However, in other areas, it viewed the proposals as not being ambitious enough. It is important to note that some matters have moved on considerably since the Mutual Ventures review and there is a new executive leadership team in SCF who are bringing fresh experience and challenge. Therefore, whilst it is relevant to consider the analysis contained in the review, appropriate weight needs to be given to it in view of these changes.

2.10. The figure below is an extract from the Mutual Ventures report which was published as an appendix to the February cabinet report. This indicates that the 2023/24 funding requirement was £39.330m, however this took account of a £3.387m deficit. If this deficit is funded via adjustment of previous years' contract sums, the budget requirement is £35.943m. The Council agreed a contract sum in excess of this figure, but the current Business and Improvement Plan is indicating that a further £4.4m is required over and above this figure.

Figure 16. Comparison of business plan with review outputs, in £'000.

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
SCF BUSINESS PLAN (Appendix D)							
Current SCF contract value							
SBC core contract	31,700	32,350	32,770	33,170	33,573	33,966	34,361
Contribution to Virtual School	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Capitalisation Directive Funding	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
SCF deficit/(surplus)	5,175	3,387	2,158	1,433	420	(745)	(1,620)
TOTAL SBC FUNDING REQUIREMENT	37,070	35,836	35,023	34,708	34,094	33,321	32,841
ALTERNATIVE SCENARIO - REVISED ASSUMPTIONS							
Correction of errors in SCF model		(146)	(307.00)	(313.00)	(299.00)	(178.00)	(92.00)
Baseline revisions							
Placement rates		236	211	197	186	167	154
Vacancy factor		(875)	(892)	(910)	(910)	(890)	(890)
Total baseline revisions		(639)	(681)	(713)	(724)	(723)	(736)
Demographic growth revision							
		64	22	(103)	(210)	(330)	(483)
Savings impact revisions							
Net foster carer recruitment		220	336	435	517	585	626
Placement rates		820	890	890	847	793	740
Care leavers volume		442	480	513	460	451	523
Care leavers rates		471	587	587	587	589	587
Family Hubs / Targeted Early Help impact		151	338	524	685	731	740
Edge of Care impact		400	397	391	390	389	379
Timing of Innovate team reduction		412	371	742	371	405	(0)
Total savings revisions		2,914	3,408	4,082	3,858	3,942	3,596
Additional inflation							
		1,408	1,760	1,872	1,953	2,054	2,104
TOTAL REVISIONS		3,601	4,202	4,825	4,574	4,765	4,388
Less revisions funded by partners/grants		(59)	(41)	(30)	(37)	(35)	(32)
TOTAL REVISED SBC FUNDING	37,070	39,330	39,184	39,503	38,630	38,007	37,198

2.11. There are no specific requests for “invest to save” funding in the Business and Improvement Plan, although the detail demonstrates that additional funding is needed in the early years of the Plan to assist with delivery of savings and containing demand pressure in future years and helpful assumptions are given on the impact of these proposals. Reference is also made to applying for grant funding from the DfE to support transformational change. The plan sets out the significant impact of loss of DfE funding compared to previous years. The savings proposals include ambitious targets to reduce placements costs and less stretching targets for some other areas. It is assumed that the proposals have built in inflation and that SCF will be able to contain further demand and inflationary pressures within its medium-term financial plans as this was built into the modelling undertaken by Mutual Ventures.

2.12. SCF is required to produce its draft annual business plan by 30 September in the previous financial year. Complying with this timetable will assist the Council with its budget setting process and its own Medium Term Financial Strategy for future years.

Proactive demand management

2.13. Mutual Ventures state that the financial outlook for SCF could be improved through a dedicated drive to focus on throughput of work, with a review of existing cases being closed where they are low risk.

2.14. The Task and Finish Group heard that managing risk and closing cases requires stable leadership and management to ensure social workers felt confident and safe in their decision-making and this is now in place.

2.15. The draft Business and Improvement Plan makes the following assumptions to reduce spending:

- a 5% reduction in families being stepped up to statutory social care by more targeting in the early help teams;
- The in-house fostering service will target six new carers by the end of 2023/24 with further recruitment planned in future years;
- Improved commissioning for accommodation for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and commissioning support to improve participation with children and young people (subject to receipt of DfE grant funding).

2.16. It is critical that there is a renewed focus on driving down demand where appropriate and monitoring against these targets will help identify whether these are overly ambitious or not ambitious enough.

2.17. There are also demand pressures that are caused by national factors. The demand pressures are mainly caused by a significant increase in unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) and increase in need for external residential placement. There is also a significant increase in caseloads in general. Some of the financial pressures for UASC is due to a delay in receiving funding from the Home Office and is therefore more of a cashflow issue than a demand pressure.

Workforce

2.18. Mutual Ventures stated that the previous invest to save proposals did not address the main reason that staff are leaving, namely caseloads. Mutual Ventures also commented on the intention to keep the two managed agency (Innovate) Teams until March 2025 as concerning, as these teams are expensive and should only be used to fill short term gaps. With stable, skilled, and confident leadership it was proposed that a more ambitious target could be set and caseload levels are now less of a concern, leading to a reduced need to rely on such teams.

2.19. The Scrutiny Task and Finish Group heard from frontline managers about the strong morale and the positive impact that programmes such as Step Up to Social Work and employing overseas qualified social workers were having on recruitment and retention. The latest figures indicate that the current workforce strategies are working. SCF has recently partnered with “Frontline” as further evidence of investment in practice development and support. The draft Business and Improvement Plan assumes an increase in permanent recruitment by 1% each year to reduce the costs spend on more expensive agency arrangements. This is building on the current

successful programmes already in place which have seen an increase in the ratio of permanent to agency/vacancy which now sits at 77:23. This has enabled the release of one managed agency team 20 months earlier than planned and the second 18 months earlier.

Early Help

- 2.20. SCF is expected to and does positively and effectively contribute to multi-agency early intervention support for children, young people, and their families to avoid the need for more intensive social care support.
- 2.21. The Mutual Ventures report noted that all the original invest to save proposals will strengthen the service offer and there should not be a 'pick and mix' approach.
- 2.22. The Task and Finish Group noted the national evidence of the need to focus on the wider children's workforce and ensuring that the wider partnership worked effectively to support children and young people.
- 2.23. An in-year funding request to support increasing the size of the targeted early help service was agreed in 2022/23 and there is evidence that this has started to have an impact on reducing reliance on statutory intervention for families. This service should also have a focus on multi-agency working and encouraging other agencies to take the lead on specific aspects of early help support.
- 2.24. The assumptions made in relation to an effective early help system have been highlighted in the proactive demand management section above.

Edge of Care

- 2.25. The Edge of Care team is intended to focus on preventing family breakdown and contextual safeguarding (safeguarding children from risks outside the home including criminal or sexual exploitation and youth violence).
- 2.26. The Task and Finish Group also heard from practitioners who had seen the success of a previous Innovate Team which consisted of multi-disciplinary practitioners who supported young people and families in crisis.
- 2.27. An edge of care team is intended to support reunification of children coming home from care in appropriate cases and reduce placement costs.

Deliverability and leadership capability

- 2.28. Mutual Ventures raised concerns about delivery capacity and capability and that SCF needs to strengthen its governance arrangements, business plan monitoring processes and benefits management discipline, work which is now underway. This includes strengthening the finance function, developing a structured approach to demonstrate value for money, having in place robust governance and board oversight arrangements and comprehensive risk assessment processes.
- 2.29. Some of these issues have also been identified as part of the Council's governance review of SCF. The Council appointed an Executive Director – People (Children) who is also the statutory Director of Children's Services who is seconded into SCF and appointed by SCF as the Chief Executive. This permanent appointment has led to a permanent leadership team and there is a new Director of Finance and Business and Improvement Planning manager which are both positive steps. The board has also

been strengthened with appointment of a new non-executive director with a finance background and an experienced local authority senior leader as Chair of the Board.

Partnerships

- 2.30. Both Mutual Ventures and the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group refer to the critical importance of the wider partnerships. Other Local Authority areas that have made sustained progress are good at engaging and collaborating at a strategic and operational level. Engaging partners is one of SCF's enablers for improvement.
- 2.31. It is positive to see a priority around partnership working, both with the Council and wider children's workforce, including the community and voluntary sector. One of the enablers is also around engaging partners.
- 2.32. Reducing demand on statutory social care and investing in early help is a partnership responsibility and this cannot be achieved by SCF or the Council alone. Requesting an update in 3 months will allow the Council to review SCF's progress in ensuring both the statutory partnerships and individual partner agencies are fully contributing to supporting families and children in Slough to thrive.

Governance and contractual requirements for approval of the business plan

- 2.33. Article 7 sets out the requirements for an annual business plan. This requires that for each year, no later than 30 September in the preceding year, the board of directors should prepare and submit a draft business plan for approval by the Council covering the next 3 years. The content of each business plan shall include relevant information under each of the following headings:
 - (a) introduction;
 - (b) strategic framework;
 - (c) working with partners;
 - (d) priorities and objectives;
 - (e) financial strategy and plans;
 - (f) profit and loss account;
 - (g) cash flow statement;
 - (h) revenue budget and working capital requirements; and
 - (i) capital expenditure requirements.
- 2.34. The Business and Improvement Plan can be varied each year, but that will also require prior written approval of the Council. If, prior to the state of the year, the board of directors has not sought the approval of the Council then for as long as approval has not been secured, the business plan for the previous year shall continue to apply.
- 2.35. Since February 2014, the Slough Children's Services have been subject to intervention from the Department for Education. The draft Business and Improvement Plan sets out a focused 12-week plan and a continuous improvement plan intended to provide a roadmap and an accountability framework for how it will deliver good services to enable the intervention to be removed.
- 2.36. In addition to the Business and Improvement Plan, if SCF finds itself in a position whereby it cannot balance its budget in year, there is a contractual mechanism to allow it to submit an in-year change request for increased funding either on an invest to save or demand pressures basis. There is a detailed process to follow to ensure the requests can be properly considered by the Council and to manage any disputes between the parties. SCF has submitted 6 in-year change requests for 2021/22 and

2022/23 to deal with its historic overspends. The Council did approve similar requests last year but requested that submission of further requests be delayed pending receipt of the revised Business and Improvement Plan. The requests are summarised below:

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

2.37. The Council supported a previous request for funding to support an increase in the numbers of UASC, but for 2022/23 this was only for a 6-month period. On the basis of the previous request, it was assumed the annual figure would be about £450k and provision was made for additional funding in the contract sum set for 2023/24. However, the 2022/23 figure is now £742k, which is partly due to an increase in numbers from 31 in September 2022 to 45 in March 2023. SCF is clear about the need to recoup all monies from the Home Office and has social workers with increasing skills in undertaking age-assessments and decision making on whether to defend age assessment challenges. Updates on current and future pressures as well as any communication with the Home Office to deal with delays in payment will be presented in future reports.

Legal Costs

2.38. These costs include court fees, legal fees from the Reading joint legal team, counsel's fees, and expert fees. The costs are largely dependent on the number of care cases and other legal proceedings such as judicial reviews but are also impacted by more complex cases and judicial continuity issues requiring more hearings or court delays. The new leadership is looking to reduce the number of proceedings in the future by focusing on child in need, child protection and PLO processes. Benchmarking data needs to be used to demonstrate cost efficiency. The Business and Improvement Plan rightly focuses on early help and edge of care team, and these should lead to a reduction in the number of proceedings in the future.

Salary pressures

2.39. The salary pressures were not unforeseen and should have been budgeted for by SCF. However, it is positive that the workforce strategy has led to the Innovate teams being released earlier than expected and the ratio of permanent to agency has improved significantly providing evidence to indicate that the strategy is working.

Loss of transformation grant

2.40. The loss of DfE grant in 2022 has been covered by the increased contract sum for 2023/24, however it would have been more prudent if SCF had considered its options at the point the grant was stopped, rather than continuing to fund services for which it had no budget. The Business and Improvement Plan refers to applications for grant funding from DfE and if provided, SCF needs to have and has requested project management capacity to ensure the funds are used in accordance with the terms of the grant.

Placement pressures

2.41. The Mutual Ventures report contains revisions based on unrealistic assumptions on unit cost and placement budgets. The request states that costs are low statistically, however no benchmarking data is presented to allow comparisons to be made. Costs have increased significantly since August 2022. The Scrutiny task and finish group raised concerns about increases in fostering households being undeliverable, which would place further pressure on the placements budget. The placements budget is clearly strongly linked to the number of children in care and most solutions are relatively long term. Future reports should contain a detailed update on placement

budgets, including benchmarking data and progress against savings proposals, including risks.

Care leavers/care experienced young people

- 2.42. The historic overspend is £430k, not including spend on UASC. It is not clear why this was not foreseeable or what consideration was given to the risks or reducing the cost of support. Most of the overspend has been funded by grant, which is positive. Further work needs to take place between SCF and the Council’s housing service to understand how delays in housing panels can lead to overspends and how the risk of this is raised corporately.
- 2.43. It is recommended that the Council formally agree the historic deficits. In future the Council needs to receive and consider in-year change requests promptly at the time SCF believes that the pressure cannot be met by mitigating measures elsewhere.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1. Financial implications

- 3.1.1. Full Council in February 2023 approved a contract fee for 2023/24 of £36.067million - an increase of £4.632m from the previous financial year.
- 3.1.2. SCF have requested one off funding amounting to £5.312 in respect 2021/22 and 2022/23, outside of the agreed budget setting process. This is summarised in the table below:

21/22 and 22/23 One off Bids for funding

	£m
DfE Transformation Grant loss	0.348
Salary Pressures	1.432
Placements	2.180
Other Child Support	0.095
Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children	0.742
Legal Costs	0.515
Total Additional Budget Pressures 2023-24	5.312

- 3.1.3 At the time the 2023/24 Council budget was set, it was on the basis of SCF staying within with the agreed contract fee of £36.067m. This business plan is requesting additional £4.47m for 2023/24 which would be funded through use of in-year contingency budgets.
- 3.1.4 The assumed contract sums in the draft plan for 2024/25 and 2025/26 will need to be considered as part of the councils medium-term financial planning.
- 3.1.5 The Company has no reserves and relies on the £5m loan from the Council for cash-flow. This loan will permit SCF to be financially solvent, however it must ensure that this loan is only used for cashflow purposes and not utilised for service delivery pressures. The Council expects repayment of the loan in full at the end of the service delivery contract, which ends in 2026 if not extended and this carries a

high risk for the Council and SCF. By agreeing to pay sums for previous years, this will assist the in-year cashflow position.

3.2 Legal implications

3.2.1 The Secretary of State for Education has powers to issue a direction in relation to specified social services functions relating to children under s.497A of the Education Act 1996. Various directions have been issued in relation to statutory functions in Slough since 2014.

3.2.2 The seventh statutory direction was issued in August 2023. This requires that the Council secures that prescribed children's services functions are performed by SCF and the Council jointly and other prescribed children's services functions are performed by SCF on behalf of the Council. The Council was also directed to enter into a new service agreement to implement the discharge of these functions and continue to comply with any instructions of the Secretary of State, his representatives and the Children's Services Commissioner in relation to ensuring that the Council's children's social care functions are performed to the required standard. The seventh direction contains reference to the DLUHC appointed commissioners requiring the DfE commissioner to work in partnership with these commissioners to contribute to the work to rebuild the finance and governance capacity of the Council and to secure its compliance with the best value duty in so far as it relates to children's services. The DfE commissioner is expected to review the delivery of children's services, determine improvement priorities, including scope, budgets and governance arrangements and ensure that any work on future delivery is led and informed by him, taking into account the work of the DLUHC commissioners.

3.3 Risk management implications

3.3.1 There are risks that the company will not achieve its agreed budget as highlighted in the report. The Council is mitigating this risk through regular financial and performance monitoring meetings and reports to Cabinet on key matters. The risks to children and families as a result of risks arising from the lack of a Business and Improvement Plan and effective leadership within SCF are covered in the Council's corporate risk register and in the governance review, which are regularly monitored by the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee.

3.4 Environmental implications

3.4.1 None

3.5 Equality implications

3.5.1 The Council has a duty contained in section 149 of the Equality Act to have due regard to the need to:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

3.5.2 The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day-to-day business and to keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services. As a body delivering public functions, SCF is expected to comply with this duty.

3.5.3 High quality and cost-effective children's services are critical to supporting both the Council and SCF to meet their equality duties, particularly in relation to advancing equality of opportunity by way of reducing inequalities that exist between certain groups of vulnerable children and their families and the wider population. As part of the update reports, it is expected that information will be presented on how SCF is meeting its equality duties and how this is supporting the Council to meet its own duties.

3.6 Procurement implications

3.6.4 There are no procurement implications from this proposal. SCF operates within the "Teckal Exemption" meaning that the Council does not have to undertake a procurement process to commission services from it. This exemption is on the basis that the Council has adequate control over SCF and that at least 80% of SCF's services are provided to the Council.

3.7 Workforce implications

3.7.1 None.

3.8 Property implications

3.8.1 SCF will need to consider its future building requirements as part of the Council's wider asset disposal programme. At present SCF operates from 3 separate buildings, including leasing office space in Observatory House, operating a contact centre in Cippenham, and operating a respite centre in Priors Close and these are all seen as required operational assets.

4. **Background Papers**

None.



Slough Children First Business and Improvement Plan 2023-26

**Our vision and aspirations for
children and families during 2023-26
including a detailed one-year**



OWNER

Simon Baker, Company
Chair

Sue Butcher, Chief
Executive and Executive
Director of Children's
Services

VERSION

0.11

DATE

August 31, 2023

© Slough Children First
Observatory House
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Introduction from the Board Chair and Chief Executive

Children's services in Slough, delivered by Slough Children First (SCF), are rated by Ofsted as 'Requires Improvement' and particularly as the area of Leadership and Management is assessed as inadequate, this is simply not good enough for our children. We need to do more to meet children's needs at the earliest possible opportunity; safeguard them from the risk of significant harm; ensure they live in stable and loving homes; and move into adulthood with the confidence, skills, and knowledge they need to live successful and fulfilling lives. We must do this despite the national challenges facing us in our post-covid world and Slough Borough Council's (SBC) exceptional financial circumstances.

However, exciting times are ahead as there are unprecedented opportunities to work across SBC and SCF on a shared agenda for improving children's lives. As the Slough Children First Chair and Chief Executive, we see everyone's clear and resolute determination to enable all Slough's children to achieve their full potential. In Slough we have a rising childhood obesity issue in an already complex system where healthy life expectancy can be ten years younger than neighbouring Boroughs. These factors require a whole council, whole partnership, and community approach. Sharing an ambition for Slough's children and delivering a continuum of support from an Early Help level through to more intense statutory services. Our business plan aligns with the Council's plan for the Borough and our success will be evidenced in clear key performance indicators.

Whilst acknowledging the challenges this Business and Improvement Plan sets out our improvement journey and identifies the solutions required for SCF to get to 'Good'. Our confidence in planning and delivering improvements for children is strengthened by the quality of our workforce. We value every one of them highly and want them all to appreciate their individual role in delivering our improvement agenda. This confidence is increased by our having a permanent leadership team in place and, although we value our agency workers, an increasingly permanent workforce with a significantly decreasing staff turnover.

We recognise that almost all children and their families will need some help at some point in their lives and, given the national challenges faced by families, we want our families to know that we are here to help. In addition, Slough has a significant transient population with vulnerable families migrating into Slough. This can be from elsewhere in the country or from other parts of the world where they may have faced extreme danger and are now living with significant trauma. We do this through our partnership arrangements and relationships with other organisations such as the Council, Schools including Early Years Providers, the Health Integrated Care Board, Health providers, Police, Community and Voluntary Sector and faith communities.

The intention of our business plan is not to capture everything we do as a company. It is a high-level strategic document which provides a clear framework for our decision-making and how we prioritise and allocate our resources. We acknowledge the importance of living within our means and ensuring that we evidence best value for money. This will mean doing more for less.

This is a huge challenge, and this Business and Improvement Plan evidences our ambition and our commitment to meet it head on.

Simon Baker

Sue Butcher

- **We will** develop and embed better ways of listening, enabling and working alongside children and young people. We need to support them, so they feel confident in telling us about their day-to-day realities but also to give them the opportunity to shape the services they receive.
- **We will** intervene in families' lives in a respectful and transparent manner, focusing on reducing risk so they can be supported without statutory intervention at an early help level.
- **We will** always recognise the importance of family, community, learning and enjoyment as central to a child's safety and wellbeing. We can only do that by working together.

The leadership team will listen to and hear what our children and families say to us and feed back to our staff when they have made a difference to the outcomes of children such as the messages received below.

[they helped me] grow a closer bond with my mum as before me and her were not so close and I couldn't speak to her about stuff

[the] social worker has been great, no words can describe how she has changed our family's life, we will definitely miss her help and support.

We actually felt like we had a social worker for once that was listening to us regarding the kids and was always available when we reached out to her to listen as well as make sure all things was done and put into place when needed.

Slough Children First and Slough Borough Council, a Borough that prioritises its Children and Young People

Children and young people are a priority for Slough Borough Council. The Corporate Plan focuses on "Closing the healthy life expectancy gap by focusing on children". This underpins our work together to deliver our top priorities for children by:

- Providing quality services for vulnerable children and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- Improving outcomes for disadvantaged children and young people
- Tackling high rates of child obesity
- Increasing children and young people's participation in decisions that affect them and in shaping the future of Slough.

The Company, as an entity, has delivered social care services for Slough Borough Council (SBC) since October 2015 but its name and ownership changed in 2021 when it became Slough Children First (SCF) and wholly owned by SBC. The Chief Executive of SCF is the Executive Director of Children's Services (DCS) and therefore has

professional responsibility for children's services in Slough, an integrated brief for both education and social care.¹ Children and their families do not care about artificial boundaries, and we must grow a 'one service approach' for Slough's children. Therefore, we have a shared Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) and work closely to promote seamless services.

As a separate company SCF set out objectives within our Articles of Association. These are to provide social care, youth justice and other related services and support to children, young people and their families for the advancement of the community, and in particular:

- (a) to keep children and young people safe from harm;
- (b) to provide high quality and coordinated services in connection with children, young people and their families, including in relation to children's safeguarding, children in care and at the edge of care, children leaving care and adoption and fostering services;
- (c) to innovate and secure improvements in the quality and effectiveness of the services provided to children, young people and their families in respect of social care, family support and youth offending services and demonstrate value for money in doing so;
- (d) to advance and promote social care, family support and youth offending services available to children, young people and their families;
- (e) to work collaboratively with other agencies to identify the individual social care needs of children and young people and to establish suitable arrangements to prepare for and meet such needs;
- (f) to make a positive and effective contribution to multi-agency early intervention support for children, young people and their families to avoid the need for more intensive social care support;
- (g) to ensure that effective care planning and appropriate intervention is in place which protects children from harm, reduces the need for children to be in care unless absolutely necessary and supports those in care;
- (h) to establish and operate arrangements based on best practice and innovation and to work in partnership with all agencies involved with children, young people and their families to encourage and support to achieve positive outcomes; and
- (i) to establish, promote and encourage the development of collaborative working arrangements between individuals and organisations in the field of information, advice, guidance and support to deliver high standards of social care, family support and youth offending services to children and young people.

¹ Statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and for the Lead Member for Children's Services. DFE 2013

The aim is for the services delivered by SCF, to move back into the Council during the lifetime of this plan with the caveat that this must be in the best interests of Slough's vulnerable children and young people. To support this ambition, we must continue to strengthen the relationship between the Council and Slough Children First, particularly regarding the complex financial environment. Both the Council and SCF are in intervention and formally scrutinised by Commissioners from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and the Department of Education (DfE) respectively. This scrutiny will ultimately determine when the move can take place.

SBC holds SCF accountable for our performance through quarterly contractual monitoring meetings. The Ofsted inspection in January 2023 identified improvements to be made in this relationship and both SCF and SBC are committed to working together in the best interests of children and their families.

Our Current Challenges

SBC faces extraordinary financial challenges which are reflected in the Section 114 Notice and continued oversight and scrutiny by Commissioners appointed by DLUHC. Inevitably these financial challenges impact on the work of SCF. Despite these constraints we must demonstrate that we provide services effectively and efficiently therefore evidencing best value for money. SCF is held to account by the DfE appointed Commissioner who also scrutinises services for children with SEND.

There is a 'national cost of living crisis' and Slough's children and families are no exception to experiencing significant financial hardship and the consequential increased emotional burdens.

Children face the continued implications of the Covid-19 pandemic on their education and their mental and emotional wellbeing.

There are significant challenges for young people who have become more disengaged from services and are therefore vulnerable to adults who seek to exploit them both criminally and sexually. We must focus on getting alongside our children and young people and work with our partner agencies to find ways to disrupt the adults who exploit them.

We are committed to supporting young people who are seeking refuge from their country of origin through the National Transfer Scheme particularly in the light of the recent Kent judgement and the need to accommodate asylum seeking young people in accordance with our quota of 0.1% population children and young people 0-18 years. We must support them to recover from the trauma that they will have experienced. This includes working with schools and colleges to ensure asylum seeking young people's educational needs are met whilst also ensuring that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place where there is a dispute about their age.

The introduction to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care states that 'this is a once in a generation opportunity to reset children's social care. What we need is a system that provides intensive help to families in crisis, acts decisively in response to abuse, unlocks the potential of wider family networks to raise children, puts lifelong loving relationships at the heart of the care system and lays the foundations for a good life for those who have been in care. What we have currently is a system increasingly skewed to crisis intervention, with outcomes for children that continue to be

unacceptably poor and costs that continue to rise. For these reasons, a radical reset is now unavoidable.² However, implementing these changes may be resource intensive.

We believe that our newly appointed Executive Team, alongside the Company Board and the Council, are entering a year of opportunity in which relationships have improved and will mature over that time. This will facilitate a ‘whole systems’ approach towards providing services for Slough’s citizens which has not been in place in recent years.

Our One-Year Plan

Our Ofsted inspection in January 2023 identified several areas in which we need to make significant and sustained improvement, not least in the relationship between SBC and SCF. Our response to that inspection was to put in place an Immediate 12-week Plan to show intent and make progress at pace. Subsequently we have built upon this plan and produced a **Continuous Improvement Plan** (Appendix 7) which will support and monitor our journey to improve services for children and families.

We anticipate that services provided by SCF will be re-inspected in the coming year to review the progress made since the ILACS Inspection in January 2023. It is our ambition to evidence, at that time, that services are much improved and being delivered to Ofsted’s definition of a ‘Good’ standard.

We cannot achieve our ambitions without our fantastic workforce. We need to continue listening to what our staff are saying to us (like the examples below) and feedback on how this has influenced our services.

<p>Support and work together to promote a culture that values each other with kindness and respect</p>	<p>Model good practice</p> <p>Maintain ongoing transparency</p> <p>Create an avenue where staff can voice their feelings and feel like they are heard</p>
<p>Be open to creative and different ways of doing things</p>	

We have appointed our first dedicated Principal Social Worker in order to promote excellent professional practice, leading on practice improvement and providing a bridge between professional and managerial responsibilities.

² Independent Review of Children’s Social Care

Our Priorities

Priority 1

Children, young people and their families must be able to easily access Early Help and know where to go and who to speak to when they need it.

Our early help offer has been developed in collaboration with partners, with a key focus on increasing the role of the Lead Professional across partner agencies to reach more children through the **right conversation** at the **right** time leading to the **right** service.

Priority 2

Education and learning are vital to ensure that our children have the best start in life and are empowered to go on to rich and fulfilling lives through work.

SBC has the strategic lead for education in Slough with a duty 'to promote high standards and fulfilment of potential in schools so that all children and young people benefit from at least a good education.' (Education Act 1996). Education is the main route for young people to achieve success as adults, as well as teaching them the skills they need to navigate the route they want to choose through life and to make a positive contribution to society.

This is of particular importance for children at particular risk of disadvantage, such as children missing education and where SCF has specific responsibilities such as looked after children and children and young people with SEND.

Priority 3

Children in our care will have a stable place to live and our care experienced young people can access their own affordable homes.

We believe that all our children have a right to grow up in a family home and that for most children this is at home with their family. We recognise that sometimes families struggle and need some extra help at times of great difficulty to prevent families from entering crisis and potentially resulting in children coming into care.

We therefore will create an edge of care approach to provide direct services to support families to prevent crisis and during any difficult periods. In-so-doing we seek to prevent admissions to care because of family breakdown; or when a care admission is needed, that we support children to return home as soon as possible with the right help.

Priority 4

Children and their families will have effective support and care from a stable workforce. This will mean that children do not experience lots of changes of worker and they can develop a trusting relationship with someone who will help them and their family.

We will continue to establish a culture in which staff feel connected to the organisation and leadership, through our shared vision and visibility of leaders.

We will move towards a workforce of permanent employees, particularly in the field of qualified social workers, although we are grateful for our agency staff members and their commitment to Slough. We will support the retention of permanent staff members through a Career Progression Pathway and wellbeing offer.

Priority 5

We will work with our children and young people to enable them to participate and shape services with us.

We will seek to involve children and young people at all stages of our work i.e., co-production and consultation at strategic level, monitoring and reviewing services when they are in place and ensuring individual voices are evidence in all decision-making. Nothing about me without me.

Priority 6

We will work in partnership with colleagues across the Council and all services that work with children, young people and their families. We believe that it is only together that we can make a difference. We value our relationship with Community and Voluntary Sector partners who know their communities well.

Children, young people and families have access to a large and diverse range of community, voluntary and faith organisations who provide significant support to Slough residents. We will find opportunities to join up and support the families we are helping to access these services so that when we are no longer needed, this support will continue. This will enable the right support to be available as and when needed in a cohesive and planned way, avoiding multiple areas of duplication and changes in workers for children and families.

Our Enablers

We are structuring the development of our services using the Local Government Association's seven enablers for children's services improvement³.

Enabler 1 – Strategic approach

- Implement our vision and strategic plan ensuring that strategies take account of Slough's particular context.
- Respond openly and honestly to any external feedback including inspections.
- Evidence that we know the improvements we need to make.

Enabler 2 – Leadership and governance

- Streamline our governance to ensure it is effective and professional.
- Ensure there is stable leadership in place at Board and Executive levels.
- Build a culture where everyone understands the impact of their decisions on outcomes for children and financial outcomes.
- Support the development of a 'High Support and High Challenge' culture.

³ Action Research into Improvement in Local Children's Services, LGA Spring 2016

Enabler 3 – Engaging and supporting the workforce

- Stabilise the workforce across Children’s Services by recruiting, developing and retaining highly skilled permanent staff. This includes ‘growing our own’.
- Enhance the skills, knowledge and experience of the whole Children’s workforce to better meet children’s and young person’s needs.
- Put in place a wellbeing offer which is highly visible to our existing workforce and for those considering joining Slough.

Enabler 4 – Engaging partners

- Promote good relationships at operational and strategic level and support the effectiveness of the safeguarding partnership.
- Be outward facing, inviting and sustaining partnership involvement.

Enabler 5 – Building the supporting apparatus

- Develop a framework to track progress, audit quality and monitor improvements in practice.
- Aligning practice with our practice model to support good quality and consistent services delivered to children and young people.

Enabler 6 – Fostering innovation

- Create a learning culture,
- Try out new ideas and initiatives to improve practice, evaluate them rigorously.

Enabler 7 – Judicious use of resources

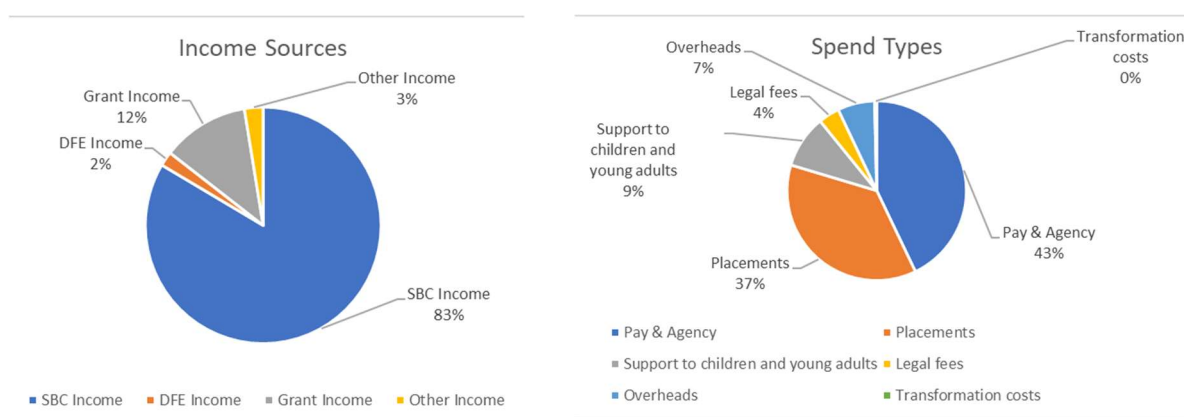
- Align business and financial strategic planning.
- Ensure we achieve the best value for money.
- Producing sound business cases for transformation including invest to save opportunities.

Our Financial Position

We are a demand led service and the operational costs are driven by the demands made on the service. In order to move forward with our financial plans, we need to demonstrate the financial position we as a Company are currently in and how changes in demand and funding have contributed to this. The table below directly compares 2019/20 to the first year of this business plan, 2023/24.

Costs	Actuals		F'cast		Var.	
	2019/20 £k	2023/24 £k	4 year change £k %		Ave. annual change £k %	
SBC Core Income	(30,104)	(36,067)	(5,963)	20%	(1,193)	4%
DFE Income	(3,649)	(1,544)	2,105	-58%	421	-12%
Other Income	(1,889)	(5,655)	(3,766)	199%	(753)	40%
Total Income	(35,642)	(43,265)	(7,623)	21%	(1,525)	4%
Pay	12,100	17,121	5,021	41%	1,004	8%
Agency	3,714	3,495	(219)	-6%	(44)	-1%
Placement Allowances	12,213	17,564	5,351	44%	1,070	9%
Other Child Support Costs	1,910	4,531	2,621	137%	524	27%
Legal Fees	1,846	1,814	(32)	-2%	(6)	0%
Other Overheads	478	3,188	2,710	567%	542	113%
Total Expenditure	35,642	47,714	12,072	34%	2,414	7%
Net Surplus/(Loss)	(0)	4,449	4,449		890	

Where our financial resources come from is shown in the pie chart with income from SBC making up 83% (£36.07m) of all our funding.



Similarly, the types of expenditure we have can be seen in the pie chart next to Income sources, with the biggest categories of spending being salaries (43%) and placement costs for children in care (37%). Of the total overheads costs, 71% (which equates to £2.2m) relate to recharges going back to SBC.

The table below directly compares 2022/23 to the first year of this business plan, 2023/24.

Costs	22/23	23/24	Variance	Comment
SBC Core Income	(32,606)	(36,068)	(3,462)	Approved increase in Contract Value of £4,632k less funding of in year losses to September 22 of £1,170k.
DfE Income	(2,780)	(853)	1,927	Reduction in income from DfE running costs grant
Other Income	(5,128)	(6,345)	(1,217)	Increase in Home Office funding for UASC offset by one off funding received in 22/23
Total Income	(40,514)	(43,266)	(2,752)	
Pay	13,733	17,121	3,389	Expected improvement in permanent workforce, plus 5% inflation
Agency	5,693	3,495	(2,198)	Reduction in agency workforce, most notably early release of Innovate teams
Placement Allowances	16,435	17,564	1,129	Growth in NMFA carer rates, inflationary uplifts on external providers and growth in overall placement volumes by 14
Other Child Support Co	3,676	4,531	855	Growth in inflationary uplifts on care leaver (£91 per week - £355k) and growth in overall placement volumes by 13 (£770k), (£130k) growth in interpreting due to UASC growth, (£100k) in CWD packages of care - partly funded through health
Legal Fees	1,894	1,814	(80)	Reductions in counsel fees
Other Overheads	3,676	3,188	(488)	Small reductions across all areas including recruitment and professional fees and staff allowances due to reduced overseas recruitment costs, reductions in subscriptions, printing and other overheads
Total Expenditure	45,107	47,713	2,606	
Net Surplus/(Loss)	(4,593)	(4,448)	(145)	

Looking specifically at the inflows and outflows forecast in 23/24 starting with the £4.6m deficit from 22/23, the 'waterfall' diagram below shows that when you add in the £3.5m income from SBC, the reduction of £1.9m in DfE funding etc. the end position is shown as a £4.4m deficit.



Included in this comparison are the increasing change from agency staff to permanent staff:

- The average annual salary change between 22/23 and 23/24 has increased less than 5%
- Overall headcount has increased on 22/23 actuals on the assumption that our vacancy rate will be lower on 23/24 – we have more people on permanent contracts demonstrating commitment to the Company
- Agency numbers are lower in 23/24 than 22/23 and therefore permanent numbers of staff have improved
- 22/23 saw agency staff in key posts of CEx and Operations Director hence the average agency rate for Corporate was so high
- 23/24 has seen successful recruitment to more experienced / higher paid posts of management but that has led to a growth in average salary in permanent staff in Frontline teams
- Corporate services are expecting a reconfiguration midway through 23/24 to incorporate more admin posts from front line services, so this has depressed the average permanent salary but also meant that on a like for like basis, Corporate services have actually reduced payroll spending
- The movement between the increasing average annual salary costs in frontline service and the corresponding decrease in agency costs is caused by successful permanent recruitment to more team manager posts in front line services. These are the highest paid posts after Heads of Service in front line teams and is offset by a corresponding reduction in the average salary in agency staff working in front line teams.
- Admin posts which are predominantly filled by permanent workers and are those on the lowest grades have also transferred into central corporate teams, hence a reduction in permanent average salary in Corporate services, further reducing the average salary in permanent staff in front line teams.

Pay costs Service	22/23 Actual £'000s		22/23 Actual Total		23/24 budget £'000s		23/24 budget Total		Variance £'000s		23/24 budget Total
	Permanent	Agency	Permanent	Agency	Permanent	Agency	Permanent	Agency	Permanent	Agency	
Corporate	£1,845	£566	£2,410	£2,243	£161	£2,404	£398		£-405		£-66
Front Line	£11,624	£5,410	£17,034	£14,879	£3,334	£18,213	£3,255		£-2,076		£1,178
Grand Total	£13,469	£5,976	£19,445	£17,121	£3,495	£20,617	£3,653		£-2,481		£1,172
Headcount Service	22/23 Actual		22/23 Actual Total		23/24 budget		23/24 budget Total		Variance		23/24 budget Total
	Permanent	Agency	Permanent	Agency	Permanent	Agency	Permanent	Agency	Permanent	Agency	
Corporate	40.91	5.89	46.80	52.31	3.59	55.90	11.40		-2.30		9.10
Front Line	260.09	59.53	319.62	273.57	43.07	316.64	13.48		-16.46		-2.98
Grand Total	301.00	65.42	366.42	325.88	46.66	372.54	24.88		-18.76		6.12
	301.00	65.42									
Ave. salary Service	22/23 Actual		22/23 Actual Total		23/24 budget		23/24 budget Total		Variance		23/24 budget Total
	Permanent	Agency	Permanent	Agency	Permanent	Agency	Permanent	Agency	Permanent	Agency	
Corporate	£45,093	£96,034	£51,504	£42,877	£44,885	£43,006			£-2,216	£-51,149	£-8,498
Front Line	£44,692	£90,881	£53,295	£54,387	£77,411	£57,518	£9,694		£-13,470		£4,223
Grand Total	£44,747	£91,345	£53,066	£44,747	£91,345	£55,341	£7,479		£-64,619		£2,275

Corporate will actually have reduced more as there has been a slight reconfiguration of admin staff moving from front line to Corporate services

Our Demand-Led Service

One of the key points highlighted in the four-year comparison in the section above is that whilst our income has grown on average 4% a year (21% in total) our costs have increased to a greater extent at on average 7% a year (34% in total).

Activity	Actuals		F'cast		Var.	
	2019/20	2023/24	4 year change		change	
	Volume	Volume	Volume	%	Volume	%
Cases	1,422	2,472	1,050	74%	210	15%
Placements	431	462	31	7%	6	1%
Care Leavers in placement	26	65	39	150%	8	30%
<18's UASC	3	51	48	1614%	10	323%
18+ UASC	7	38	32	485%	6	97%

As a demand-led service although we use projections and models as far as possible, we still need to analyse the change in demand of activities we undertake in order to start to explain our financial position. The table above shows an increase in the cases managed by SCF of 74% in that same four-year comparison period and although the number of placements paid for has not seen that level of increase (further details in the table below), the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) has on average tripled each year.

Placement Budget 2023/24 (£'000s)									
	Actual 22/23			Budget 23/24			Variance		
	Volume	Avg weekly rate	Total	Volume	Avg weekly rate	Total	Volume	Avg weekly rate	Total
Children Looked After									
External Residential	19	4,503	4,521	24	4,467	5,490	4	-36	969
Asylum Seeker 16-18 (Semi-Independent)	36	800	1,484	51	800	2,144	16	-0	659
Semi Independent < 18's	18	2,187	2,025	17	1,796	1,621	-0	-392	-404
Secure Remand	1	2,426	99	0	0	0	-1	0	-99
Total Children Looked After	73	2,125	8,129	92	1,923	9,255	19	-202	1,126
Permanency									
Adoption Allowances	75	216	847	71	210	776	-4	-7	-71
Special Guardianship Order	150	205	1,607	150	187	1,456	-0	-19	-150
Permanency total	225	209	2,454	221	194	2,233	-5	-15	-221
Fostering									
External Fostering Agency	82	980	4,195	81	1,068	4,483	-2	88	288
In House Foster Carers	71	423	1,558	69	444	1,593	-2	21	35
Fostering Total	153	722	5,753	149	780	6,076	-3	58	323
Total Placements	451	694	16,336	462	729	17,564	11	34	1,228
Careleavers	52	634	1,711	65	638	2,165	13	4	454

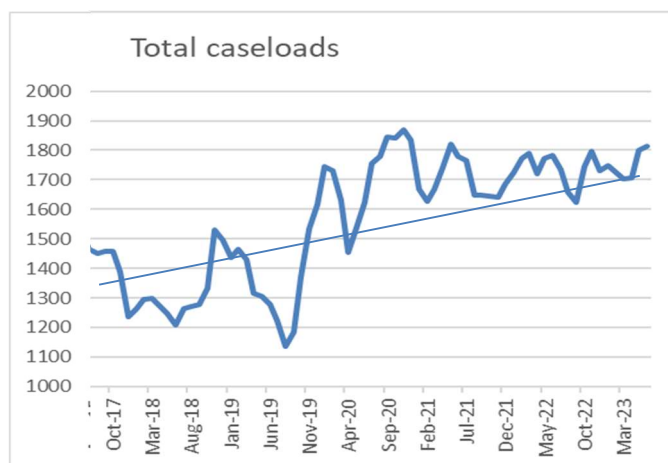
Specifically looking at the UASC increase, we can spotlight on the budgeted cost impact of our UASC population within the budget for 23/24 below – some figures are calculated, others estimated but the overall net pressure would be £1.3m for a cohort of 51 children under 18 and 41 young people over 18. This accounts for 28% of our expected deficit for 23/24.

	Budget £000's
Accommodation, support and subs costs	2,144
Care leavers accommodation, support and subs costs	1,427
Translation services costs	218
Social work, including Age Assessments	141
Legal	50
Home office funding income	<u>(2,723)</u>
Totals spend / adverse position	<u>1,256</u>

There are currently significant delays being experienced from the Home Office in their processing of funding applications which then brings a risk to SCF with regards to income recovery in the region of an additional £900k for 2023/24. The risk is not assumed in the business plan income levels.

Claims by SCF submitted to the Home Office since November 2022 have not, at time of writing been confirmed in detail, so funding estimated to be in the region of £700k for 22/23, although accrued for, cannot yet be reconciled to what the Home Office have funded.

In addition, to this some of the young people seeking asylum and transferred to Slough have had age assessments that concluded that they are over 18 years old. In these circumstances although the young people may have been supported financially for several months, Home Office funding will only be paid for the first month of a local authority's involvement. This means that income cannot be assumed to be awarded until the Home Office has confirmed that they agree with the young person's claim. This can be months later and as such funding is uncertain. In addition, all UASC accommodated by SCF and meeting certain criteria become care experienced young people and are entitled to services including financial support until the age of 21 and it can be requested until they are 25 years old. Failure to provide or the perception of failing to provide any support can result in the threats of Judicial Review.



This increase in overall demand is further illustrated by the graph on the left which shows a rising trend in the total number of caseloads held within SCF.

These factors have all influenced our financial modelling.

Our Financial Model

The financial model we have used reflects the activities required to achieve **Our Priorities** for our children and our aim is to deliver better outcomes for children by **doing differently for less** with a clear focus on improving practice.

As demonstrated in the previous section, we have an increase in the complexity of needs, growth in children presenting to Slough seeking refuge from unsafe situations in their own countries, a cost-of-living crisis and rising prices. Our financial model reflects this and incorporates the key activity needed in 2023/24 to realise benefits, as well as further phases of our plan, such as Family Group Conferencing and Family Hubs in later years.

Our modelling reflects **Priority 1** in Early Help through targeting a **5% reduction** in the number of families stepping up into statutory social care. This is by short- and medium-term funding for additional Targeted Early Help teams. In addition to these teams, the continuing development of partnership working (**Priority 6**) will mean that half of the children in need plans that close will be stepped down to Early Help teams and half to community partners.

Children who are being considered for care but have not entered it (defined as 'Edge of Care') will be supported with a specific Edge of Care team to support them to remain in their family home. This will **avoid entering care** alongside an **increase in the reunification** of children coming home from care (where appropriate).

With this support and the focus on **Priority 3** our **placement costs will start to fall**, particularly in the high-cost residential placements for those children with complex needs around Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). Edge of care teams will also impact legal fees as they will also reduce as the volume of proceedings reduce.

Our in-house fostering service will continue to develop their support model and make Slough a great place to be a foster carer. Increasing their numbers and developing their specialist skills will help **avoid placing** with external fostering agencies also removing the margins we are charged by third parties - all driving greater **value for money**. We will target **six new carers** by the end of year 1 with further recruitment planned in future years.

Our spending on placements for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) and Care Leavers is also expected to benefit from some commissioning initiatives aimed at targeting the rates paid and **driving better value for money**. This will be done through identifying multiple occupancy accommodation available for Semi-Independent and Independent living.

A stable workforce where Slough is a preferred employer is **Priority 4** for the company. Through successful international recruitment and our on-going ASYE programme, the ratio of permanent to agency social work staff is modelled at 77%:20% with the remaining 3% factored for vacancies. This is based on our current data and in future years we expect to **improve this by 1 percentage point** each year. The Company is working with Frontline, England's largest social work charity to further grow our own sustainable and stable workforce. This has enabled the safe release of two managed agency teams considerably earlier than planned. Those savings have allowed additional capacity to focus on improving practice and keeping caseloads at a manageable level.

Overall, the financial modelling shows a £4.4m funding requirement to break even in 2023/24. This includes £2.03m of inflation added to Slough Borough Council's

(SBC) Income and a further agreed contribution to the Core Contract of £4.6m to £36.065m as agreed at SBC's Cabinet in February 2023.

To validate our assumptions an independent review was carried out in 2022 on our financial modelling the conclusion is known as the 'Mutual Ventures' report. This report is in the public domain and available at the link on this footnote.⁴

Although we cannot reduce the demand we experience as such we can implement strategies to meet it and a number of recommendations were made within the Mutual Ventures to address this.

One such recommendation that was actioned was the early ending and therefore cost avoidance of two managed teams provided by Innovate which released an overall total £1.1m saving.

The whole of the report was taken into account by SCF and our responses to its content and recommendations can be reviewed further in Appendix 8.

Role	Annual costs
Innovate T1	£737,176
Innovate T2	£737,176
Full year cost if teams not released	<u>£1,474,352</u>
LESS	
Replacement team (1 TM and 3SWs)	£107,718
Spend prior to release	
Innovate for 1 mth	£56,396
Innovate for 3 mths	£183,287
	<u>£347,401</u>
Total Saving	<u>£1,126,951</u>

Our Cashflow

The monthly cash flow as depicted in the table below, without mitigation, suggests that the Company will be in deficit by the end of the financial year 2023/24 – detailed analysis predicts this will happen by November 2023 and at the end of the financial year we will run out of cash. A one-off historical debt with SBC was resolved at the beginning of this financial year.

CASH FLOW FORECAST

	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24
	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
RECEIPTS:	-7,199	-3,651	-3,730	-5,164	-4,297	-4,835	-4,014	-4,014	-4,984	-4,481	-3,863	-4,416
EXPENDITURE:	5,058	5,458	4,452	4,296	4,912	4,393	5,815	5,362	4,401	5,832	4,519	4,419
NET CASHFLOW	-2,141	1,807	722	-869	615	-442	1,801	1,348	-582	1,351	656	3
BANK BALANCE B/F	-2,559	-4,700	-2,893	-2,171	-3,040	-2,425	-2,867	-1,066	282	-300	1,050	1,706
BANK BALANCE C/F	-4,700	-2,893	-2,171	-3,040	-2,425	-2,867	-1,066	282	-300	1,050	1,706	1,709
SECONDARY ACCOUNT BALANCE	-31	-31	-31	-31	-31	-31	-31	-31	-31	-31	-31	-31
Total	-4,731	-2,924	-2,202	-3,071	-2,456	-2,898	-1,097	251	-331	1,020	1,675	1,678

The 3 year cash flow below suggests that were prior year losses to be funded during 23/24, then the company could remain cash positive over the term of the business plan.

⁴ <https://democracy.slough.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx>

	£'000		
	23/24	24/25	25/26
Opening Cash Balance	2,559	-1,709	-4,123
Core Contract Payments (VAT inc.)	43,489	45,133	45,967
DfE Running Costs Grant	1,179	381	381
Home Office Funding	1,917	2,981	3,040
YJB / EYJS Grants	479	388	388
Pupil Premium	228	465	437
Movement in SBC & other debtors	5,289	0	0
Other Income	2,067	2,515	1,584
Total Income	54,647	51,863	51,797
Payroll Costs	-16,107	-17,372	-17,739
Agency (VAT inc.)	-4,851	-3,108	-2,795
JLT	-2,158	-2,220	-2,059
Placements Expenditure	-19,672	-18,544	-17,290
Other Expenditure	-7,329	-7,082	-6,738
SBC Recharges	-2,191	-2,191	-2,191
VAT	-6,083	-3,760	-3,995
Movement in creditors	-526	0	0
Total Expenditure	-58,915	-54,277	-52,807
Closing Cash Balance	-1,709	-4,123	-5,133
Mitigation			
21/22 In Year Losses (Vat exc.)	719		
22/23 In Year Losses (Vat exc.)	4,593		
Total Prior Year Losses (Vat exc.)	5,312		
Adjusted Closing Cash Balance	3,603	1,189	179

Our income is expected to reduce over time as the DfE grant funding prescribed for the running costs of the company will reduce again from 24/25. Expenditure is expected to decrease as cost reductions are made in reducing SCF over the 3-year term. However, the gap between income *in* and expenditure *out* is widening, and cash deficits are increasing year on year.

A decision has not been made as yet on the in-year requests that have been made for funding prior year losses of £5,312k (these were caused by the increase in demand during and following the pandemic). **The non funding of the prior losses are causing a significant drain to the operating cash of SCF, resulting in us running out of cash in financial year 23/24.** If these prior losses were to be approved and funding received it is expected that SCF would remain cash positive over the 3-year term.

Our Balance Sheet

SCF's balance sheet shows the projected losses for the end of 2023/24. The table below shows the projected movement on the projected balance sheet to March 2024, showing cash balances as negative with a reducing reserves position.

The balance as at 31 March 2024 is the accumulation of unfunded prior year losses from 21/22 through 23/24.

In order to remain a going concern, additional funding of £9,760k is required.

- £5,312k accumulated losses from years 21/22 and 22/23 – subject of previous in year requests to fund
- £4,448k – expected deficit from 23/24 business plan

The long-term loan of £5m from Slough Borough Council remains unpaid during this time and has been used in prior years to ensure the company meets its liabilities whilst it has experienced year on year losses following increasing demand that has been unfunded.

Slough Children First Ltd

Balance Sheet	as at 31	as at 31 Mar
	Mar 2023	2024
	£000's	£000's
Current Assets		
Debtors	6,860	4,326
Cash at bank and in hand / (overdrawn)	2,216	(1,709)
Total current assets	9,076	2,617
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	(9,388)	(7,377)
Total current liabilities	(9,388)	(7,377)
Net current assets / (Liabilities)	(312)	(4,760)
Long Term Creditors - Receipts in Advance	(5,000)	(5,000)
Total long term liabilities	(5,000)	(5,000)
Net Assets / (Liabilities)	(5,312)	(9,760)
Reserves		
Income and Expenditure Account	(5,312)	(9,760)
Reserves	(5,312)	(9,760)

Our Profit and Loss Account

The table below shows the projected profit and loss account over the life of this business plan. The £4.632m increase in contract growth from 22/23 was awarded as ongoing rather than as a one off. Previous iterations of the business plan had assumed all but the inflation element of that funding was to be a one off.

	Plan 2023/24 £000's	Plan 2024/25 £000's	Plan 2025/26 £000's
Income			
SBC Income	(36,067)	(37,511)	(38,206)
SBC other income	(100)	(100)	(100)
DFE Income	(853)	(168)	(168)
Grant Income	(5,142)	(5,267)	(4,337)
Other Income	(1,104)	(1,250)	(1,274)
Total Income	(43,266)	(44,296)	(44,085)
Expenditure			
Pay & Agency	20,439	19,962	20,068
Placements	17,564	16,557	15,438
Support to children and young adults	4,531	4,667	4,369
Legal fees	1,814	1,850	1,716
Overheads	3,188	3,210	3,227
Transformation costs	178	82	84
Total revenue expenditure	47,714	46,329	44,902
Revenue Surplus / (Deficit)	(4,448)	(2,033)	(816)

The table below sets out the funding requirement for Slough Children First over the next 3 year period.

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Total Funding Requirement from SBC		40,515	39,544	39,022
Made up of:				
22/23 Contract value	31,435	31,435	31,435	31,435
Uplift on interest payable		11	11	11
Contract Inflation		1,051	1,663	1,900
Pay Inflation		925	1,758	2,216
Additional agreed on going core contract uplift		2,644	2,644	2,644
One off In year funding	1,170			
	32,605	36,067	37,511	38,206
Incurring / Expected deficit	4,593	4,448	2,033	816
Funding Requirement	37,198	40,515	39,544	39,022
One Off funding to cover prior year unfunded losses		5,312		
Total Funding Requirement	37,198	45,827	39,544	39,022
Less currently agreed Core contract value		36,067	36,067	36,067
Annual change in funding requirement		9,760	3,477	2,955
Minimum annual additional cash required to remain solvent - including 20% tolerance		2,051	2,896	1,212

Appendix 10 includes further detail demonstrating the funding requirement changes between 22/23 and 23/24.

Our Plans for Years 2 (2024/25) and 3 (2025/26)

Our financial modelling includes the delivery of our improvement plan in Appendix 7 and covers the actions being undertaken in Year 1. Further details on the additional opportunities and risks for Year 1, along with any mitigating actions, can be seen in Appendix 9. However this business plan is a three-year plan and additional approaches include:

- The Company is on a journey of improvement and is planning to consider projects to better deliver services. These include an edge of care provision, based on the No Wrong Door Model, and collaboration with other authorities on placement provision. However, these are unlikely to deliver savings of any significance until 2025/26.
- Health contributions to placement costs need further exploration and we will work with an 'expert' to review and secure joint funding arrangements where possible.
- Reduction of legal fees requires a shift in culture and practice to reduce reliance on advice. However, improved practice in decision making is intended to reduce the overall number of children subject to proceedings
- Reconfiguration of caseloads across frontline teams
- Deep dives to be undertaken on standalone services to review structures, locations, sell additional capacity and benchmark fee/payment schemes

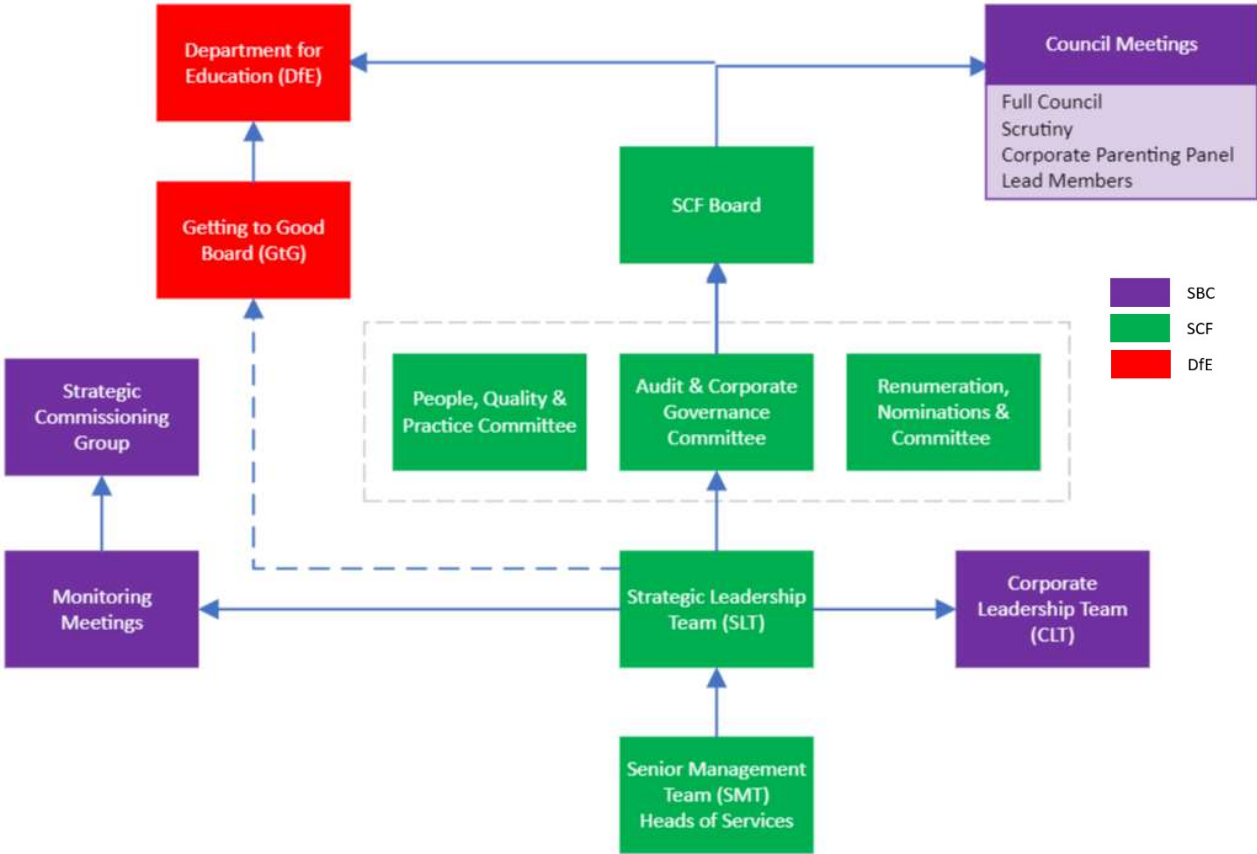
Board Committees

The Board operates through committees to monitor progress in detail.

- **Audit and Corporate Governance Committee (ACGC):**
 Joint Chairs Nina Robinson and Steven Mason
- **Remuneration, Nominations and Appointments Committee (RNAC):**
 Chair Raj Bhamber
- **People, Quality and Practice Committee (PQPC),**
 Joint Chairs Lesley Hagger and Ketan Gandhi

Working Groups: The Board may establish a limited number of working groups when intensive scrutiny and/or additional Board level support is needed.

Governance Arrangements



The Strategic Leadership Team

The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) meets weekly to provide the strategic leadership, management and direction of the Company. It seeks to ensure that there is a focus on shaping and delivering the strategic priorities of the Company in as resourceful, efficient and effective a way as possible.

Appendix 2 – Our Financial Oversight

This paper covers the following matters with the aim of offering assurance to both DfE and DLUCH Commissioners that robust financial oversight is in place in respect of:

- The Role of the Slough Children First Company Board
- Financial Decision-Making Controls
- Changing the culture

The Role of the SCF Board.

Slough Children First's Company Board meets on a three-monthly basis. The previous permanent chair stepped down in May 2023 and whilst the DfE conducted a procurement exercise to appoint his replacement, Paul Moffat, our DfE Commissioner, held the chair on a temporary basis. The successful candidate, chair Simon Baker, assumed the role on 14th August 2023. There are three sub-committees namely People, Quality and Practice; Audit and Corporate Governance; and Remuneration, Nomination Appointments Committee, each chaired by a Non-Executive Director.

SCF Board's agendas have included financial information however, the general view on reflection is that what had been provided to the Board, and separately to the Director, was detailed but did not allow them to have sufficient strategic oversight into the Company's financial situation and therefore the effective and efficient running of the Company. Such were the challenges that the Company's Business Plan was not agreed and the relationship between the Council and the Company was a casualty of this situation and may have contributed to the inadequate judgement for Leadership and Governance in the Ofsted inspection in January 2023. The Mutual Ventures report specifically mentions the need to 'strengthen the Company's finance function to ensure that the Finance Director can have a more strategic role.'

To strengthen the Board's financial acumen and to give the Council greater oversight of SCF's financial arrangements, the SBC appointed Steve Mason as its second council representative on the board and he assumed the role in May 2023. Steve has experience of working with arrangements like those in Slough and has also been a Section 151 local authority officer. Both of the Council representatives on the panel are required to balance the Council's challenging financial position with particular regard to the restrictions placed upon it by the Section 114 notice and the financial, mainly demand driven, issues in SCF. To support them with this task a pre-meet is being put in place before each board for the council representatives, the Council's section 151 officer, the SBC Chief Executive and the Council's stakeholder representative to highlight financial issues.

The SCF Director of Finances and Resources left their position at the end of March 2023 due to personal circumstances. A Business and Planning Manager had just been appointed and the resources aspect of the Director of Finances role has, in the main, been transferred to

that new post. SCF's longstanding Finance Business Partner took on aspects of the Director of Finance's role on a short-term basis and has grown to become a valuable member of the Strategic Leadership Team.

Significant consideration had to be given to recruiting another Financial Director particularly given the changed remit of the role. The other aspects requiring consideration were the proposed back-office merger. That meant that the finance team might be merged back into the Council and so the role might not exist other than in the short term and would need now only be a part-time role. We have therefore recruited to the role on a day rate for 75 days per year. The days can be deployed as necessary in line with business needs. The new incumbent from July 2023 is Chris Reilly who has a wide range of experience in the commercial world, bringing a different perspective and challenges to SCF's financial management. As Chris is new in post, he has not been able to influence the writing of the Business and Improvement Plan as much as he will be able to going forward.

Therefore, the financial basis of the Company is likely to be firmer for the following reasons.

- The experience of the new SCF board chair
- The recent appointment of a council appointed director
- The 'pre-meets' between the council appointed directors, the council's Executive Financial Director (s151 director)
- The appointment of a new financial director with a wide range of experience
- The wider experience and expertise of the longstanding business partner which will allow the Financial Director to concentrate on the strategic aspects of his role.
- A permanent SCF leadership team.

Financial Decision Making. Direct Controls.

Forum/ work	What is overseen?	Who is involved?	What will we achieve?	Impact/ challenges?
External Placements Panel	All children who are living in placements other than our own 'in-house' foster care placements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent and child assessment centres 	Head of Sufficiency and Performance (Chair) Virtual School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The right home for a child in order to meet their immediate and long-term needs. • Identification of cost unit savings per 	This is a new forum however it is already identifying cost savings

Forum/ work	What is overseen?	Who is involved?	What will we achieve?	Impact/ challenges?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential children's homes Supported and semi-supported accommodation for care experienced young people. Unaccompanied asylum seeking (UAS) children, all placement types Unregistered placements 	Finance Manager Placements Commissioning Housing representation would be advantageous for discussions about care experienced young people – an area for development*	placements for settled and long-term placements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify children who can move on from semi-supported to their own accommodation. 	Finance colleagues to present 'live' information to the panel on the financial impact of placement changes. Local housing market for young people is challenging. Further work needed with Housing colleagues to attend panel/ create housing panel for care leavers.
Legal Gateway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decisions to make public law applications. Decision to enter Pre-Proceedings (step before court to safeguard children to try and avoid court) Tracking court work to final order Financial decisions for assessments as part of pre-court and court proceedings 	Head of Family Support and Safeguarding Principal Lawyer JLT Service Manager IRO Placements team Fostering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in the number of new applications to court Reduction of emergency applications to court. No unplanned applications without approval from the Director of Operations. 	Slight reduction in numbers of children entering PLO in July. Decrease expected to continue. Significant decrease in time spent in PLO leading to 6 exiting in June and 10 in July. No unplanned applications in July

Forum/ work	What is overseen?	Who is involved?	What will we achieve?	Impact/ challenges?
		<p>Adoption agency (RAA)</p> <p>DCS and Director of Operations challenging requests from JLT to commission counsel as a default position.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grip and reduction on commissioned assessments <p>Direction of Operations' approval required to commission</p>	<p>ISW cost for assessments appears to be reducing month on month Apr- 14K, May 21K, June £8.5K (average amount £2.5K)</p> <p>Number of children In proceedings remains high with 72 Interim Care Orders – court backlog issues and need for greater grip</p> <p>Potential 'invest of save/practice improvement support of Court Work Progression Manager to support completion of proceedings in as timely a way as possible. To be costed</p>
Continuing Health Care and Health	Financial contributions from Health to complex packages of care for children with a high level of health needs.	A specialist in funding complex packages was commissioned to look for income potential from	Reduction in care package costs to by funded by SCF	Potential cost avoidance to be established from the report but ball park figure is £90K

Forum/ work	What is overseen?	Who is involved?	What will we achieve?	Impact/ challenges?
contribution work		health for packages of care. - Heads of Service Commissioning Finance		
Access to Resources Panel (ATR)	<p>This panel is split into two parts:</p> <p><u>Part 1</u> Section 17 spend for support or services over £500 which are not covered in Legal gateway or external placement.</p> <p>This may include specialist assessment or support to prevent a care admission.</p> <p><u>Part 2 – children with disabilities and short breaks</u></p> <p>This is to consider, review and agree (or decline) specific short breaks</p>	<p><u>Part 1</u> Head of Service for Assessment service Finance Virtual School</p> <p><u>Part 2:</u> Commissioning Heads of Service – Regulated Services and Children with disabilities</p>	<p><u>Part 1</u> Decisions to agree spend under Section 17 and support costs are scrutinized by panel to ensure that we only provide financial support when necessary and when this is not available from elsewhere.</p> <p><u>Part 2</u> Fulfils out statutory duties to children and families with complex needs.</p>	<p>Oversight of spend to allow for forecasting.</p> <p>Membership allows other funding streams to be identified</p> <p>Ensured we can meet the needs of children to keep them safe and prevent care admissions (more costly)</p> <p><u>Part 2</u> Rigour in costings presented to the panel.</p>

Forum/ work	What is overseen?	Who is involved?	What will we achieve?	Impact/ challenges?
	<p>support for children with complex needs.</p> <p>These breaks form part of support to families where they are parenting children with overly complex needs. This includes the provision of Direct Payments, overnight stays or packages of care to be commissioned to support families.</p>	<p>Finance</p> <p>Ratification by Director of Operations</p>	<p>Provides oversight of spend and looks for reduction in packages.</p>	<p>These services are statutory services and for many families, without which there would be a significant pressure which may result in family breakdown and expensive looked after arrangements</p>
<p>Expenditure Control Panel (ECP) process</p>	<p>All expenditure over £500.00 except placements, short break costs, court costs are agreed by SBC's ECP panels informed by financial business cases</p>	<p>SBC panels</p>	<p>Ongoing Expenditure Control – providing evidence and satisfying Council Colleagues of the need to spend money. .</p>	<p>SBC has suggested that SCF should now manage its own finances and therefore does not need to engage in the ECP process. This is under consideration as it is an effective oversight mechanism but is also time consuming. Parameters to be changed instead? Decision to be made end August 2023</p>
<p>Decisions to agree child becoming</p>	<p>This decision has been delegated to Heads of Service</p>	<p>Heads of Service with critical friend discussion</p>	<p>Ensure only those children who need to become looked after do so.</p>	<p>Herd indicator report shows new looked after arrangements are in-line with expectations – 11</p>

Forum/ work	What is overseen?	Who is involved?	What will we achieve?	Impact/ challenges?
looked after (emergency)				May, 3 June and has been consistent for the last 7 months.

Changing the Culture in SCF – Best Value spending.

This work must be aligned to the overarching vision for children and families in Slough which is to be 'Happy, Safe, Loved, Thriving' and the financial controls, including the role of the board, as set out above. The imperative to improve practice and therefore outcomes for Slough's most vulnerable children and young people cannot be seen as a reason to spend more money. To be more precise, although it is an essential part of a social worker's role to advocate for the children and families with whom they are working, all spend must be set against assessed need. Likewise leaders must not think about training and development as being based around expensive commissioned training programmes but use information from training and skills gap analysis to consider what can be done through avenues such as sector led support.

Culture change is being approached through various routes including:

- A clear message that the Business and Improvement Plan aims to bring together practice improvement and financial planning into one overarching plan because they are mutually dependent
- Regular updates on the Business and Improvement Plan at weekly 'all staff' briefing sessions. (includes all staff in People (Children's) directorate). These messages
 - Endorse the fact that there is money, but it must be spent wisely and well. Children's needs must be met but not necessarily families'/professionals' additional expectations
 - Have introduced the requirement to evidence Best Value
 - Emphasised that good practice costs less than poor practice – e.g., well-planned court proceedings can save placement costs.
 - Stressed the importance of use of 'self.' Staff are our best resource by far.

However frequently these messages are repeated, the current budget monitoring arrangements need to be reset and rescheduled on the advice of the new Finance Director and the Finance Business Partner, to provide clearer lines of financial awareness and accountability.

When the Business and Improvement Plan is signed off by Cabinet a 'Turning the Curve' 'all-staff awareness event' will be held with the aim of :

- Promoting staff awareness of the Vision for vulnerable children and young people
- Supporting every member of staff to be clear about their role in implementing Slough's Business and Improvement Plan including the judicious use of resources
- Identifying what 'Best Value' looks like in social work/social care terms. For example, when a social worker visits a residential children's, home how will they assess, as part of ensuring the young person is being well cared for, that their care is the best value for money.

SB. 23/08/2023

Appendix 3 – Our Recommendations from Ofsted



Inspection of Slough local authority children's services

Inspection dates: 23 January to 3 February 2023

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Inadequate
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Requires improvement to be good
The experiences and progress of children in care	Requires improvement to be good
The experiences and progress of care leavers	Requires improvement to be good
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement to be good

What needs to improve?

- The scrutiny by senior leaders of the council and the governance arrangements between these leaders and Slough Children First.
- The impact of leaders and managers, including the corporate parenting board, on driving progress for all children.
- The participation offer and engagement of children and young people in the development and delivery of services.
- The quality of practice and the timeliness for achieving permanence.
- The impact of quality assurance processes to improve social work practice and, in particular, the quality of children's plans.
- The assessment, planning and service provision for children in private fostering arrangements and for homeless 16- and 17-year-olds.
- The timeliness and oversight of placement with parents and connected persons arrangements.

The full report can be accessed [here](#)

Appendix 4 – Our Demographics



Pen portrait of our children and our service (31 March 2023)

Our aspiration is for children to be **Happy, Safe & Loved, Thriving**

Number of children with a child protection plan 264

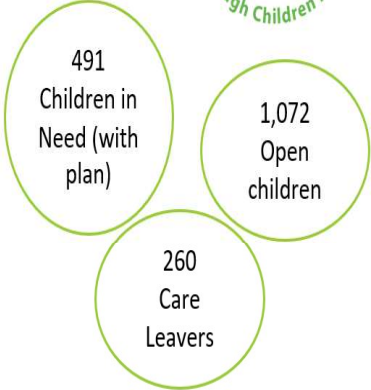
Number of employees

Gross budget £37m

Number of children in care 263

40 unaccompanied asylum seeking children
45 foster care households – ?? placements
Children adopted ??

Child breakdown by age
Under 1
1-4
5-9
10-15
16-25



Demographics being updated following review and inclusion of data from the Slough Observatory – therefore a new version will be included in the public version.

Appendix 5 – Our Commitment

To inform this Business Plan we asked colleagues in SCF and in the education directorate “What is their role was in making a difference to the lives of our children in Slough?”

Their responses demonstrate our whole Company commitment to delivering the priorities set out in this Business Plan

- Promoting and ensuring a good working relationship with Partners
- Supporting and empowering children and families
- Ensuring children are safeguarded
- Really and genuinely **listening** to the children
- Supporting our teams to be the best they can be
- Believing in a child’s potential
- Early identification and support to prevent escalation
- Advocating for our staff so they can advocate for their children and young people
- Quality assuring plans and ensuring they are progressed in timely way
- Recruiting quality and talented staff
- Ensuring every child has a school place/education setting
- Knowing how to piece things together
- To be accountable for everything we do
- Promoting permanence for children
- Having an effective early years’ service

Appendix 6 - Our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The KPIs listed below are the initial indicators the Company was using to measure the impacts of our delivery. A new dashboard is in development, and these will cover our contractual KPIs that can and will be discussed at the contact monitoring meetings with SBC.

Performance/Efficiency Indicators	Good to be
Early Help Assessments. SCF Lead Professional	
Early Help Assessments. Partner Lead Professional	
Contacts	
Referrals	
% of Re-Referrals	↓ <i>Low</i>
% Core Assessments completed on time	↑ <i>High</i>
% ICPC (Initial Child Protection Conference) timeliness (statutory measure by child)	↑ <i>High</i>
% of Children subject to CPP (Child Protection Plan) with all reviews within timescale	↑ <i>High</i>
CP (Child Protection) Visits undertaken on time	↑ <i>High</i>
% CLA (Children Looked After) visits undertaken on time	↑ <i>High</i>
% of CLA with their latest review within timescales	↑ <i>High</i>
Participation in CLA reviews	↑ <i>High</i>
CLA placed over twenty miles away	↓ <i>Low</i>
% Children seen on their own	
Placement Stability - short term	↓ <i>Low</i>
Placement Stability - long term	↑ <i>High</i>
Care Leavers EET (Education, Employment or Training)	↑ <i>High</i>
Care Leavers with a pathway plan (18+)	↑ <i>High</i>
Supervision	↑ <i>High</i>
% Agency social work staff	
% All staff turnover	
Financial Indicator	

Appendix 7 - Our Improvement Plan

Executive Summary

The purpose of SCF's immediate plan was to identify the key themes and areas for improvement that arose from the Ofsted inspection outcomes that were published in March and to ensure robust actions were in place to improve children's services in Slough. The period was from April to June 2023 and was succeeded by this Continuing Improvement Plan which also incorporated those actions exceeding that short period.

This plan is being used to monitor progress and provide assurance by reporting regularly to the SCF Board, Slough Borough Council and Getting to Good Board (chaired by the DfE Commissioner).

A central and essential part of our plan is that it reflects the views, wishes and feelings of children and young people and these will be identified throughout the plan. We will look for opportunities for children and young people to participate.

The actions listed within the Company's Improvement Plan are not the limits of the work being undertaken – each Service has their own individual delivery plan which underpins the wider improvement plan.

Improvement Plan

Largely based on the LGA's 7 enablers for improving children's services, the following key themes have been identified for this improvement plan:

1. Strategic approach,
2. Leadership and governance
3. Engaging and supporting the workforce
4. Engaging partners
5. Practice and performance (Building the Supporting Apparatus)
6. Fostering innovation
7. Better (Judicious) use of resources

The participation of children and young people is a theme running through the sections listed above.

The plan below is a general overview only as it does not list action owners or updates on progress to date.

Ambition for Children and Young People	Action	Due by
Strategic Approach		
To ensure focus on improvement and transformation leading to better outcomes for Children, Young People, and their families	Ensure that key priority strategic actions have Programme and Project support	30 September 2023
To support practice improvement and carry forward sufficiency transformation work.	Resource, appoint and deploy a 'Building Practice' Lead to promote and support Quality Assurance and Practice Improvement	30 April 2023
Ensure there is sufficient resource to support practice improvement and carry forward sufficiency transformation work.	Resource, appoint and deploy a 'Sufficiency lead' to lead the development and implementation of: Sufficiency Strategy; Corporate Parenting Strategy; Permanency strategy	30 September 2023
To identify emerging trends and inform strategic planning and transformation work	To develop forecasting and demand models through contribution to wider SBC review on future investment in IT and Informatics	30 November 2023
To support the development of a 'High Support and High Challenge' culture	Create a system which supports a learning model for the whole child's journey to work across children's services by launching a revised Quality Assurance Framework	30th March 2024
To ensure senior managers have sufficient capacity and oversight of key decision-making processes and the timeliness and impact of outcomes for children.	Develop and implement a revised, robust QA audit programme	30 September 2023
To improve the performance framework	Developing a focused performance dashboard aligned with the improvement plan that drives the quality of practice and supports senior leaders in understanding the quality of practice	31 December 2023
Produce a sufficiency strategy based on current demand and needs of our Children Looked After population and forecasted demand	Develop and gain agreement for the Sufficiency Strategy and move into a Sufficiency Project Board	30 August 2023
To strengthen the impact of the Youth Justice Board	Seek an LGA/ Peer review of Youth Justice and prepare for inspection and SEF through task and finish group	30 September 2023
To ensure strategy in place for Children and Young People to have opportunities to shape the services they receive	Co-produce a Participation Strategy with Children and Young People.	30 September 2023
To support participation of young people in a meaningful way	Provide training to young people to enable them to contribute to high level meetings, recruitment etc.	30 November 2023
Leadership & Governance		
To develop a shared vision and approach to the transformation of services for children and young people.	Consult with Staff in SCF on vision for ownership of Business and Improvement Plan	01 June 2023
To increase capacity to support the delivery of QA and performance	Submission of business case to DFE to increase capacity at senior level for 6 months	30 June 2023
Lead the development of good corporate parenting for our children in care and care experienced young people	Take forward the recommendations from the Peer Review of Corporate Parenting and move into Task and Finish Group to develop a clear action plan with the new Lead Member,	30 September 2023
Address recommendations for the development of the Corporate Parenting Board (CPB)	Reset Corporate Parenting Panel structure and governance ensuring that all Members and Officers are clear on their role.	30 September 2023
Ensure members of the CPB have the training required to fulfil their roles	Corporate Parenting training offered to all Members in accordance with their involvement with Children's Services	30 July 2023
Care Leaving to become a Protected Characteristic	To write proposal and take to Cabinet via Lead Member	30 September 2023
Involve Members and senior officers in Practice shadowing opportunities and Practice Weeks	Develop a programme of Shadowing Practice opportunities for CEx, Lead Member, DCS, DSC and CP Champions – twice per year.	31 December 2023
Ensure governance framework drives improvement across the partnership with membership from multi-agency partners, Council leaders and elected members.	Key strategic partners are members of the G2G Board and are enabled to provide high support and challenge to support the improvement of services for children. A G2G Board away morning to be arranged to strengthen the Boards role and oversight.	30 November 2023
Develop a robust and effective framework for self-assessment and evaluation that is subject to ongoing continuous review to ensure it is providing the evidence necessary to accurately inform the authority of the quality and impact of Children's Services	SEF preparation framework to be aligned with our QA and audit programme to develop challenge sessions within Children's Improvement Group and SMT to regularly review our practice and update the SEF.	31 October 2023

Improve and streamline the governance between Slough Children First and the Council	Business plan to be agreed between SCF and the Council based on service provision to children and families, including identifying realistic options to save money and invest to save approach. Agree the monitoring arrangements between Council and SCF and the key indicator reports. Agree use of report format which is in line with reporting to other Boards so one report services all meetings to prevent additionality of reporting.	01 July 2023
Leaders will implement and demonstrate our practice model across the organisation We build a culture in which practice flourishes	Leaders will consistently demonstrate our model in practice. This includes how meetings are chaired, interaction with the workforce and across the partnership. Feedback will be received through staff surveys conducted throughout the year. All practitioners and managers will demonstrate the practice model in their assessment and planning work.	30 September 2023
Engaging and supporting the workforce		
Young people will have their voices heard in the recruitment process	Involve children and young people in redesigning our online recruitment strategy	31 October 2023
To support 'staff pipeline opportunities' for Newly Qualified Social Workers	Launch Slough's first Frontline Unit through recruitment to new posts	01 September 2023
To support staff pipeline opportunities for career progression to enhance retention	Complete and implement the Career progression Framework	31 December 2023
To enhance the skills, knowledge and experience of the whole Children's workforce to better meet children's and young person's needs.	Undertake a skills gap analysis to inform a workforce training programme across frontline staff, managers and leaders.	31 December 2023
To ensure that the workforce are clear and engaged about their role in the Children's Services Improvement Programme.	Process to begin for all staff in Children's Services to have an annual appraisal	30 September 2023
To progressively strengthen the quality of strategic and frontline leadership.	Design a leadership development programme for leaders and managers at all levels of the system of support for children	30 September 2023
For other stakeholders to directly contribute to the Getting to Good Board.	To set up an ongoing shadow Getting to Good Board	31 July 2023
To present SCF as an employer with clear focus on staff's wellbeing to existing workforce and for those considering joining Slough	To formalise the wellbeing offer including, MHFAs, wellbeing check and launch	31 December 2023
To review expectations of home v office-based working	To develop guidance about hybrid working and approach	31 December 2023
To provide apprenticeships for care experienced young people	Increasing opportunities for apprenticeships and work experience placements across Slough council and partner agencies	31 March 2024
To ensure staff understand their responsibilities for health and safety	Raise the profile of Health and Safety obligations	31 December 2023
Engaging with partners		
Work across the partnership to develop and embed local priorities, such as Supporting Reduction of childhood obesity, reducing Antisocial behaviour and support the implementation of the domestic abuse strategy	Put in place an escalation policy and process for partners where they want to raise concerns or compliments about practice including a reporting back mechanism Agree clear and achievable strategic priorities as a partnership.	30 September 2023
Invite and sustain partnership involvement in the Getting to Good Board to develop a culture of 'High Support and High Challenge'	Strategic partners to be active members of the Improvement board to support challenge and support 'unblocking' of issues	31 August 2023
To demonstrate clear improvements in working alongside Community and Voluntary Sector; and faith leaders/ groups.	To produce firm action plan to deliver EH Strategy that includes Comm and Vol sector and faith leaders	30 September 2023
Undertake regular multi-agency audits into key themes	Include multi-agency thematic audits with regular reports to SPB and G2G	30 September 2023
To facilitate ongoing support and training around complex safeguarding issues	To design and implement a regular training cycle for FGM, HBV, radicalisation and exploitation.	31 October 2023
To increase awareness of Private Fostering arrangements through campaign	Review materials and devise comms plan to raise Private Fostering across the partnership to support identification of children who are privately fostered to ensure that referrals to access support are made to Social Care	31 October 2023
To strengthen the Multi-Agency Strategic Hub Partnership	Look to increase partnership presence in the MASH	31 March 2024
To raise the focus of Youth Justice within the Company	Include Youth Justice Service in Children's Improvement Group and maintain audit programme to drive improvement in delivery of support to this cohort	30 September 2023

SEND linkages	Tracking and escalation process to be in place to ensure that EHCP advice requests to be returned within one week with good quality information	30 May 2023
To provide support for care experienced young people - clear and concise in support available to them	Work across the partnership including housing, to deliver local offer.	31 December 2023
Practice and Performance		
Clarify and strengthen the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) arrangements	Revise the policy and practice framework of MACE and relaunch to provide clear distinction between Operational and Strategic MACE	30 September 2023
Provide targeted practice support to improve the quality of services to children and review impact	Put in place programme of Workshops and Practice Learning sets, including staff feedback, to support. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision and Management oversight • Use of chronology to inform practice. • Plans and planning. • Case summaries to support direction of travel. 	30 June 2023
Embed audit programme to improve the quality of services to children and review impact	Our audit work evaluates impact of workshops on practice.	31 May 2023
Improve management oversight and touchpoints to support driving and delivery of plans within the child's timeframe.	Practice standards for team managers supervision and oversight will be reviewed and measured through performance surgeries	31 December 2023
Increase the timeliness of decision making for Children	To re-educate operational teams on providing timely and accurate information so that Initial Child Protection Conferences take place within the statutory timescales	31 December 2023
To prevent unnecessary court applications and look for more supportive outcomes	Reduce emergency applications to Court by having clear senior manager oversight of all decision via legal gateway.	30 June 2023
Children entering the Public Law Outline process will benefit from their wider family and network being explored to provide support, or to be a carer if they cannot stay at home.	Where needs may require legal intervention, this is done in a planned way and utilising PLO (Pre-Proceedings)	30 June 2023
To provide a clear and rationalised plan for the child, including clarifying the support provided.	We will ensure that tracking is completed within the legal gateway process and that final care planning meetings are undertaken	31 August 2023
A clear process is in place to review children's permanence arrangements, including supporting children to their permanence plan as soon as possible	Review mechanism for children living at home subject to placement with parents to be developed within a Permanence Monitoring Group framework.	31 August 2023
To link into wider Council plan to develop 'self-serve' access to live data	To contribute to SCF requirements re PowerBI and Annex A	31 March 2024
To finalise Practice Standards	Revise all practice standards and ensure that a central library and toolkit is available (Tri-X as example). Provide access to partners to our practice standards.	01 October 2023
IROs and CP chairs through their oversight will support consistency, challenge and a focus on the child's needs and voice.	To implement Escalations in 'Forms' within ICS . This- will provide an audit trail and be reportable in line with Dispute Resolution policy	30 September 2023
Children will have plans that are progressed in a timely manner - any drift and delay will be addressed	Midway form already in place for Ch, need to implement for CLA - can then formally report	30 September 2023
Safe space for care experienced young people	Provide a 'pop-in' space for care experienced young people to be scoped and found	30 October 2023
For LADO to provide scrutiny and oversight where professional issues have been raised.	To schedule LADO work into the Audit cycle as part of dip sampling.	30 November 2023
Children are supported by the right team to meet their needs.	Review and amend the case transfer policy. Supports good practice and timely arrangements in place for children transferring between teams, there will be handover arrangements and case work will be completed to a good standard	30 September 2023
Children subject to child protection plans are reviewed to avoid drift and delay.	A Child protection challenge panel will be implemented to Review Child Protection Plans open for over 12 months to provide additional review point specific to supporting driving the plan to meet the child's needs.	31 December 2023
Adoption plans are progressed for children where this is appropriate	We will strengthen early permanence considerations through legal gateway and the Regional Adoption Agency sitting on panel.	30 September 2023

Joint housing protocol benefits from CSC input	Contribute to discussions with Housing to ensure meeting legislation and CEYP requirements	30 November 2023
YP know how to access help and professionals with regards to homelessness	Revise and refresh homelessness for 16- and 17-year-old leaflets	30 September 2023
Fostering Innovation		
To identify opportunities to locate social work teams in the Early Help service	To locate the Frontline unit within Early Help to provide opportunity for early support and brief intervention to prevent needs escalating.	30 October 2023
Support children to stay at home by preventing family breakdown	Explore opportunities to create edge of care support within the Borough – No Wrong Door, Multi Systemic Therapy (MST), Functional Family Therapy (FFT) etc	30 October 2023
To widen the use of Mockingbird (fostering model)	Explore introducing a second Mockingbird constellation	30 October 2023
To reduce high number of referrals for unborn children demonstrating good practice in relationship with early permanency practice.	To develop practice standard; consult on the existing pre-birth tool and build into practice system	30 November 2023
Explore option for court work progression manager to increase oversight of care proceedings, improving grip and reducing drift and delay	To look at options for supporting Court Work Progression	30 September 2023
To review our operating model to provide locality/ teams around school model and frontload help and support.	Review demand and forecasting and review current operating model effectiveness. This is with a view to 'front-loading' and providing support earlier on; and reducing changes in social workers for children and families	30 October 2023
Family led decision making to avoid escalation of risk and improve safe planning for children and making permanence decisions as early as possible.	Develop and launch a Family Group Conference model of approach to engage, support and promote family-based arrangements to address identified needs, risks and circumstances and ensure there is robust decision making for children entering care	01 January 2024
To review MACE arrangements across the partnership to strengthen operational and strategic oversight	Get agreement at MACE to revise contextual safeguarding strategy - establish task and finish group (revise policies and procedures around CS)	31 December 2023
To strengthen the oversight of children who become missing from home	Clarify policy and procedure including guidance for staff. Implement revised procedures and evidence with robust reporting	30 September 2023
To strengthen the oversight of children vulnerable to exploitation.	Review, update and launch risk assessment tool - following #71	31 March 2024
Judicious use of resources		
For the Company to live within financial means whilst meeting children's needs.	Deliver an SCF's approved Business and Improvement Plan	31 March 2024
To gain oversight of all external placements	Put in place external placement panel in place to regularly review all external placements	30 June 2023
To reduce overall spend in Joint Legal Team space which has arisen because of high demand and lack of availability and expertise in JLT	Put in place gatekeeping to reduce reliance on legal to provide care planning advice and decisions, ensuring that they are able to advise on a well-articulated and considered plan. (social worker is the expert)	31 March 2024
To reduce cost of independent assessments in Public Law Outline cases	Explore options to create a 'bank' of ISW's to complete work Explore Court Assessment Team (CAT) options internally to reduce legal spend	30 October 2023
To delete the managed teams from the current structure	Put in place plans to exit the remaining Innovate team	30 August 2023
To identify drift, avoid high-cost placements and support children to live in appropriate accommodation.	Implement revised process, TOR, scope and chairing arrangements for Legal Gateway, Permanency Management Group and High-cost placement panel	31 August 2023

Appendix 8 - Our Response to the Mutual Ventures Report (2022)

The Mutual Ventures report was commissioned by the DfE in mid-2022, reported in November 2022 and was agreed by SBC's Cabinet in December 2022.

The aim of this piece of work is to set out the actions contained in the report and set out and update on the work that have been taken forward and explain why others have not or could not be progressed. It will form part of the Slough Children First Business and Improvement Plan for 2023/24 - 2025/26.

Report rec. or identified issue	Mutual Ventures Report Comment	Assessed priority from MV report	Suggested current priority	Current position	Further Comments	Benchmarking/Statistics/Costs
Workforce: 'The business plan rightly identifies 'stability of workforce as the key challenge for the service. It is also the key prerequisite for improving both the financial operational effectiveness of the service and the quality of outcomes for children and young people.' (MV report pg. 9)						
Retention package	Salary needs to be competitive but does not address the main reason for staff leaving - i.e., staff caseloads. Agency SW staff at 25%. Reduced in July from 41% in June due to exit of Innovate.	Low	Low	Staffing increasingly stable. Turnover reduced. 16% for all staff, 15% for case holding social workers. Highest number of agency staff in CLA. % of agency staff in CLA. 50% of agency SW staff in CLA, not including short term age assessment resource. Includes maternity cover where applicable, although mat leave in SW tends to be covered through existing staff except in fostering as smaller team. Caseloads manageable.	Caseloads monitored on a weekly basis. Model the decrease of agency staff in the Children Looked After (CLA) service (in years 2 and 3 projections). Looking to decrease % agency from 50% to 30% by end March 24.	Early Help - 30 Assessment Service - 20.9 Safeguarding and Family Support -18.3 Looked After - 13.75 Young Person's Adviser - 29 Conference Chairs - 75.9 Independent Reviewing Officers - 56.9
Family Support Workforce - skills mix	The proposal to includes developing a family support workforce (non-social work qualified) to support social workers. This could be productive given the difficulty in recruiting and retaining social workers. We believe the attention to skill mix is a good direction.	High	High	WT 2023 supports move to Child in Need (CiN) at non-SW level. The model is to be developed further informed by national pilots. However, is likely to be case holding rather than social work support	Current planning is to model non-social work qualified staff to replace agency social work staff in the front door and social work teams. In line with Working together recommendations which are out for consultation. Opportunity for savings in 2024/25	If 10% of agency social workers were replaced by Family Support Workers - saving of £88K, if 20% - £184K, if 30% - £276K.
De-commission Innovate (managed teams)	It is concerning to see that SCF see the continued use of Innovate teams until March 2025. The senior leaders are acutely aware of the negative impact of such teams, but they feel they have no alternative in order to limit the caseloads.	High	N/A	One Innovate team left April 2023, the second June 2023. Caseloads not adversely affected, Some concern at level of practice in the innovate teams which has left more complex work needing to be progressed. This may have an impact on legal costs. In order to release the teams more quickly a Building Practice Team has been put into place consisting of one team manager and three social workers for this financial year. Costs for this team are £236k.	Complete	The full year costs of Innovate if retained through 2023/24 would be 1,474,352.57. Spend prior to release £239,683.00. Saving £1,126,951.57 (minus cost of Building Practice workers for 9 months).
Early Help: 'SCF is looking the rationalise its continuum of care through investment in prevention and early help services.' (MV report pg.10)						
Develop Family Information Service	Cost £114k/annum. Will have a beneficial effect of relieving pressures at the front door enabling other invest to save service developments however, it will probably not have much of an impact on caseloads in the safeguarding and CLA teams which has been identified as the key issue in the business plan or make direct financial savings. Little financial impact.	Low	Low	Unsure of rational for proposal and therefore how amount identified. The service already exists and sits in Education Services. The website's configuration and functionality are currently being reviewed by SBC education colleagues. The Early Help Services in SCF has already contributed £x using 'Strengthening Families' funding. No expectation or anticipation of funding coming from SCF therefore no invest to save costs.	The Early Help Partnership Strategy was agreed by Cabinet in July 2023 however there had already been a 'soft' launch and work was progressing. Governance of the Strategy is through the Children and Young People's Partnership Board, chaired by the DCS which reports to the Slough Health and Wellbeing Board. Aims to increase involvement of partners in EH before targeted EH support assessed as required. Implementation of Early Help Strategy (agreed by Cabinet in July 2023) linking with Community and Voluntary Services (CVS).	Current grant £72k

Develop Family Hubs	Cost 424k/annum. This may have some impact on high caseloads but as with the FIS is leaning towards universal services. Whilst the development of family hubs will undoubtedly improve the services to families and help SCF in the ambition of G2G it will have moderate impact. Some financial impact.	Medium	High (for Children's Services in SBC)	Unsure of rationale and therefore of amount identified. At the same time as the MV was being compiled a plan was put in place by educational services to reduce the number of Children's Centres in Slough and convert them into Family Hubs. The matter has now been presented and agreed by Cabinet, public consultation has taken place and staff consultation is in progress. No expectation or anticipation of finances coming from SCF and therefore no invest to save costs.	As above. This line has the highest 'invest to save cost' set out in MV report. Plus, progression of Family Hubs - led by Neil Hoskinson, Associate Director Education, and Inclusion. No timescale as yet for Family Hubs being operational. Savings from reducing the number of Children's Centres has already been identified and badged against the education directorate's budget.	
Develop Targeted Early Help	Cost £99k - £255k / annum over 4 years. An opportunity to strengthen the focus on multi-agency work. The service may also need social workers to oversee the higher risk cases, not included in the original design of the team. Significant financial impact.	High	High	Two additional teams (EH) within the service which has enabled a reduction in CIN work within social worker teams; has contributed to exiting innovate earlier and enabled caseloads to be maintained across the social work teams. Combined with move to non-qualified CiN assessment and case holding. This is funded for the year.	We envisage that this will need to be funded again next year as part of the wider approach to managing demand, caseloads and supporting staff stability (by offering manageable caseloads) and increasing stability for children by experiencing fewer changes in worker. Model the move of 10%, 20% and 30% CiN to non-qualified staff.	
Establish Community Assessment Team	Cost of £395k / annum. Reducing costs requires a more holistic approach (including close cooperation with the courts). Increasing community-based assessment capacity - while a helpful initiative - is unlikely to solve care proceedings cost pressures on its own.	Low	High	Team not established. However, spend on Independent Social Workers (ISW) via Joint Legal Team (JLT) hosted by Reading is significant as are legal costs overall. Direction is in place - no ISW without HoS agreement in Legal Gateway.	We have implemented further controls with JLT on the commissioning of ISW assessments in court by using the legal gateway as the panel to approve such spend. In so doing we are concentrating on an overall reduction in JLT spend by circa £200,000 Further modelling required. Combined with the revised Legal Gateway and new Practice Standards this could reduce ISW spend. Discussions also taking place re actions to reduce the spend on Counsel which is frequently commissioned because of a lack of availability in the JLT	
Edge of Care: 'The proposals focus on the Family Breakdown Prevention Team and the Adolescent Contextual Safeguarding Team.' (MV report pg.10)						
Develop Edge of Care Team	Cost of £360k / annum. Agreement that an edge of care team would have an impact on reducing the need for children to come into care. Such teams have a proven record of helping families in crisis and enabling children to remain at home or with extended family members.	High	High	No specific provision in place. Some pressure on areas with Serious youth Violence and Exploitation - common across most LA's in terms of unpredictable and high demand. Options for FGC being considered: a - Employ full time FGC Coordinator (Team Manager grade) and 'as and when' facilitators b - Commission from a provider - would need to be costed c - Set FGC inside Edge of Care (EoC) team as part of that cost	Currently discussing support for 'No Wrong Door' approach with DfE. (DCS led trailblazer project in previous authority.) If it happens it will be capacity and not financial support. Needs to be linked with Family Group Conferencing (FGC) - part of the whole EoC package. Modelling required for Edge of Care Reunification Team where children and young people will be identified via the panel process. Revisit previous business case. This to be a Year 2 savings option.	Approx. 20% of current cohort of Children in Care are UASC. In the two years from August 2021 the number of admissions to care were 267 of whom 144 were 13+ and 68 were UASC. As only 53.9% had some possibility of their admission being option is less realistic than previously appreciated. Benchmarking shows that Slough has a high number of UASC and care experienced YP who were previously UASC.
'Improving the financial outlook for SCF. Requires strong leadership. Required steps to drive practice and shift culture.' (MV report pg.12)						

Review of the targeted operating model for the intervention work to ensure it is delivered at the right stage to have an impact on children and families and ensure risks and needs do not escalate.	High	High	Early Help Partnership Strategy launch and action plan in place. Early Help System's Guide submitted to DLUCH	As above.	
Further monitoring and review of thresholds to assess if there is a potential to raise them in a measured and managed way, building on work already done through the Safeguarding Partnership	High	High	Ofsted Inspection in Jan 2023 does not indicate that thresholds are inappropriate. No children identified at immediate risk of harm. Quality Assurance Framework in place which tests thresholds and reports received at Getting to Good Board on a 6-weekly basis. Staff have received initial training in auditing practice. QAF needs further embedding. Capacity being increased through DFE bid (on track for agreement).	QA role is a permanent post in the new business plan and costed (Manager grade) QA capacity is being built and permanent team manager starts in September. Audit framework in place and supported by Audit2Excellence (costed) on an interim basis.	
Root and branch review of open cases, prioritising families where there is risk of significant harm and supporting staff to close cases where the risk is lower	High	Medium	A root and branch review not seen as best use of time at present as caseloads are basically manageable. Weekly compliance report indicates where drift and delay in casework is possible to enable focus on individual cases and more broadly.	Review necessity of overall task if caseloads increase. This could be done service by service. Current focus, through Children's Improvement Group is a - Contacts to referrals, b - Child Protection work enquiries to Conference, c- numbers of children subject to a Child Protection Plans for more than one year d - Children in need subject to intervention for 12+ .	
Focus on growing confidence in decision making at all levels of the organisation to be consistent in demand management.	High	High	Building Practice Sessions ongoing.	Building Practice sessions continuing. Peer mentoring programme from Hampshire for HoS in place and being well received. Mentoring for Director of Operations. Scheme of Delegated responsibility has been refreshed enabling senior managers to take appropriate decisions. (reduce single points of failure)	
'Business Plan Deliverability. Specific shortfalls needing to be addressed.' (MV report pg.12)					
Strengthen the Company's finance function to ensure that the Finance Director can have a more strategic role			Previous Financial Director managed business support and planning in addition to financial responsibilities however the case had already been made for a Business Planning Manager appointed on a permanent basis in March 2023. Tasks removed from FD post. New, more widely experienced, FD in post from July 2023.		
Developing a more structured approach that would allow the Company to demonstrate that the services provide value for money			Quarterly report (rag rated) provided to Audit and Governance Committee by Stakeholder Representative. (SBC lead lawyer). Significant progress made only 2 aspects remain rated red and these relate to the Business and Improvement plan. Sept 2022, Red 11, Amber	Quarterly contract monitoring meetings to review Business and Improvement plan to be reset when Plan agreed by Cabinet. Financial reporting to SCF Board needs to be strengthened by new Financial Director in conjunction with the new board chair.	

		21, Green 14. June 2023 Red 2, Amber 23, Green 27.		
Developing an explicit list of all the core assumptions that can be stress tested and monitored		Being developed as part of Commissioner oversight and will be part of evidenced decision making around the future of the service. Likely to include a - Workforce stability, b - Strong Governance, c - Positive Ofsted feedback from focused visit, d - Voice of children and young people, e - Financial viability	Conversations regarding refining stress tests and metrics will take place between Commissioner, DCS and DfE.	
Developing robust governance and board oversight arrangements for the business plan delivery.		More robust reporting needed to Company Board. New NED has 151 officer experience. Business plan includes practice issues which are reported to a board subcommittee. Business plan will also be reported to the Getting to Good Board chaired by DfE Commissioner.	Reset with new Financial Director and new Chair of Board.	
Developing a robust business plan monitoring process with effective and insightful in year forecasting		See line 22 and 24		
Developing SMART output and outcome measures		Performance Scorecard in place for Getting to Good Board. Performance reporting to sub-committee in place.	Metrics presented to SCF Board re the Business and Improvement Plan to be reset with new board chair.	
Developing a comprehensive risk assessment process and monitoring risks on a regular basis as part of ongoing programme management		Overseen by Business Planning Manager. Risk log in place, reported to Company Board and Senior Leadership Team meetings. Links strongly with Corporate Risks which are reported to the Council's Audit and Governance Committee.	To become BAU	
Key Contextual Issues. Described as mission critical. (MV report pg.13)				
Leadership stability	Delivery of the improvement plan and service improvements is dependent on strong, confident. capable leadership. It is critical that the next DCS appointee is full-time and committed to a longer term of office.	Permanent experienced DCS in place and permanent leadership team.	Head of Safeguarding and Quality has left SCF. Advert going out for permanent replacement.	
Transformational capacity	Once SCF is in a more stable position, SBC and SCF should consider carrying out an options appraisal the optimal scope of services that should be discharged to SCF vs those retained by SBC. However, this becomes less relevant if the council is determined to bring services back in-house when the service is rated 'Good'.	Formal exercise not started. However, where necessary to maximise effectiveness and professional support there are 'dotted lines' of accountability across SCF and SBC. For example, the Virtual School sits in SCF, but the Head receives professional supervision from the Associate Director for Education. Restructure of corporate leadership in place and some functions are moving across to Children's Services. Although they should technically be in the company for reasons of TUPE, they will formally be based in the education directorate.	Continue to identify opportunities for cross working. The commissioner will make recommendations about the future of SCF to the minister in c 9months time.	

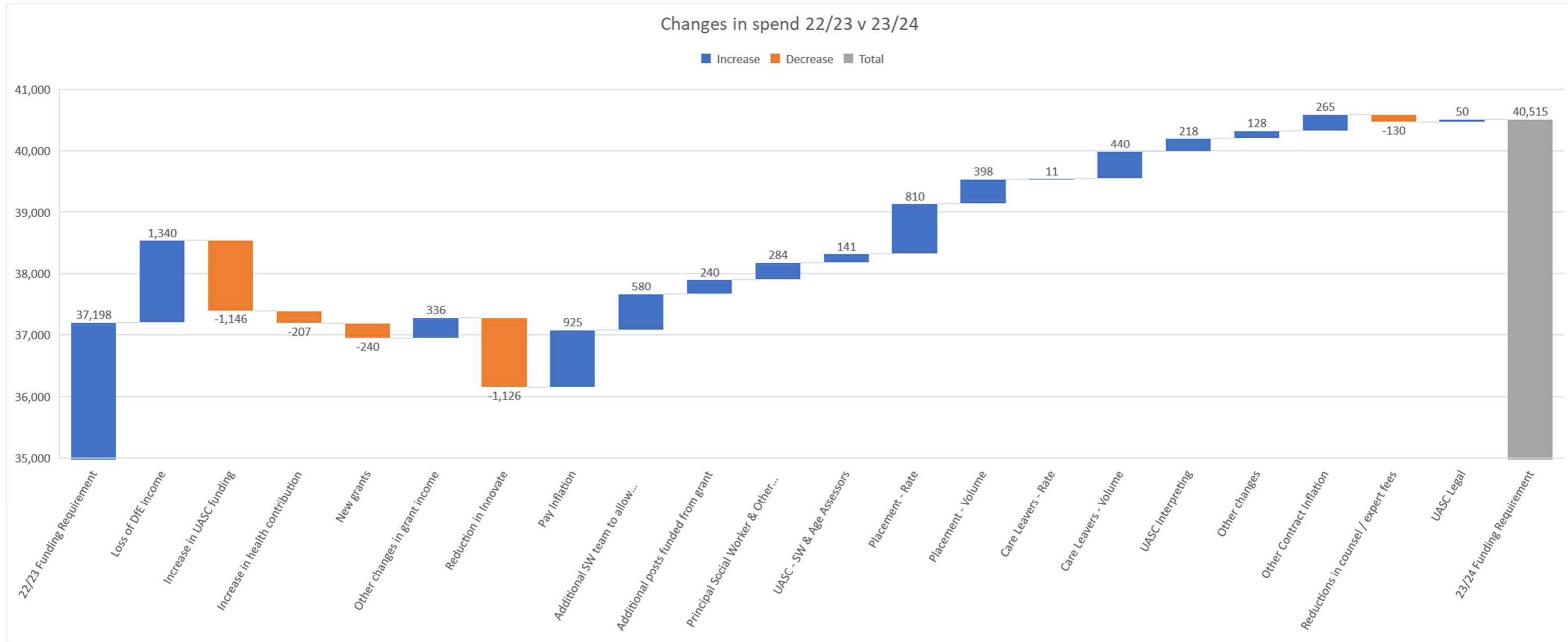
Relationship with SBC	Continued improvement of the relationship between SCF and SBC is vital including ensuring effective and proportionate oversight mechanisms as well as building a strong partnership of culture and trust	One Children's Service approach being embedded. Overall Council/Company relationships reported as much improved. Focus on blurring the line between the Council and the Company wherever appropriate'. Good relationship with 151 officer.	To continue to develop relationships.	
Scale and scope of children's services managed by SCF	Once SCF is in a more stable position, SBC and SCF should consider carrying out an options appraisal about the optimal scope of services that should be discharged to SCF vs those retained by SBC. However, this becomes less relevant if the council is determined to bring services back in-house when the service is rated 'Good'.	The Council's aim is for children's services social care services to move back into the Council. However, this is a Commissioner decision. The Council needs to evidence that it prioritises and champions vulnerable children in Slough.	see above.	
Partnerships across the wider system.	Areas that have made sustained progress in the quality of services for children are good at engagement and collaboration. There is an opportunity to review and streamline partnership governance arrangements across Slough and further strengthen the multi-agency collaboration.	Chief Exec of Council championing multi-agency engagement. Children's Services still has a need to improve partnership arrangements with the third sector, communities, and faith communities. Partnership Officer joining public health and working more closely with Children's Services from September (decision made as part of council restructure) to focus on this work.	Early Help services in Slough are an excellent example of strong partnership working.	
Exploring partnership opportunities. (MV report pg.13)				
Alternative delivery model	Exploratory soundings with potential partner local authorities confirmed that the option of engaging with a partner to support the improvement journey in Slough could be a feasible way forward for SCF. MV recommends that DfE continue engagement with potential partners to explore the opportunity in more detail.	Commissioner's discretion regarding recommendations to the Minister		

Appendix 9 - Our Opportunities and Risks

This document is attached separately.

Appendix 10 – Changes in Spend between 22/23 v 23/24

22/23 Funding Requirement		37,198
Income		
Loss of DfE Income		1,340
Increase in UASC funding		-1,146
Increase in health contribution		-207
New grants		-240
Other changes in grant income		336
Salaries		
Reduction in Innovate		-1,126
Pay Inflation		925
Additional SW team to allow release of Innovate		580
Additional posts funded from new grants		240
Principal Social Worker & Other practice posts		284
UASC - SW & Age Assessors		141
Placements		
Rate	+£35 per week	810
Volume	+11 FTE	398
Care Leavers		
Rate	+£4 per week	11
Volume	+13 FTE	440
Other Costs		
UASC Interpreting		218
Other changes		128
Other Contract Inflation		265
Legal		
Reductions in counsel / expert fees		-130
UASC Legal		50
23/24 Funding Requirement		40,515



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Request for funding to cover Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children cost pressures incurred in Slough Children First of £742k for 2022/23

Executive Summary

This is a request to SBC for funding to cover additional costs incurred through caring for increasing volumes of young children seeking asylum in Slough having fled from unsafe situations in their home countries.

The additional burden on the Company from rising demand

SCF are requesting additional funding of **£742k** to cover spend over budget for the period Apr 22 – Mar 23 from an increasing Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) cohort.

The total spend over budget is **£967k**, less a previously submitted claim for **£226k**, to leave the balance of **£742k**.

An increase in volumes of children presenting to Slough for care as an unaccompanied minor has led to an increase in placement pressures in the number of semi-independent accommodation placements, along with additional staffing and other support costs incurred through supporting these young children.

This request is a follow on from the successful claim of £226k claimed for such additional costs during Q1 and Q2 of 22/23. The claim follows the same process and calculation in working out the additional cost burden to the Company, net of additional Home Office funding.

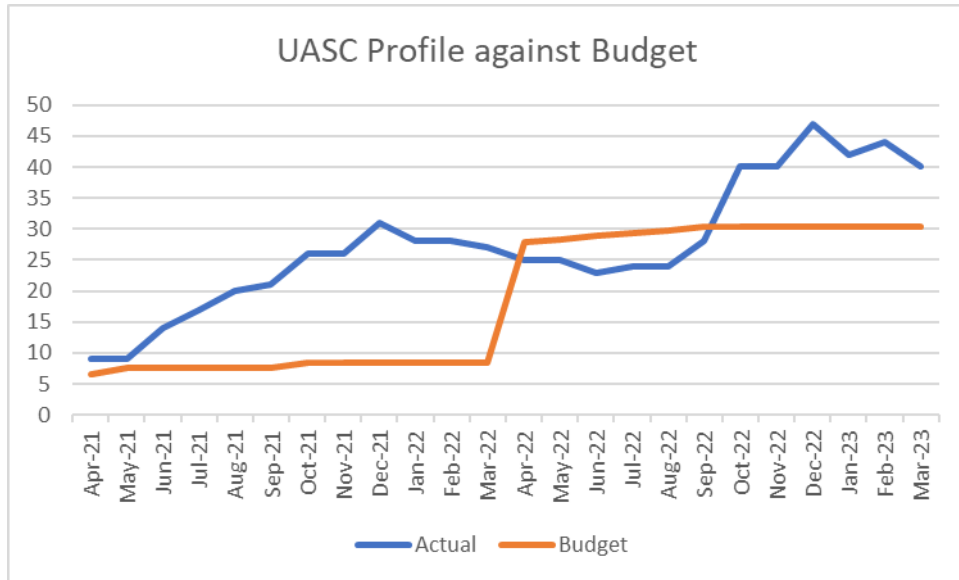
SCF are having to complete age assessments for most UASCs presenting in order to either secure home office funding or for the responsibility of the young person to be picked up by the home office. Most of the young people presenting do not speak English, and therefore translations services are required to support them through care and through care leavers services, the impact being a pressure against the budgeted levels of translation. As part of the process, SCF have had to seek legal advice on the cases to support the challenges around age.

The extent of the increase in the demand for services

SCF saw a sharp increase in the number of UASCs in 2021/22 which has continued into 2022/23. There were 9 UASCs in the system at 1 April 2021, this rose to 26 by 31 March



2022, 31 at September 2022 and estimated to be 45 by year ending March 2023. Of the growth in volume in 22/23, only 5 have come via the national transfer scheme. The remainder have either arrived in Slough through other routes and therefore we are not entitled to Home Office funding for them until their status is confirmed.



The table above shows the comparison of actual FTE against budgeted FTE. 21/22 having 17 more UASCs by 31 March 2022 than budget. Budgets were reset for 2022/23 and have largely tracked against budget, although a recent influx has resulted in an adverse position against budget. By year end, the Company is supporting 40 young people.

The Implications on Resources from Demand

The cost burden on SCF for UASCs being **£967k** year to March 2023 in relation to **accommodation, support, subsistence, translation services, legal fees and the costs for carrying out age assessments offset by home office funding** actuals in total.

Undertaking an age assessment requires experienced and suitably qualified social workers to ensure against legal challenge. SCF currently have 16 individuals awaiting an age assessment with 9 in train, due to delays in having such suitably qualified workers, appropriate adults and interpreters together at the same time, although SCF have now employed an additional specialist age assessor to manage the volumes presenting to SCF. The Company is also developing the children looked after service so more workers are qualified to undertake this specialist work. A framework to increase resourcing of appropriate adults is also being developed.

The Company prioritises the order of undertaking age assessments to those thought to be adults following initial screening of the individual so that once the outcome is known and



the individual can be accommodated as a child in care or moved on into Adult Asylum Seeking services as appropriate and the case closed to SCF.

The table below breaks down the cost impact from the rising demands of UASCs and the cost burdens bourn by SCF against the budget

	2022/23		Variance adverse / (favourable) £000's	Less already claimed £000's	Current Claim £000's
	Actual £000's	Budget £000's			
Accommodation, support and subs costs	1,365	1,046	319	27	292
Care leavers accommodation, support and subs costs	737	265	471	127	344
Translation services costs	262	70	192	37	155
Age Assessments	75	0	75	37	38
Legal	93	0	93	43	50
Home office funding income	(1,342)	(1,159)	(183)	(46)	(138)
Totals spend / adverse position	1,190	223	967	226	742

The volume variance referenced in section 3 has led to incremental accommodation, support and subsistence cost of **£319k** above budget in 2022/23 driven by price variances with delays in progressing the 16+ tender.

	Volume FTE	Price	Total £000's
CLA accommodation & support			
2022/23 budget	29.7	£677	1,046
2022/23 actual	37.4	£702	1,365
2022/23 variance	7.7	£24	319

Care leavers volumes have increased as a result of the increase in UASCs turning 18 or being assessed as 18.

There have been 93 UASCs present since September 2020. 12 of these have been challenged as being over 18 and recorded as care leavers following their age assessment, contributing to the adverse numbers of care leavers against the budget assumptions.

7 of these challenges have been successful and the adults passed back to the home office for ongoing support.

	Volume FTE	Price	Total £000's
Care leavers accommodation & support			



2022/23 budget	9.0	£567	265
2022/23 actual	23.1	£614	737
2022/23 variance	14.1	£47	471

There has been an increase in the requirement of translation services to support the UASCs as a result of the increasing volumes of UASCs. 2022/23 has seen an increase in activity with ongoing legal challenges around 3 cases which have been challenged and have been referred to an upper tribunal.

SCF have in place robust processes to ensure funding claimed from the Home Office is maximised. Timely communications between finance and the children looked after teams ensure all cases are logged and reconciled regularly. The Home Office is kept up to date on all cases and outcomes of age assessments with grant claims submitted in line with the Home Office time scales. These processes are covered in more detail in the Appendix.

SCF seek legal advice where necessary to ensure the Company is protected against legal challenge on its action and around following proper process and in the following scenarios:

- A case has been presented by a lawyer giving us 24 hours to respond
- There is dispute on the age of the individual
- There is a challenge on the outcome of the age assessment

The table below shows a sample of where legal advice has been sought and the outcome.

Action	No.
Pre action - accommodated	1
Pre action - settled as no further evidence offered	1
SCF successfully challenged JR	1
JR challenge age assessment	4
Legal advice undergoing	2
Pre action - age assessed as under 18 and accommodated	8
Pre action - age assessed as adult and case closed	1
SCF successful challenge pre action	1
Grand Total	19

Where there is no dispute, no legal advice would be sought.

Out of 12 cases being challenged, SCF have conceded on 2 occasions and settled at pre action, even though the age assessment showed them as being over 18.

Taking a robust approach and being successful in defending cases is having a positive impact. Out of 30 new cases presenting to SCF in 2021/22, 15 (50%) were referrals from lawyers, but only 3 of 27 (11%) cases presenting were referrals from lawyers to date in 2022/23. Showing a real decline in the numbers being presented with legal backing in 2022/23.



Information and Supporting evidence on steps the Company is taking to manage the said circumstances/ events within the initial Contract Sum

SCF are undertaking a number of activities to drive cost efficiencies and incremental income to assist with the pressures.

Specifically relating to the rise in UASCs

- SCF automatically accommodate UASCs presented to avoid any legal challenge and expense.
- SCF have taken steps to look at alternate means of assessing age and are in the process of testing this out. Seeking input from colleges and workplaces, social media etc, with the aim of avoiding the costs of an age assessment.
- If the UASC presents is nearing 18, with 13 weeks or less to their birthday, SCF do not undertake an age assessment as the individual will not be entitled to care leavers services at 18 as they have not been in care for 13 weeks or more. This results in avoidance of costs for assessment including translation services and legal advice.
- SCF have developed a level of age assessment expertise which is being shared amongst social workers to ensure good practice now and in the future.
- SCF have successfully met the **criteria for 2 UASC transferred** through the national transfer scheme which attracts additional one-off funding of **£12k**.
- SCF are working with a local provider to develop a **new provision designed for UASCs**, recognising the increasing demands for UASCs. This will be tailored to meet their specific needs and provide for a better value option.
- SCF are looking at commissioning opportunities to develop a model of semi independent for UASCs with models of support tailored to their needs to drive a more cost effective solution.



Appendix 1: UASC Assessment and Defence Procedures

The process map below lays out the information flows, the required documents for submission and communication between finance and the Home Office and the internal rate calculation trackers re all UASCs.

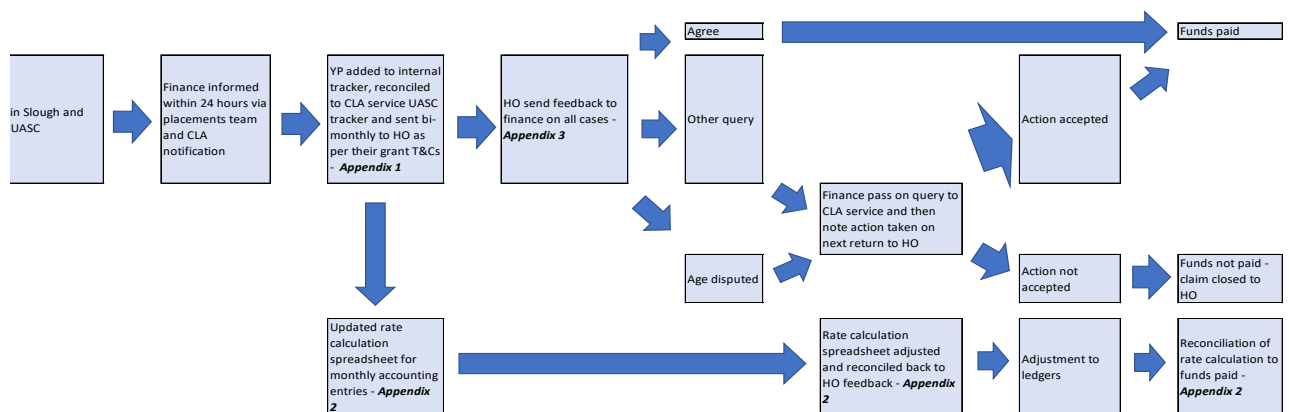
The current cohort is 40 under 18 year olds:

- Starting cohort – 9 (9 agreed)
- Hotel entrants – 22 (22 awaiting HO review or awaiting age assessment)
- NTS entrants – 5 (1 awaiting formal agreement by HO)
- Other entrants – 4 (3 awaiting age assessment)

There are 2 entrants under the new 5-day transfer scheme attracting higher rate of funding

Finance are notified via various routes of an entrant into care that is claiming asylum – ATR panel, placements function, CLA service and CLA notifications. As soon as they are notified, the young person (YP) is entered onto the HO submission form and a finance tracker to calculate funding. The HO form is submitted bi-monthly as a grant claim in order for HO funding to be received. The finance tracker is used to calculate accruals for income in the monthly accounts.

The HO send feedback to finance (only one received to date this year) on each YP claim, by either accepting the claim as valid, requesting more information or disputing age. Finance update the tracker accordingly to amend income accruals and also liaise with the CLA service re the claims in query so they can be answered on the next submission form.



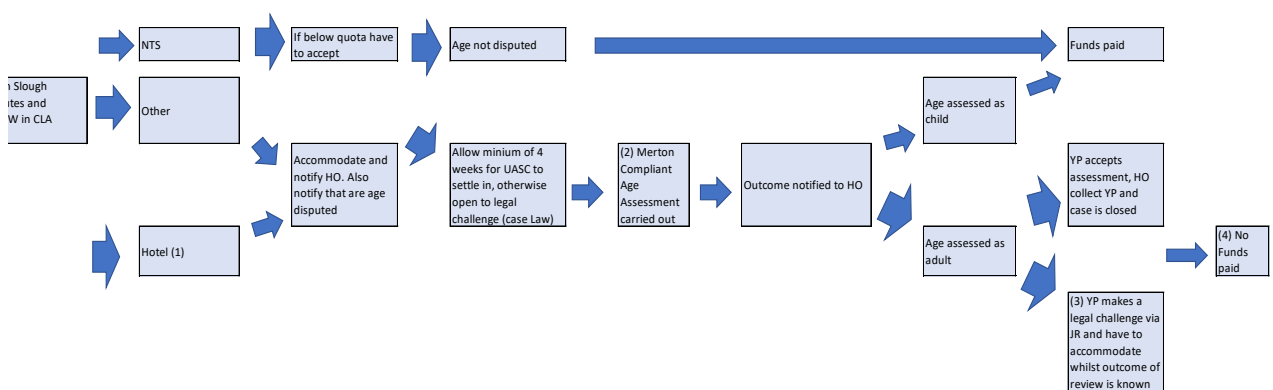


The process map below lays out the information flows between the **Children Looked After service and the Home Office**.

A YP enters into care as a UASC through 1 of 3 usual routes- NTS, dispersal hotel or other routes. SCF have to accept the case unless the 0.1% quota has been reached in which case only those transferred via the NTS route can be refused. All those coming via the hotel route are disputing their initial age assessment – done by the HO in the first instance, but not in compliance with the Merton age assessment procedures – therefore we have to accept as a child until evidenced otherwise to avoid legal challenge at this stage. The CLA service informs the HO at this stage that we have accommodated the YP, but the initial age assessment is disputed.

To follow case law, we have to allow YP disputing their age 4 weeks to settle into placement before commencing an age assessment. To be Merton compliant, an age assessment has to be undertaken by a suitably qualified SW, with a further SW in attendance, an appropriate adult and an interpreter where required. The assessment takes place over 3 days, with the outcome notified to the HO. The HO have never disputed our age assessments and will therefore amend their records and pay a legitimate claim, or close the case and pick up the YP where we have assessed as being an adult.

Where SCF assess as being an adult the HO is notified and would normally arrange for NASS to pick up the YP fairly promptly. A number of YP have still challenged their compliant age assessment through a JR and SCF take legal advice and may continue to accommodate until the matter is resolved. At this point it is up to the court to decide our actions and the outcome.



- (1) All are age disputed and are notified to us via Solicitor or Vol Org. HO carried out non Merton compliant age assessment at the port. Have to accommodate as a child. Didn't accommodate initially but lead to legal challenge and costs. Now accommodate whilst under going Merton compliant assessment.
- (2) 22 currently awaiting age assessment due to volume. Wait time depends on capacity and availability of workers. Require x2 SW, 1 of whom has to be fully trained in Merton Compliant age assessments which can take 3 days. Requires appropriate adult to be present and interpreter as necessary. Engaged a fully trained additional SSW to undertake age assessments.



-
- *(3) 9 JR's last year, 3 JRs currently progressed to the Upper Tribunal. Have sought approval, and been granted from Court, right to be accommodated and known as a child in care whilst awaiting hearing outcome, likely to be Jan / Feb 23. No HO funding agreed*
 - *Did ask HO to carry out age assessments but outcome of 2 they did were open to challenge and SCF ended up accommodating as care leavers with no HO funding*
 - *(4) Process can take 3 months even before JR / legal challenge / HO pick up adult*
 - To note:
 - Slough has 2 hotels within LA area
 - SCF give minimum entitled to as a child in care
 - Entitled to education, but limited school places so have to buy in additional tuition - no PPG as most are 16+



Request for funding to cover Other Child Support cost pressures incurred in Slough Children First of £98k for 2022/23

Executive Summary

To seek additional funding from SBC to cover increasing pressures from Other Child Support Costs. Rising demands have partly arisen from the cost of living crisis, higher levels of support required for complex young people, reduced housing stock for our care leavers to move into, plus the growth in Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children (UASC) who have aged up to be care leavers.

The total additional costs claim is **£95k**, as this excludes the UASC cohort who are the subject of a separate claim.

The additional burden on the Company from rising demand

SCF are requesting additional funding of **£95k** to cover the balance of the over spend for the period Apr 22 – Mar 23 from an increasing Care Leaver cohort.

The overall overspend in care leavers is a pressure of £430k (excluding the UASC cohort), but with additional income from Strengthening Families, Home Office funding for UASCs, Household Support Grant offsetting one off support to care leavers and other additional income, the remaining overspend balance for SCF during 22/23 as a result of demand pressures is **£95k**.

There has been an overall increase in the numbers of care leavers during 22/23, at 24 over budget with an average of 52 per month during 22/23.

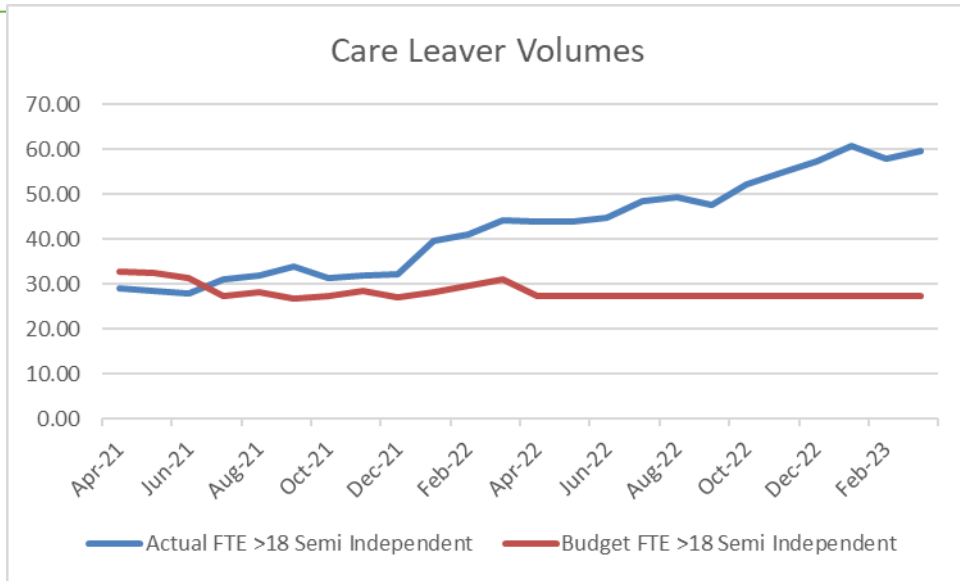
The total spend over budget in care leaver placements is **£974k, or £430k** excluding UASCs.

The average unit cost is £634 per week v a budget of £565 per week.

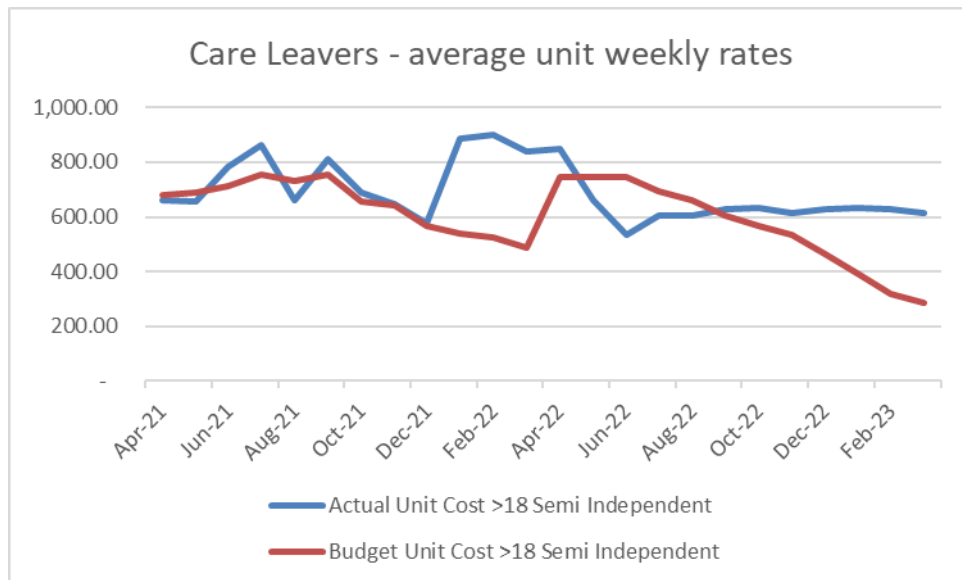
The extent of the increase in the demand for services

The overall Care leaving population has grown since 2021/22 as seen in the graph below, following broadly, the increase in the CLA population over that time period.

However, it was envisaged as part of the budget setting post Covid pandemic, and due to increasing use of Housing Panels to move more 18+ into independent living, that volumes would remain fairly flat.



The graph below demonstrates how increasing rates have also impacted on total costs during the period. In the 22/23 budget, unit rates were expected to fall in SCF with the implementation of the 16+tender. However, the tender for the procurement of Semi Independent accommodation and support for 16-25 year olds proved unsuccessful through the lack of a provider able to deliver a financially viable proposal for independent accommodation for 18-25 year olds.



There have been a number (11) of high-cost semi-independent placements over £1k per week which have had an adverse impact on the budget, including one exceptional cost for an individual child resulting in an adverse **£75k** by May 2022.



The Implications on Resources from Demand

The table below shows the additional cost burden position against budget of **£904k** for 22/23.

22/23 YTD	FTE	Unit rate		Total £000s
Actual	51.77	£ 633.75	£	1,711
Budget	27.42	£ 564.55	£	807
Variance	24.35	£ 69.21	£	904

There have been no housing panels since June, which has led to a delay in some young people moving on to their independent living, and partially explains the rise in 18+ semi independent numbers.

18+ semi independent rates have increased 10% since 1 April 2022. This is in part an impact from inflation rises, but also delays in implementing the 16-25 tender plans aimed at reducing current rates which had been built into the budget as a saving. The delays a consequence of the provider no longer able to deliver against the original specification with the rises in cost of living. Alternative housing solutions are being explored for 23/24.

Information and Supporting evidence on steps the Company is taking to manage the said circumstances/ events within the initial Contract Sum

SCF are undertaking a number of activities to drive cost efficiencies and incremental income to assist with the pressures.

- SCF engaged **Homes 2 Inspire** to look at the opportunity of developing residential provision in Slough. SCF are working with housing to identify potential properties to meet this need and deliver savings.
- SCF have completed a **tender on 16-25 accommodation** and working with a provider to deliver against sufficiency plans. This includes the provision of emergency beds to allow time to find more suitable longer-term accommodation that matches the needs of the young person and provides better value for money.
- SCF have been **engaging new providers** to enter the local market and deliver greater competition.
- SCF are working with a local provider to develop a **new provision designed for UASCs**, recognising the increasing demands for UASCs. This will be tailored to meet their specific needs and provide for a better value option.
- Top **20 most expensive care leaving placements** challenged on bi-monthly basis to ensure best



value, and to ensure each young person is maximising benefits where applicable.

- Development of an **External Placement Panel** to focus on high cost, external placements with a tighter grip on review of time, additional support costs and step downs to drive value for money through appropriate placement decisions and more emphasis on permanence.

Any other information the Company and/or Council reasonably consider to be helpful for the Council to consider

The recent Mutual Ventures report on the business plan highlights that SCF and costs for children in social care are in the bottom quartile for cost per capita, suggesting costs of services are not excessive.

However, SCF accept there is other benchmark data which does not paint SCF in as good a light, largely around the high referrals but this must be seen in the context of Slough and the immature Early Help system. It is expected that with the investment in early help services this will result in fewer referrals to care and an improvement in the benchmark analysis.

It is commonly reported in the national press that children's services up and down the country are also overspending on their budgets with the rising demands for service.¹

¹ For example: [LGA: Eight in 10 councils forced to overspend on children's social care budgets amid soaring demand | Local Government Association](#) And [Safeguarding Pressures | ADCS](#)



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Request for funding to cover Placement cost pressures incurred in Slough Children First of £499k in 21/22 and £1,681k for 2022/23

Executive Summary

To seek additional funding from SBC to cover increasing costs in the Company’s placement spend. Rising demands have partly arisen from the cost of living crisis leading to an overall increase in the numbers of children looked after in placement of an average of 5 FTE in 21/22 and 4 FTE in 22/23.

The total additional costs claim is **£2,180k**, **£499k** for 21/22 and **£1,681k** for 22/23 and excludes the cohort of children seeking asylum in Slough, having fled from unsafe situations in their home countries and are the subject of a separate claim.

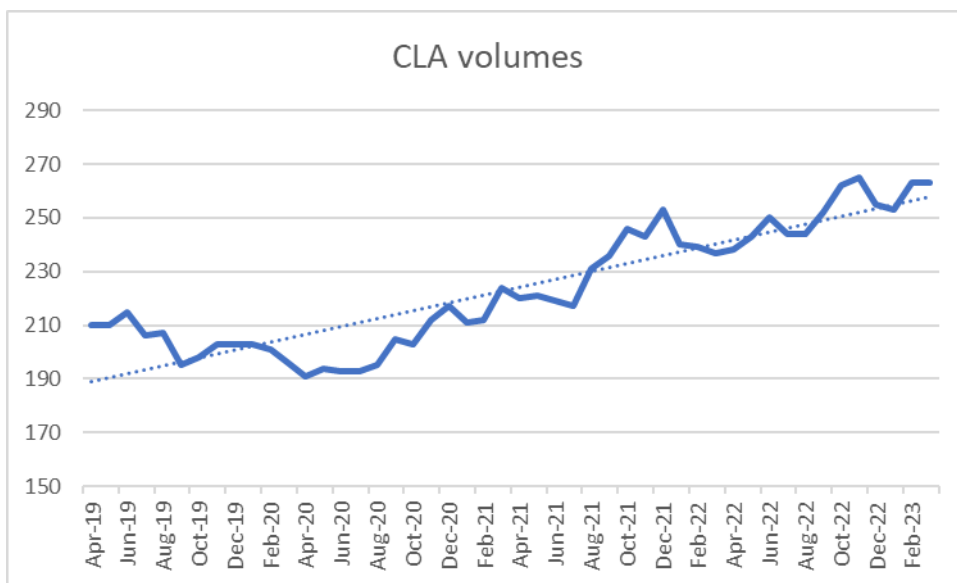
The additional burden on the Company from rising demand

SCF are requesting additional funding of **£2,180k** to cover spend over budget for the period Apr 21 – Mar 23 from an increasing volumes of children being looked after.

The total spend over budget is **£1,160k** for 21/22, but previous funding claims and reallocation of additional income has brought this down to a balancing figure of **£499k**. For 22/23 the total spend over budget and claimed for is **£1,681k** as UASC costs are included in a separate claim.

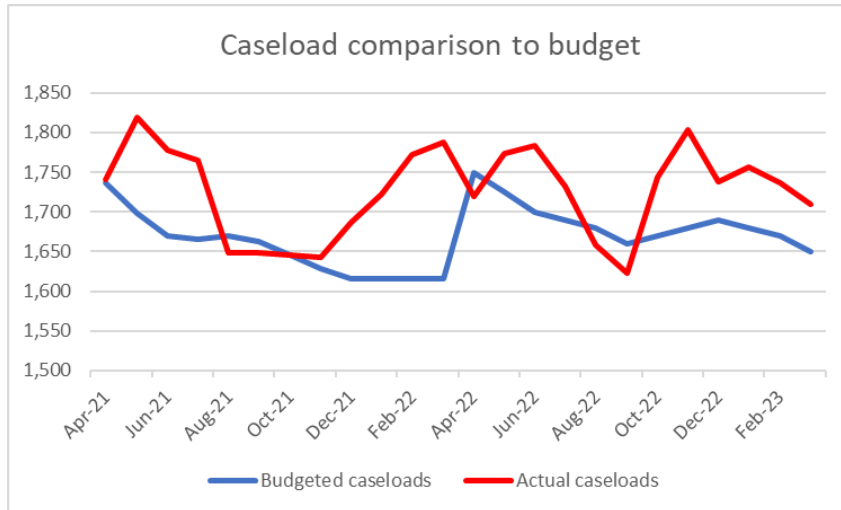
The extent of the increase in the demand for services

The overall children in care population has grown since 2019/20 as seen in the graph below.





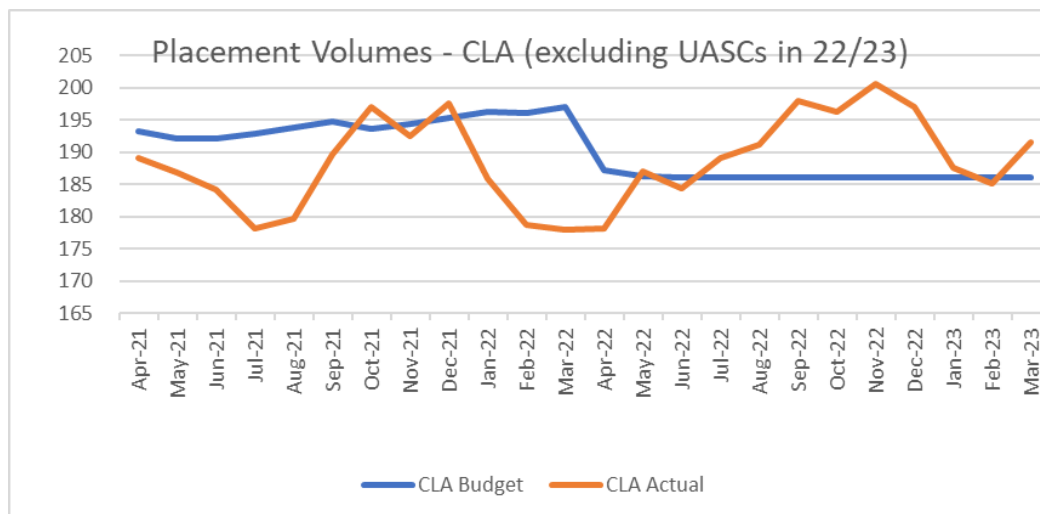
Total caseloads were projected to fall for 2022/23 as part of the budget setting post Covid pandemic. With the significant rise in inflation and the impacts on food and fuel, the cost of living is no doubt having a bearing on the volume of activity and referrals in children’s services, with caseloads remaining higher than projected, and this impacts on all services, including the volumes of children placed in to care.



There are an additional 4 FTE in placement in 22/23 to that projected in the budget, the impact of this results in an additional cost burden from the additional placements.

The complexity of need of young people in care, and the mix of where they are placed has meant the average unit cost has risen from £616 per week to £693 per week.

Levels of children looked after in placement have risen significantly since April 2021 and exceeding budget estimated growth in CLA placements (excluding UASCs), the chart below shows the profile for the year against budget.



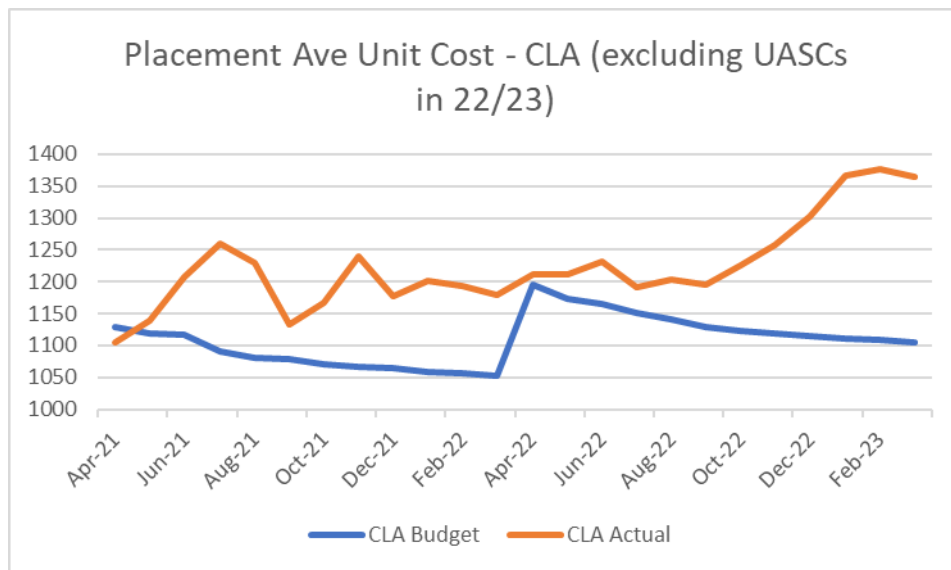


Nationally, the care population has increased and with a shortage of placements for young people in care, reduced supply and increasing demand has also increased rates. The graph below demonstrates these increasing rates, and also shows how in the 22/23 budget, unit rates were expected to fall in SCF with the implementation of the 16+tender. However, the tender for the procurement of Semi Independent accommodation and support for 16-25 year olds proved unsuccessful through the lack of a provider able to deliver a financially viable proposal for independent accommodation for 18-25 year olds.

There have been a number of high-cost semi-independent placements which have had an adverse impact on the budget. One exceptional cost for an individual child was almost £10k per week due to the level of support required.

Expected increases in in house foster carer recruitment following the implementation of additional complexity allowances, although welcomed by carers, has not lead to the hoped for increase in carer numbers, with a larger than budgeted for reliance still on External foster placements at higher rates.

There have also been a number of shorter term but higher cost residential packages for teenagers at risk of criminal exploitation placed in year with average weekly costs of over £7k per week.



Court delays stemming from the Covid pandemic still exist for some cases, especially those with added complexities and complications such as a foreign element or where numerous family assessments are required, has continued to prolong some children in care, or mother and baby placements longer than they may have otherwise.



The Implications on Resources from Demand

The table below shows the additional cost burden position against budget year to date of **£499k** for 21/22 and **£1,681k** for 22/23. The key variances are in residential for both years, external fostering placements for 21/22 and 16-18 semi-independent placements for 22/23.

	21/22 YTD total	22/23 YTD total
Budget	£000's	£000's
Res	3,701	3,989
IFA	4,191	4,339
In house	1,638	1,767
16-18 Semi	1,201	876
UASC	311	1,046
Secure	229	66
SGO	1,380	1,518
Adoption	783	761
	14,720	14,363
Actual		
Res	4,311	4,521
IFA	4,565	4,195
In house	1,461	1,558
16-18 Semi	1,176	2,025
UASC	816	1,484
Secure	17	99
SGO	1,444	1,607
Adoption	805	847
	14,395	16,336
Variance		
Res	(610)	(532)
IFA	(374)	143
In house	177	209
16-18 Semi	25	(1,149)
UASC	(505)	(438)
Secure	212	(33)
SGO	(64)	(88)
Adoption	(22)	(86)
Total	(1,160)	(1,974)
UASC	0	293
Less previous claims	661	
Total - less UASC impact	(499)	(1,681)



The table below shows the impact on CLA placement volumes by FTE year to date. Again, residential variances and semi independent are the main differences v budget.

Volumes	Average 21/22	Average 22/23
Budget		
Res	18	16
IFA	82	80
In house	74	77
16-18 Semi	18	13
UASC	8	30
Secure	2	1
SGO	160	160
Adoption	77	71
Total	443	447
Actual		
Res	18	19
IFA	85	82
In house	67	71
16-18 Semi	16	18
UASC	20	36
Secure	0	1
SGO	158	150
Adoption	76	75
Total	448	452
Variance		
Res	- 0	- 3
IFA	- 3	- 2
In house	7	6
16-18 Semi	2	5
UASC	- 13	- 6
Secure	1	0
SGO	2	10
Adoption	1	4
Total	- 2	4

The table shows the adverse volumes in residential each month, the cause of the adverse spend on that budget line. There have been a number of mother and baby placements this financial year, more than previous years.



Semi independent placements are also adverse to budget, also contributing to the overall position. There have been no housing panels since June, which has led to a delay in some young people moving on to their independent living, and partially explains the rise in 16-18 semi independent numbers.

16-18 semi independent rates have increased 10% since 1 April 2022. This is in part an impact from inflation rises, but also delays in implementing the 16-25 tender plans aimed at reducing current rates which had been built into the budget as a saving. The delays a consequence of the provider no longer able to deliver against the original specification with the rises in cost of living. Alternative housing solutions are being explored for 23/24.

SCF commissioned PeopleToo to introduce a robust process for negotiating inflationary requests on 4th May 2022. PeopleToo developed a form for completion by suppliers for any such inflationary requests, this was sent out to all suppliers on 16th June 2022. The form captured details of why an inflationary uplift was required providing details to support the request to allow for detailed scrutiny of the cost uplifts on the suppliers to assess for reasonableness.

Information and Supporting evidence on steps the Company is taking to manage the said circumstances/ events within the initial Contract Sum

SCF are undertaking a number of activities to drive cost efficiencies and incremental income to assist with the pressures.

- SCF engaged **Homes 2 Inspire** to look at the opportunity of developing residential provision in Slough. SCF are working with housing to identify potential properties to meet this need and deliver savings.
- SCF have completed a **tender on 16-25 accommodation** and working with a provider to deliver against sufficiency plans. This includes the provision of emergency beds to allow time to find more suitable longer-term accommodation that matches the needs of the young person and provides better value for money.
- SCF have been **engaging new providers** to enter the local market and deliver greater competition.
- SCF are implementing against the **IFA recruitment strategy** to bring new carers onboard. Having achieved the Ofsted rating of Good, this provides greater opportunity to attract new carers. Looking further afield than just Slough, recognising the limitations of opportunity in Slough itself.
- SCF are working with a local provider to develop a **new provision designed for UASCs**, recognising the increasing demands for UASCs. This will be tailored to meet their specific needs and provide for a better value option.
- **Top 20 most expensive placements** challenged on bi-monthly basis to ensure best value.



-
- Development of an **External Placement Panel** to focus on high cost, external placements with a tighter grip on review of time, additional support costs and step downs to drive value for money through appropriate placement decisions and more emphasis on permanence.

Any other information the Company and/or Council reasonably consider to be helpful for the Council to consider

The recent Mutual Ventures report on the business plan highlights that SCF and costs for children in social care are in the bottom quartile for cost per capita, suggesting costs of services are not excessive.

However, SCF accept there is other benchmark data which does not paint SCF in as good a light, largely around the high referrals but this must be seen in the context of Slough and the immature Early Help system. It is expected that with the investment in early help services this will result in fewer referrals to care and an improvement in the benchmark analysis.

It is commonly reported in the national press that children's services up and down the country are also overspending on their budgets with the rising demands for service.¹

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Request for funding to cover Salary Pressures incurred in Slough Children First of £1,423k for 2022/23

Executive Summary

To seek additional funding from SBC to cover increasing costs in the Company’s salary spend. Rising demands have partly arisen from the cost of living crisis leading to an overall increase in caseloads requiring the retention of Innovate teams throughout 22/23. Market demands from a national shortage of social workers has also increased rates for agency social workers.

The total additional costs claim is **£1,432k** for 22/23 made up **from £1,278k** from salary cost pressures and **£154k** from recruitment for international social workers. Total overspend on staffing in 22/23 was £2,479k as below, less £1,201k funding through other claims (UASC, inflation, Early Help IYR, Transformation claim):

Cost Variance	Total £000's
Perm	(1,064)
Agency	1,651
Innovate	1,298
Transformation Salaries	594
Total	2,479
Less already Claimed	(1,201)
Total	1,278

18 International social workers have been recruited since 21/22 at a cost of **£154k** spent on visas, recruitment fees and relocation costs.

Row Labels	Sum of Amount
Relocation	89,960
Visa	41,587
Recruitment	22,740
Grand Total	154,287

The additional burden on the Company from rising demand

Assumptions on demand, caseloads, unit costs and levels of funding from other sources were built up in detail within workings, to give a balanced budget for both years. Following further unanticipated lockdowns, nationally on the 5th November 2020, and further school



closures between January 2021 and March 2021, caseloads and demands on services again started to rise over and above those planned for in the budget.

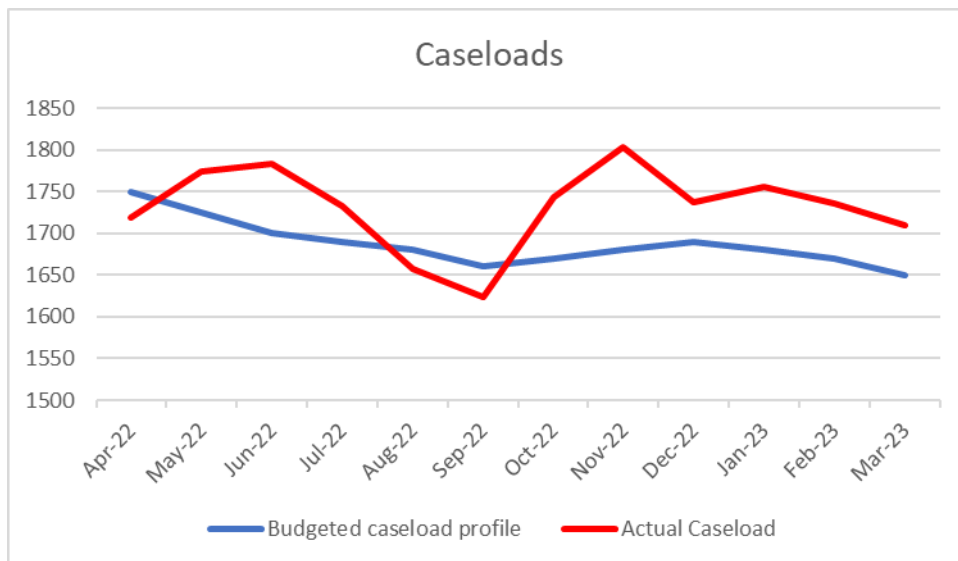
Cost pressures arose in staff costs to meet the demand, including the need to extend Innovate teams to help meet caseloads; the number of children in proceedings; on Child Protection plans and an intake of additional Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

Budgets assumed a steady state of caseload capacity The graph below shows a comparison of budgeted v actual total caseloads over the year to March 2023.

The graph shows the average caseloads by month over the past year, showing the impact of seasonality, with the impacts most extreme following schools returning in September.

Average caseloads for the year were 1,728 per month v budget caseloads of 1,687, with a high of 1,795 in November. Due to market conditions, shortage of social workers and rate rises, the retention of Innovate teams to secure stability within the workforce, reduce changes of social workers for children and families and ensure resource to manage caseloads seemed the most prudent way to ensure all the above happened. This has come at a cost premium but has enabled the Company to focus on the remaining workforce. A drive to recruit more experienced permanent workers through international recruitment has been very successful, and along with the induction of more cohorts of ASYE's and social work apprenticeships, the company is growing the future permanent workforce from within.

On this basis the organisation has been able to retain both permanent and experienced interim staff and have seen permanent social worker turnover rates fall from 56% for social workers in March 2022 to 22% by March 2023.





The extent of the increase in the demand for services

The request is to cover the impact from demand related, increased spend on staffing.

Total caseloads were projected to fall for 2022/23 as part of the budget setting post Covid pandemic. With the significant rise in inflation and the impacts on food and fuel, the cost of living is no doubt having a bearing on the volume of activity and referrals in children's services, with caseloads remaining higher than projected.

Innovate teams have been brought in since 21/22 to help manage the increase in caseloads. As caseloads did not fall as expected during 22/23, 2 of the original 3 teams have been retained to help with the demand. The Social workers in each team work on capped caseloads of 20.

As part of the long term plan to grow our own social workers and recruit from within, a number of ASYEs, student social workers and social work apprenticeships have joined the organisation. They are also on capped caseloads.

A number of international social workers have been recruited to and as part of their induction work on protected caseloads for a time limited period of settling in over a number of months.

The total impact of social workers on capped caseloads is in the table below, and if assume the average caseload is 20, accounts for between approximately 4-11 social workers each month over the year.

	Apr-22	May-22	Jun-22	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23
No. of ASYE	11	11	11	10	10	6	10	5	4	4	4	4
No of Internationals	9	11	11	11	13	11	10	8	8	8	6	0
Average capped caseload	260	270	294	277	323	204	262	173	172	200	172	52
Average caseloads at full capacity	440	480	480	460	500	380	440	300	280	280	240	120
Difference in caseloads	180	210	186	183	177	176	178	127	108	80	68	68

The Trust recognise the difficulties to permanently recruit to established social worker posts. There are many factors at play in this respect including a reputational issue, high caseloads, weak management supervision, uncertainty of the future (transformation, financial sustainability, becoming a wholly owned subsidiary of the council) along with other factors such as office move, car parking and adding in an increased level of anxiety for social workers from the impact of Covid.

Permanent recruitment to a 5th Safeguarding and family support team established in 2021/22 through the growth bid as part of budget setting has been unrealistic given the difficulties in recruiting to existing vacant posts. Therefore, retention of the Innovate team



was seen as the only viable option to retain caseloads at manageable levels and avoid permanent staff turnover.

The Innovate team costs £19k per month additional to having a permanently established team. An alternative to recruiting to the newly established team on a permanent basis, would be to recruit on an agency basis. This option would again prove more cost effective to the Innovate model reducing the monthly outlay by circa £9k per month, however the risks around retention and turnover with agency staff would still remain.

The Innovate teams have brought a level of stability, being established teams with a track record in the main, of having worked together for some time. This has led to greater stability, allowing breathing space for existing teams to work on existing casework without having to take new cases, picked up by the introduction of the Innovate teams. This in turn has led to the conclusion and closing of some old historic plans, creating greater capacity in the system.

Locally and nationally, due to a shortage of social workers, agency rates have had to have been raised to avoid interims moving to neighbouring boroughs for higher rates, and leaving unfilled vacancies in Slough. It is currently a workers market and Slough have had no choice but to increase rates to remain competitive.

The total overspend on staffing is seen in the table below (including Transformational staff).

Type	Budget			Actual			Variance		
	Rate	Volume	Total	Rate	Volume	Total	Rate	Volume	Total
Perm	£ 51,535	276.10	£ 14,228,794	£ 49,429	271.77	£ 13,433,458	-£ 2,106	-	4.33 -£ 795,336
Agency	£ 85,030	25.09	£ 2,133,693	£ 90,175	45.58	£ 4,110,495	£ 5,146	20.49	£ 1,976,802
Innovate	£ 162,864	3.75	£ 610,740	£ 135,501	14.08	£ 1,908,308	-£ 27,363	10.33	£ 1,297,568
Total	£ 55,660	304.94	£ 16,973,227	£ 58,691	331.44	£ 19,452,261	£ 3,030	26.49	£ 2,479,034

Information and Supporting evidence on steps the Company is taking to manage the said circumstances/ events within the initial Contract Sum

SCF are undertaking a number of activities to drive cost efficiencies and incremental income to assist with the pressures.

- SCF have **changed the Innovate model** reducing the number of teams from 3 to 2, but only reducing the numbers of Social Workers by 1. The impact being savings on management and support, reducing the weekly costs by **£6,144** an annual saving on costs of **£319k**.
- SCF continue to operate **vacancy management**, ensuring all roles recruited to are essential to the delivery of services.



-
- **International Recruitment** has brought in a number of permanent skilled social workers driving down turnover of staff and reducing costs on agency staff. Since 2021, 18 number of international social workers have been brought in over the last 2 years.
 - Going into 23/24 it is proposed to release Innovate earlier than original planned in this financial year to help further reduce costs.
 - **Permanent : Agency ratios** in front line case holding staff is expected to improve from 57:43 at the beginning of 22/23 and is currently around 69:31 in April 2023.

Reasons why the additional budgetary pressure cannot reasonably be managed until the next Contract Sum Negotiation Period

The losses from 2021/22, with further losses forecast in 2022/23, raises a significant concern around the company as a going concern. The business plan for SCF shows the company are unable to manage these risks in the coming years, with losses accumulating over the years. The company therefore requires the funding in year to remain a going concern.

Cash balances are forecast to be depleted during 2024/25, were the new business plan to be accepted. The company has no reserves to draw upon. If the company were to cut controllable costs, largely staffing, this would put children at far greater risk and the company would not be delivering against its contractual obligations for discharging the council's statutory obligations.

Any other information the Company and/or Council reasonably consider to be helpful for the Council to consider

The recent Mutual Ventures report on the business plan highlights that SCF and costs for children in social care are in the bottom quartile for cost per capita, suggesting costs of services are not excessive.

However, SCF accept there is other benchmark data which does not paint SCF in as good a light, largely around the high referrals but this must be seen in the context of Slough and the immature Early Help system. It is expected that with the investment in early help services this will result in fewer referrals to care and an improvement in the benchmark analysis.



It is commonly reported in the national press that children's services up and down the country are also overspending on their budgets with the rising demands for service.¹

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**Request for funding to cover Transformation cost pressures incurred in Slough
Children First of £348k for 2022/23**

Executive Summary

To seek additional funding from SBC to cover Transformation costs incurred in the Company following the late decision by the DfE to withdraw funding in 2023/23.

The total additional costs claim is **£348k**.

The additional burden on the Company from rising demand

SCF are requesting additional funding of **£348k** to cover spend over budget for the period Apr 22 – Mar 23 following the removal of the DfE Transformation Grant.

The company submitted a bid for **£1,844k** of Transformational funding to the DfE in advance of the financial year 22/23. This was following the grant award of £1,478k for transformational activities during 21/22.

The bid was revised down to £990k following on going discussions with the DfE, and re-submitted in February 2022. SCF were notified in late April / May 2022 that the bid was unsuccessful, by which time staff had been recruited into posts and workstreams either under way, or were continuing the progress made in the 21/22 workstreams.

The table below shows the costs and overspend totalling **£348k**:

Ref	Description	Funding Requested	Actual Spent
1	Stability of workforce	213,003	155,856
2	Contextual safeguarding	210,028	142,424
3	Quality of service	298,684	162,064
4	Development of sufficiency	164,408	5,400
5	Targeted Early Help	6,000	-
6	Participation	23,040	-
7	Further Development of Edge of Care Services	75,221	-
Total DfE Transformation Funding		£ 990,384	£ 465,743
	Other Costs to Deliver Savings	£ 220,000	£ 102,636
Other Costs to Deliver Savings		£ 1,210,384	£ 568,379
	Net Budget		£ 220,000
Total Cost Pressure			£ 348,379



Additional transformational spend of £220k was proposed within existing budgets to help deliver savings for 22/23.

The extent of the increase in the demand for services and the impact on resources

4 of the 7 proposed workstreams were continuations of the prior year funding, and the Stability of Workforce, Contextual Safeguarding and Quality of Practice workstreams in particular were felt to be highly beneficial to the company in order to drive down costs in the longer term and improve practice and outcomes for young people.

The Stability of Workforce workstream has delivered a reduction in front line social work turnover from 56% in March 22 to 22% by March 23. The ratio of permanent case holding staff is predicted to increase to 69:31 v 57:43 at the beginning of 22/23. **£156k**

Contextual Safeguarding started late in 21/22. It is a regular focus of OFSTED and the Company was still exploring the impact of the new team. OFSTED noted it was an effective service and the wrap around support offered through SALT and parenting worker enabled a more holistic approach to assessment of need and more successful transitioning to adulthood of some of our older young people. **£142k**

Quality of Practice in the company is key to our improvement journey in getting to good. Practice improvement mentors have helped embed a successful and highly rated induction programme for our international recruits in order that they feel more welcome and settled in their new roles, and country, leading to better retention. A quality workforce leads to fewer referrals, reduced caseloads, and ultimately earlier release of managed teams and agency staff as the workforce stabilises. **£162k**

Other workstreams which were proposed but didn't progress were Development of Sufficiency, Targeted Early Help (training), Participation and Development of Edge of Care Services. **£6k**

Additional costs associated with delivering savings for 22/23. The remit included additional contributions from health, scoping the development of shared residential accommodation for young people with complex needs, assisting in the redesign of children's centres and maximisation of income. **£103k**



Information and Supporting evidence on steps the Company is taking to manage the said circumstances/ events within the initial Contract Sum

SCF are undertaking a number of activities to drive cost efficiencies and incremental income to assist with the pressures.

- SCF engaged **Homes 2 Inspire** to look at the opportunity of developing residential provision in Slough. SCF are working with housing to identify potential properties to meet this need and deliver savings.
- SCF have completed a **tender on 16-25 accommodation** and working with a provider to deliver against sufficiency plans. This includes the provision of emergency beds to allow time to find more suitable longer-term accommodation that matches the needs of the young person and provides better value for money.
- SCF have been **engaging new providers** to enter the local market and deliver greater competition.
- SCF are implementing against the **IFA recruitment strategy** to bring new carers onboard. Having achieved the Ofsted rating of Good, this provides greater opportunity to attract new carers. Looking further afield than just Slough, recognising the limitations of opportunity in Slough itself.
- SCF are working with a local provider to develop a **new provision designed for UASCs**, recognising the increasing demands for UASCs. This will be tailored to meet their specific needs and provide for a better value option.
- Top **20 most expensive placements** challenged on bi-monthly basis to ensure best value.
- The savings consultant helped progress discussions with health leading to the achievement of **health contributions of over £1m** in year.
- Development of an **External Placement Panel** to focus on high cost, external placements with a tighter grip on review of time, additional support costs and step downs to drive value for money through appropriate placement decisions and more emphasis on permanence.

Any other information the Company and/or Council reasonably consider to be helpful for the Council to consider

The recent Mutual Ventures report on the business plan highlights that SCF and costs for children in social care are in the bottom quartile for cost per capita, suggesting costs of services are not excessive.



However, SCF accept there is other benchmark data which does not paint SCF in as good a light, largely around the high referrals but this must be seen in the context of Slough and the immature Early Help system. It is expected that with the investment in early help services this will result in fewer referrals to care and an improvement in the benchmark analysis.

It is commonly reported in the national press that children's services up and down the country are also overspending on their budgets with the rising demands for service.¹

¹ For example: [LGA: Eight in 10 councils forced to overspend on children's social care budgets amid soaring demand | Local Government Association](#) And [Safeguarding Pressures | ADCS](#)



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Request for funding to cover Legal Pressures incurred in Slough Children First of £220k for 2021/22 and £295k for 2022/23

Executive Summary

The request is for additional funding of **£220k** to cover legal pressures incurred in Slough Children First in 2021/22, and additional funding of **£295k** to cover forecast legal pressures incurred in 2022/23

Slough Children First (SCF) is contracted to provide Children’s Services in Slough to ensure children are safeguarded to meet the council’s statutory duties to children and families, which has become increasingly challenging within the current budget.

The request will contribute to one of the key aims of SCF, that of being financially sustainable; A secure and sustainable organisation which provides high quality and cost-effective outcomes.

The request is necessary to be a sustainable and going concern and to ensure services can be delivered at appropriate levels to better manage the risks of safeguarding harm against children. The costs being incurred are essential to delivery of the statutory services.

SCF have previously been awarded £613k as a contribution to 2021/22 losses following a request to fund pay inflation and UASC pressures that was approved at Cabinet in December 2022. Cabinet also approved a contribution of £1,172k to cover losses arising in 2022/23 from pay and contract inflation, UASC pressures and the loss of public health funding.

The table below shows the breakdown of the current position, with 2 remaining claims to be made totalling £719k to cover legal and placement pressures.

	2021/22	2022/23
	£000's	£000's
Reported loss for year	1,332	5,766
Less in year request - pay inflation	(189)	(358)
Less in year request - UASC pressure	(424)	(226)
Less in year request - contract inflation		(88)
Less in year request - Public health income		(500)
Total remaining loss	719	4,594
Claim for Legal pressures	(220)	(295)
Claim for Placement pressures	(499)	
Total remaining loss	0	4,299



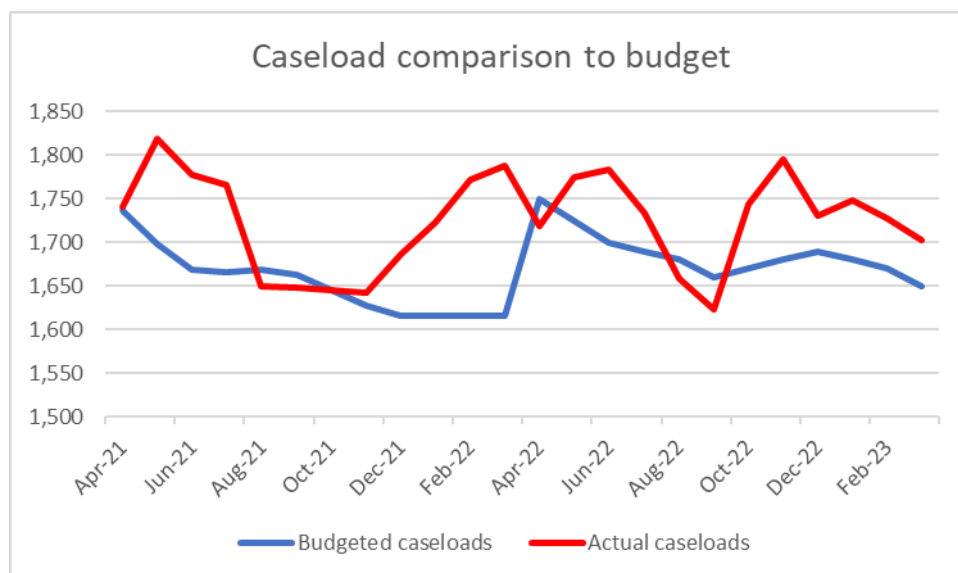
The additional burden on the Company from rising demand

In 2021/22 the budget setting process had to be approved through both SCF own internal governance process through ELT by 19th January 2021, the Board by 28th January 2021 and then by Slough Borough Council (SBC) and Cabinet by February 2021.

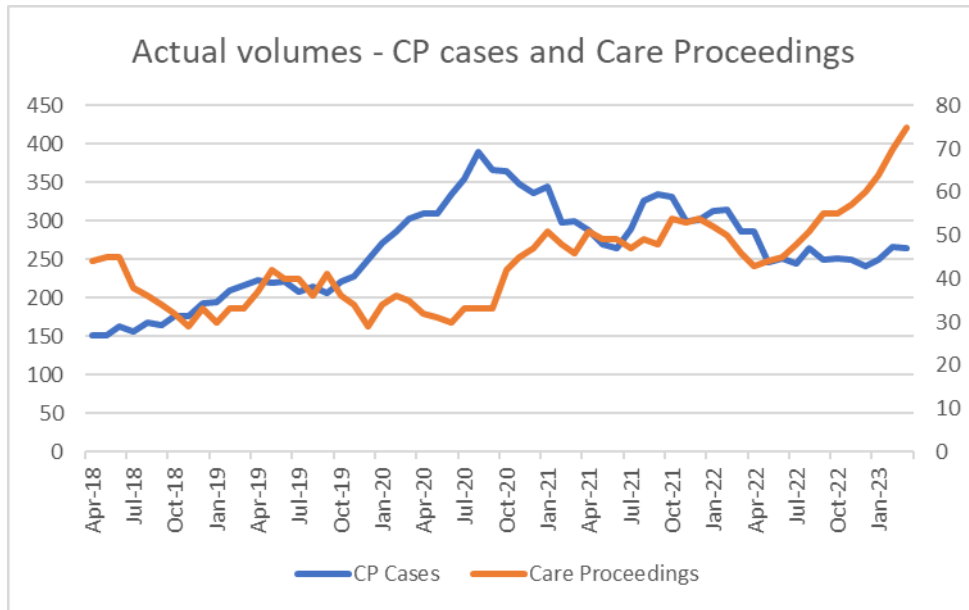
The original budget for legal fees for 2021/22 was £1,406k. This included budgeted growth of £150k in to cover demand pressures in legal fees. The actual spend was £2,171k, giving an adverse variance of £765k for the year.

In 2022/23, the budget rose to £1,506k, again recognising the need for growth following what was thought to be unprecedented legal costs, and continued rising caseloads. Actual spend is £1,894k, an adverse variance of £388k.

Assumptions on demand, caseloads, unit costs and levels of funding from other sources were built up in detailed workings, to give a balanced budget for both years. Following further unanticipated lockdowns, nationally on the 5th November 2020, and further school closures between January 2021 and March 2021, caseloads and demands on services again started to rise over and above those planned for in the budget. The graph below shows a comparison of budgeted v actual total caseloads over the 2 years to March 2023.



The graph below shows the trend in increasing volumes in CP cases and legal proceedings, indicative of growth in legal support.



The table below shows how outturn compared with budget, with legal fees exceeding budget by £765k in 21/22 and expected to be £388k adverse to budget in 22/23.

	2021/22			2022/23		
	Actuals	Budget	Variance	Actuals	Budget	Variance
	£k	£k	£k	£k	£k	£k
SBC Core Income	31,534	31,559	(25)	32,606	31,434	1,172
DFE Income	2,701	2,454	247	2,780	2,721	58
Transformation - DFE	1,459	1,481	(23)	0	990	(990)
Other Income	3,223	1,866	1,358	5,128	4,406	722
Total Income	38,917	37,360	1,557	40,514	39,551	962
Pay	(11,513)	(12,457)	944	(13,164)	(14,229)	1,064
Agency	(5,688)	(3,934)	(1,754)	(5,693)	(2,744)	(2,949)
Placement Allowances	(14,600)	(13,434)	(1,165)	(16,336)	(14,363)	(1,973)
Other Child Support Costs	(3,276)	(2,532)	(744)	(3,521)	(2,461)	(1,061)
Legal Fees	(2,171)	(1,406)	(765)	(1,894)	(1,506)	(388)
Other Overheads	(2,254)	(2,114)	(141)	(3,930)	(3,039)	(891)
Transformation costs	(1,459)	(1,481)	23	(568)	(1,210)	642
Total Expenditure	(40,962)	(37,360)	(3,602)	(45,107)	(39,551)	(5,556)
Net Surplus/(Loss)	(2,044)	0	(2,044)	(4,593)	0	(4,593)
Additional Charges to the Council for Covid-19	714		714			
Net Surplus/(Loss)	(1,330)	0	(1,330)	(4,593)	0	(4,593)



Although legal fees were £765k over budget, additional Covid grant funding received in 21/22, along with an element of the prior in year request covering additional UASC legal costs, means this request is for the balance of the pressure at £220k.

Likewise for 22/23, an element of the legal fees overspend is included in the request for funding additional UASC cost pressure, meaning the remaining legal cost pressure is £295k.

The extent of the increase in the demand for services

The request is to cover the impact from demand related, increased legal spend.

Legal fees to some extent follow the same pattern of activity as all other cases in the Company, being a demand led service. Legal fees have consistently overspent against budget with increases in legal proceedings and PLO activity associated with increases in child protection cases and as such, the budget setting process for 21/22 included a request for growth in legal fees of £150k, and £100k in 2022/23. This reflected the highest level of care proceedings in the Company's history.

Legal fees in 2021 included one exceptional case which incurred significant costs in reaching its conclusion. The case was thought to be a one off and not expected to re-occur.

Following the agreement in September 2020 on the contract sum for 21/22, it was thought the peak of activity was over following the pandemic, however, there followed 2 further lockdowns, with associated growth in cases in SCF.

The impact of covid on the courts could not have been anticipated and lead to delays in proceedings. In January 2022, Slough had 52 cases in proceedings, 25 of which were over 26 weeks long, and 12 over 52 weeks, with the statutory timeframe being 26 weeks. The position in March 2023 is that proceedings are at 75.

The reasons for such delays are multi-facetted:

1. Covid 19 pandemic
 - Backlog of cases.
 - Parents isolating/contracting Covid and unable to partake in assessments or attend hearings.
2. Remote Hearings
 - Remote hearings take longer due to difficulties accessing hearings/connectivity particularly by parents and social workers.
 - Fewer cases settling at an early stage due to lack of pre-court discussion.
 - Remote hearings not affording parents access to Justice.
 - Hybrid or attended hearings conducted in Covid safe way (The layout of Reading Family Court only makes it possible for one hearing at a time)



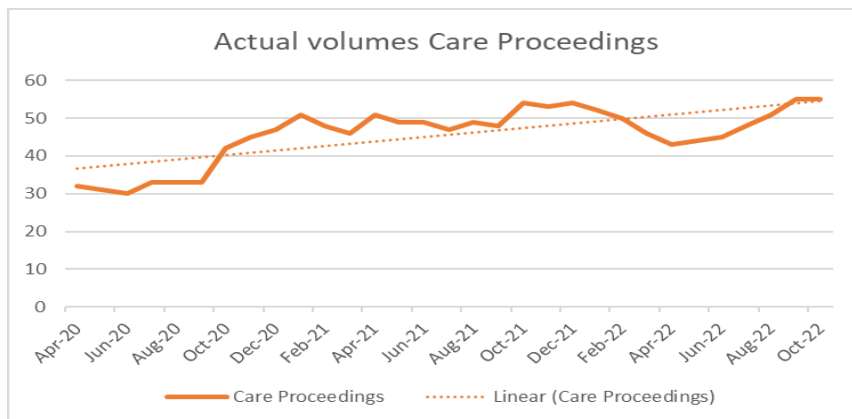
3. Increase in case numbers.
4. Increase in complexity of cases. Time estimates of up to 30 days taking up more court time.
5. Length of proceedings creating more opportunity for parents to change and request further assessments.
6. Change of social workers.
7. Poor quality social work requiring cases to be adjourned.
8. Late experts' reports and difficulties in identifying experts
9. Lack of Judges
10. Sickness absence of a team lawyer for SCF meant increased costs through having to use private practice to help manage work loads

The pandemic has led to increases in serious injuries to children requiring fact finding hearings with counsel, often KC's, for multiple days. Added complexity also leads to requirements to have expert counsel fees conduct hearings on the Companies behalf, and what was hoped to be a one-off exceptionally high cost case in 20/21 has now become one of many, and the 4 most expensive cases in 21/22 were 21% of the total cost (£433k). The highest costing case in 20/21, incurred fees of £58k, including £38k of counsel fees, whereas the highest costing case of 21/22 incurred fees of £120k, including £95k of counsel fees.

High Cost cases	2020/21	2021/22	% increase	2022/23
1	£ 58,119	£ 119,837	106%	£ 170,015
2	£ 36,056	£ 113,253	214%	£ 138,298
3	£ 35,755	£ 107,239	200%	£ 72,578
4	£ 34,418	£ 88,871	158%	£ 37,541
Total costs	£ 164,348	£ 429,200	161%	£ 418,433

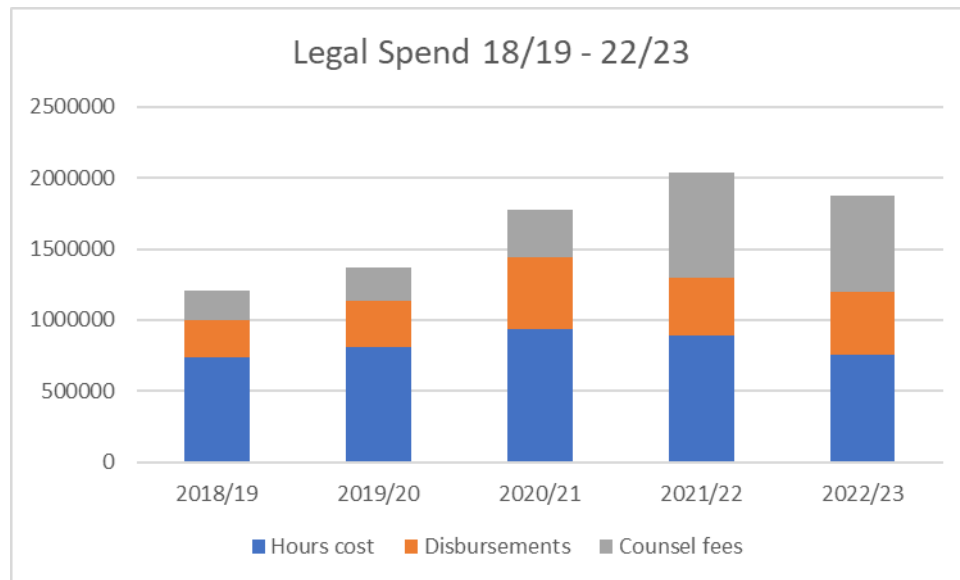
The top 4 cases in 2022/23 have cost £418k, 22% of the total spend for 2022/23, including £355k on counsel fees.

In 2021/22 total legal spend was £2,171k, £765k over budget. There was growth of circa 10 care proceedings in 21/22 on 20/21, as shown below, with no change on volumes in 2022/23.





Expert fees, especially in relation to Counsel fees were a 123% increase on those in 20/21, at a total of £740k.



Information and Supporting evidence on steps the Company is taking to manage the said circumstances/ events within the initial Contract Sum

SCF are undertaking a number of activities to drive cost efficiencies and incremental income to assist with the pressures.

In terms of the Joint Legal team at Reading, and the wider legal community, the following is in place to help speed up proceedings and avoid drift and delay

- 3 additional circuit judges have been appointed at the Reading Family Court
- Training sessions delivered by the District Family Judge gave very clear guidance on the assessments and evidence the court expects from the social worker to avoid delay
- JLT provided bespoke training to SCF focussing on types of assessments and statement writing to achieve the desired outcome and writing care plans
- Authority is required for sign off before any instructions go out to use of counsel
- JLT have appointed an in house advocate who can conduct certain hearings
- Apprenticeship scheme at JLT as staff work towards legal qualifications



Reasons why the additional budgetary pressure cannot reasonably be managed until the next Contract Sum Negotiation Period

The losses from 2021/22, with further losses forecast in 2022/23, raises a significant concern around the company as a going concern. The business plan for SCF shows the company are unable to manage these risks in the coming years, with losses accumulating over the years. The company therefore requires the funding in year to remain a going concern.

Cash balances are forecast to be depleted by March 24, were the new business plan to be accepted. The company has no reserves to draw upon. If the company were to cut controllable costs, largely staffing, this would put children at far greater risk and the company would not be delivering against its contractual obligations for discharging the council's statutory obligations.

Any other information the Company and/or Council reasonably consider to be helpful for the Council to consider

The recent Mutual Ventures report on the business plan highlights that SCF and costs for children in social care are in the bottom quartile for cost per capita, suggesting costs of services are not excessive.

However, SCF accept there is other benchmark data which does not paint SCF in as good a light, largely around the high referrals but this must be seen in the context of Slough and the immature Early Help system. It is expected that with the investment in early help services this will result in fewer referrals to care and an improvement in the benchmark analysis.

It is commonly reported in the national press that children's services up and down the country are also overspending on their budgets with the rising demands for service.¹

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Slough Borough Council

REPORT TO:	Cabinet
DATE:	18 September 2023
SUBJECT:	Budget Monitoring Quarter 1
CHIEF OFFICER:	Adele Taylor – Executive Director, Finance & Commercial (Section 151 Officer)
CONTACT OFFICER:	Neil Haddock, Interim Strategic Finance Manager, Financial Planning & Reporting
WARD(S):	All
PORTFOLIO:	Councillor Smith – Leader of the Council Councillor Chahal – Lead Member Financial Oversight
KEY DECISION:	YES
EXEMPT:	NO
DECISION SUBJECT TO CALL IN:	YES
APPENDICES:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 People (Adults) 2 People (Childrens) 3 Place & Community 4 Housing, Planning & Place 5 Strategy & Improvement 6 Finance & Commercial, & Corporate Budgets 7 Capital Projects detail, General Fund & HRA 8 Contingency Budget (Inflation) Proposed Virements detail 9 Contingency Budget (General) Potential calls detail

1 Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report sets out the forecast position of the Council for the financial year 2023/24 as at the end of the first quarter, June 30 2023.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to **agree** the following:

1. That Lead Members work with individual Executive Directors to reduce the forecast overspend ahead of the Quarter 2 monitoring report for Cabinet

2. To authorise a virement from centrally held budgets to Adult Social Care allowing expenditure against the 2 ring fenced grants, of £1.2m and £0.6m, that have been awarded this year.
3. To authorise a virement from centrally held budgets to service directorates in respect of inflationary pressures, amounting to £3.3m of the £5.3m available, and allow the balance of £1.9m to be added to the General Contingency
4. To authorise a virement from centrally held budgets to service directorates in respect of pressures, other than inflation, amounting to £1.6m of the £12.4m available.
5. To authorise the funding of the one-off payment of £5.312m to Slough Children First in respect of prior year deficits from the Budget Equalisation Reserve, subject to the Slough Childrens First Business Plan (elsewhere on the agenda) being agreed.
6. To delegate the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial, in consultation with the Lead Member for Finance and Finance Commissioner, to allocate the pay inflation of £2.8m held centrally to departments once the pay award is known.

That Cabinet **note** the following.

1. Service revenue budgets are forecast to overspend by £24.4m in 2023/24; centrally held contingencies once allocated will mitigate this in part, and reduce the forecast overspend to £8.4m. Corporate underspends in respect of interest costs and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) amount to £3.1m and reduce the overall forecast to an overspend of £5.3m
2. Medium Term Financial Strategy Savings (MTFS) of £19.7m are expected to be delivered against planned savings of £22.4m.
3. That the Capital programme is forecast to underspend by £17.2m

Commissioner Review

In the challenging social and economic climate with risks inherent in several of the Council's operations and financial pressures carried forward from previous years, it is important that members and officers fully understand the budget and are accountable for the delivery of it. This includes the delivery of savings and the need to manage in-year pressures. Clear transparent reporting is needed to identify issues as they arise and take the urgent corrective action required to support the Council's overarching aim to be a Council that lives within its means, which is essential to its long-term financial sustainability.

The commissioners are content with this report recognising that overall, this leaves the Council with an in-year deficit still be addressed.

2 Report – Introduction

2.1 The 2023/24 budget and Medium-Term Finance Strategy were approved by Full Council on 9th of March 2023 based on an estimated financial deficit in the Capitalisation Directive (CD) of:

- £267.1m up to 2022/23
- £31.6m for 2023/24
- £58.4m for post 2023/24

2.2 The General Fund revenue budget was approved at £143.4m and included growth of £12.2m and savings by Directorates of £22.4m. The budgets set were and are cash limited budgets and all budget holders need to manage in year pressures within those cash limited budgets. The forecasts in this report are against those cash limited budgets. However, a significant proportion of the General Fund budget is currently held centrally and needs to be distributed to directorates. There is a permanent budget of £22.2m held centrally, intended for distribution as follows:

- £12.4m general contingency
- £ 6.9m for contract inflation
- £ 2.8m for pay inflation

2.3 In addition, the Adult Social Care budget contains income for three grants. Two of these are ring-fenced and carry expenditure commitments but with no allowance made for the associated expenditure. Virements in respect of these will increase the spending power of the Directorate to rectify this position. The other grant where the income should instead be treated in the accounts as “Sources of Finance” is an accounting adjustment with no impact on the position. The grants are as follow:

Market Sustainability & Improvement Fund	£1,207,019
Adult Social Care Discharge Fund	£ 559,310
Social Care Grant	<u>£7,759,622</u>
Total	<u>£9,525,951</u>

2.4 The outturn for 2022/23 and the Quarter 1 forecast for 2023/34 will inform the updating of the Capitalisation Direction model and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) in the context of the following:

- 2018/19 Accounts awaiting final sign-off from the auditors, Grant Thornton.
- 2019/20 Accounts prepared with external audit expected to begin July 2023
- 2020/21 Accounts partially prepared but yet to be fully completed, in light of 2019/20 waiting audit.
- 2021/22 to be completed.
- 2022/23 to be completed.
- 2023/24 budget delivery/forecast.
- 2024/25 - 2028/29 MTFS work is at a very early stage, in line with other local authority timelines.

2.5 Having multiple financial years actively being worked on is an extremely challenging environment and adds considerable risk and uncertainty to financial planning. In this context the period 3 forecast for 2023/24 is indicating that:

- Service budgets are forecast to overspend by £24.4m before allocation of centrally held budgets. Issues remain to be resolved in respect of funding inflationary uplifts and pressures for 23/24 which are in part dependent upon the outturn for 2022/23 and the impact this has on reserves and contingencies. At this stage there is £16.0m that can be distributed which reduces the forecast overspend to £8.4m. This is reduced to £5.3m once Corporate underspends on interest and the MRP amounting to £3.1m are taken into account.
- £15.6m savings, 70% of the £22.4m total savings required in 2023/24, have been identified as delivered or on track to be delivered, with a forecast that £19.6m (88%) will eventually be delivered. Savings are classified as being B(lue/delivered) R(ed) A(mber) G(reen) or Mitigating savings.
- There is inconsistency between the reporting that savings are being delivered and the significant overspend that is being forecast. This suggests that the overspends reported are too pessimistic, the savings being delivered is too optimistic, or that the delivery of savings is not feeding through to the forecasts. It could also suggest that existing pressures within the system had not been fully recognised previously. Deep dive reviews per directorate at a line by line level to assess this in detail have been undertaken to identify actions to manage the resulting overspends, but the impact of these actions will only be included in forecasts once there is evidence that these will deliver real cashable reductions in spend.
- The Housing Revenue Account is forecasting a surplus of £0.1m for the year.
- The Dedicated Schools Grant is forecasting a carry forward deficit of £12.8m at the end of year inclusive of Safety Valve funding.
- Corporate Budgets will play a critical role in determining the overall outturn position for 2023/24. These budgets, alongside the one-off reserves and provisions on the Balance Sheet, provide the means to manage the financial risks of the Council, whether those take the form of inflation, pay awards, other budget pressures and/or changes in circumstances during the year. These will also be subject to that deep dive review.
- The Capital Programme (General Fund) is showing an underspend of £17.2m against a budget of £36.3m, of which £11.4m is due to slippage on timescales where the budget will need to be rolled forward into next year, and £5.6m is identified as savings on the programme.
- The Capital Programme (HRA) is showing a minor underspend of £61k against a budget of £10.1m.
- The funding available and the estimated commitments against that funding are being reviewed to ensure prudent and transparent financial management are

undertaken in 2023/24, which in turn will inform the development of the MTFs and the budget for 2024/25. Potentially the Corporate Budgets counterbalance the forecast overspend relating to service budgets in 2023/24, however further work is required to ensure that any financial commitments and risks are built upon robust assumptions.

3 GENERAL FUND

- 3.1 Service departments are collectively projecting an overspend of £24.4m at the end of month 3, before allocation of centrally held budgets which will need to be formally agreed by cabinet. Centrally held budgets amounting to £16.0m are potentially available to reduce the underspend to £8.4m; at this stage it is recommended that virements totalling £6.6m are made, £6.1m to service directorates and £0.5m to a Corporate budget for bad debt provision. As this movement of £0.5m is within Corporate budgets, this does not show up in the table below.
- 3.2 The predominant theme emerging is of unrealisable income targets being reported, some of which date back to previous years too. There are also service pressures leading to overspends where expenditure is greater than budgeted for, most notably in People (Adults) as well as homelessness, highways maintenance, and contract inflation unbudgeted for.
- 3.3 Slough Children First is a wholly owned company providing statutory social care services for the Council. There is a separate report on the Cabinet agenda on its business plan and financial situation, which includes that it has significant unfunded deficits from the two previous financial years totalling £5.312m and is projecting a significant shortfall in funding this year, despite the contract sum being increased.
- 3.4 The company has been encouraged to submit in-year contract change requests in year at the point it submits that additional funding is required. This should avoid a future situation where there are unfunded deficits in previous years. Where there are underspends, these tend to be around staffing, partly where vacancies are being held, but also notably where vacancies cannot be filled. In Finance this is leading to a significant overspend with the bulk of posts being held by interims.
- 3.5 There are options for addressing some of this service overspend. Centrally held contingency budgets amount to £21m and it is proposed that £16.0m can be distributed which will mitigate the current position. The balance of the total contingency proposed to be retained centrally. Further work is underway to establish the full extent of the headroom available, including the potential use of one-off reserves and contingencies derived from the final outturn position for Corporate Budgets in 2022/23.

Table 1 – General Fund Forecast

Service Budgets	2022-23	2023-24				
	Draft Outturn	Current Budget	Projected Outturn	Variance	Potential Virements	Adjusted Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
People (Adults)	34,538	16,638	27,883	11,245	(3,425)	7,820
People (Children)	7,972	7,820	7,092	(728)	(357)	(1,085)
Slough Children First	34,289	36,067	40,514	4,447	0	4,447
Place & Community	15,868	13,784	16,515	2,731	(1,194)	1,537
Housing, Property & Planning	1,945	3,536	7,533	3,997	(11)	3,986
Strategy & Improvement	7,725	11,599	11,849	249	(146)	103
Monitoring Officer	14,910	1,839	1,653	(186)	0	(186)
Finance & Commercial (S151)	8,112	4,299	6,973	2,674	(1,009)	1,665
Total Service Budgets	125,359	95,581	120,012	24,430	(6,142)	18,288
Corporate Budgets						
Other Corporate Budgets	16,572	22,851	6,851	(16,000)	6,142	(9,858)
Pension Deficit	4,914	5,014	5,014	0	0	0
Minimum Revenue Provision	17,699	13,393	12,147	(1,246)	0	(1,246)
Capital Financing	4,156	6,539	4,648	(1,891)	0	(1,891)
Total Corporate Budgets	43,341	47,796	28,660	(19,136)	6,142	(12,994)
Total Expenditure	168,700	143,378	148,672	5,294	0	5,294
Financing						
Council Tax	(69,179)	(72,995)	(72,995)	0	0	0
Business Rates	(40,168)	(30,591)	(30,591)	0	0	0
Collection Fund Deficit	10,611	0	0	0	0	0
Revenue Support Grant	(6,451)	(7,302)	(7,302)	0	0	0
Other Government Grants	(4,291)	(914)	(914)	0	0	0
Total Financing	(109,478)	(111,802)	(111,802)	0	0	0
Capitalisation Direction	(59,222)	(31,575)	(36,870)	(5,294)	0	(5,294)
Total Funds	(168,700)	(143,378)	(148,672)	(5,294)	0	(5,294)
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0

- 3.6 Within the People (Adults) Directorate there are forecast overspends related to the costs of services for all areas of on-going long-term support and care, including Older People, People with Learning Disabilities, and Mental Health. There is also a significant overspend, caused by both staffing and operational pressures, in respect of short-term services, which support Hospital Discharge. This should be funded from the Better Care Fund, and Hospital Discharge grant.
- 3.7 In addition, within Adults an element of the overspend will be in respect of uplifts that have already been paid to some providers, but where the budget has not yet been distributed.
- 3.8 There are underspends in Children's services in Children Management, and School Effectiveness, as well as on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The largest underspend is due to holding vacancies in School Effectiveness. The Children's company (SCF) are forecasting an overspend of £4.4m in line with the expectations outlined in their business plan, although this is after significant in-year action to manage further pressures of around £1.6m. If these actions do not result in SCF

being able to contain their overspend to £4.4m this could increase their request for additional contract sums by up to £1.6m and a subsequent pressure on Council finances.

- 3.9 Within Place and Communities, the significant pressures mostly arise from unachievable internal recharge income targets and contract inflation which has had to be paid but which is not yet funded.
- 3.10 Within Housing, Planning & Property, the significant pressures also arise from unachievable income targets, particularly in respect of recharges to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). There is also significant demand for Temporary Accommodation. The pressure was initially reported as being £2.1m in period 3; however, corrective action in the form of work starting on auditing use of temporary accommodation, the management of voids for Council owned stock, which should help bring expenditure levels down and on ensuring improved rent collection from service users and this pressure is now being reported as £1.6m. Pressure on non-HRA housing costs has also been reduced by agreeing a recharge for asset contract management should be transferred to the HRA (£300k)
- 3.11 The most significant variance in Strategy and Improvement relates to the risk that the savings item in respect of support services will only be partly delivered in year.
- 3.12 Within Finance the most significant pressure is from staff costs due to the number of interim staff in senior positions in Finance. Recruitment for these posts is active and the forecast assumes all senior positions will be replaced with permanent staff by December 2023. There are also pressures from significantly increased costs of insurance (£0.9m) and Housing Benefit subsidy claims from the DWP (£0.8m)
- 3.13 Corporate Budgets show an underspend of £16m reflective of the expectation that release of the Contingency budget will reduce Service overspends by that amount.
- 3.14 The Capital Financing budget line comprises budgets for Interest charges on short and long term, market and PWLB loans, and interest earned on investments. The favourable variance of £1.9m is nearly all explained by a £2.0m underspend on the interest costs of Market Loans, due to having been paid down debts from the proceeds of asset sales. This has also impacted on the Minimum Revenue Provision budget, which is showing an underspend of £1.2m
- 3.15 The summary for savings is shown in the next table

The table shows some savings have already been delivered, and confidence that a significant proportion will be delivered in the year. There are some risks in People (Adults) and in Place & Community of non-delivery. At this stage only one saving is considered undeliverable, the vacancy factor within Finance and Commercial.

With finance being reliant on interims at present there is in fact an overspend against budget and this saving cannot be achieved this year.

Table 2 – Saving delivery Summary

2023-24 Savings	Savings Target	Already Delivered	On Track	Some risk	Major Risk	Mitigating Savings	Savings Forecast	Over / (Under) delivery
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Service Budgets								
People (Adults)	5,688	298	2,254	2,536	0	613	5,701	13
People (Children)	805	480	115	0	0	105	700	-105
Slough Children First	0						0	0
Place & Community	3,700	785	2,440	200	275	0	3,425	-275
Housing, Property & Planning	750	50	120	200	380	0	370	-380
Strategy & Improvement	1,823	818	1,005	0	0	0	1,823	0
Finance & Commercial (\$151)	7,506	12	7,095	0	399	0	7,107	-399
	20,272	2,443	13,029	2,936	1,054	718	19,126	-1,146
Corporate Budgets								
Other Corporate Budgets	2,150	0	133	368	0	37	537	-1,613
Total Corporate Budgets	2,150	0	133	368	0	37	537	-1,613
Total	22,422	2,443	13,162	3,304	1,054	755	19,663	-2,759

- 3.16 Elements of savings items within Place are considered undeliverable this year, and the full saving from charging for green waste is not considered achievable, with perhaps £275k unlikely to be delivered.
- 3.17 Corporate Budgets show an underspend of £16m reflective of the expectation that release of the Contingency budget will reduce Service overspends by that amount.

4 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA)

- 4.1 The HRA accounts for revenue expenditure and income relating to the Council's housing stock and is ringfenced from the General Fund. It must include all costs and income relating to the Council's housing landlord role (except in respect of households owed a homeless duty, and in respect of accommodation provided other than under Housing Act powers).
- 4.2 A prudent and pragmatic approach has been adopted to reflect the financial realities facing the Council, hence the HRA capital programme for the next five years has been reduced to £52.7m in comparison to £123.4m for the previous 5 year period.
- 4.3 The HRA is currently forecasting an in-year surplus of £0.9m, £0.1m in excess of the budget. The surplus will be transferred to general reserves at the end of the financial year.

Table 3 – HRA Forecast

Description	Budget £'000	Forecast £'000	Variance £'000
Total HRA Expenditure	40,355	40,087	(268)
Total HRA Income	(41,156)	(41,006)	150
(Surplus)/Deficit for the year	(801)	(919)	(118)

4.4 Key areas of variance include –

- Repairs & Maintenance Services - (£0.5m) underspend, mainly arising from lower than expected costs for Hawker House and Asbestos Management.
- Other Services - £0.2m overspend, mainly from additional costs for Building & Window Cleaning. These will be fully offset by underspend elsewhere.
- Rents – £150k under-recovery, the projected rent from Land has been adjusted downwards to reflect realistic expectations. This will be fully offset by underspend elsewhere.

5 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG)

5.1 Dedicated schools grant (DSG) is paid in support of local authority schools' and education providers and covers four distinct funding blocks:

1. Early Years Block (EYB) – Funding for pre-school aged children
2. Schools Block (SB) – Funding for mainstream schools
3. High Needs Block (HNB) - Funding children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
4. Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) – Funding services provided by the Local Authority to support schools and education providers.

5.2 The overall provisional DSG deficit in 2022/23 was £0.1m and represents a better position than previously forecast of £1.6m. The High Needs Block has a provisional deficit of £0.4m, the Central School Services Block a provisional deficit of £0.4m and the Schools Block is a deficit of £15k. The Early Years Block has a provisional surplus of £0.7m, which gives the overall provisional deficit position for 2022/23. The overall cumulative deficit is forecast to reduce to £12.8m by year end. Any additional Government funding forecast (£3.2m in 2023/24) is subject to the council managing its DSG recovery plan as part of the grant conditions and close monitoring by the DfE.

Table 4 DSG

Cumulative forecast brought forward	£m
Deficit carried forward from 2021/22	25.470
In Year forecast deficit/(surplus)	0.097
Safety Value Funding	-12.800
Cumulative Forecast carried forward	12.767

6 ASSET SALES

- 6.1 The Council's financial recovery plan is heavily dependent on the delivery of the asset disposal strategy. The Asset Disposal programme yielded capital receipts of £195m in 2022/23 and is forecast currently to yield £383.9m in total. However, a complication has been identified in relation to the pipeline of disposable assets in that some of them are designated as belonging to the HRA, as such these assets will need to be declared surplus to the needs of the HRA and transferred to the General Fund before they can be sold to benefit the recovery of the Council. This in turn requires the HRA to be suitably compensated from the General Fund for the value of the assets transferred, which consequently may adversely affect the total value of the capital receipts achieved. Further work is being undertaken to determine the impact of this situation.
- 6.2 The forecast is subject to a more detailed review of the assets already identified for disposal in terms of:
- Further due diligence information that has been discovered, some of which impacts directly on values achievable and timescales for completion of transactions.
 - Changing market and economic conditions, which are generally having a negative impact on values – e.g. increasing interest rates, declining appetite for developers/investors entering the market and lenders tightening criteria for loans
- 6.3 The current forecast also includes operational and community assets, some of which we are likely to retain. The Estate Strategy (in development) will inform which operational and community assets will be retained, and which can be sold. This will clearly have a significant impact on the overall disposals forecast.

7 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

- 7.1 The General Fund capital budget in 2023/24 is £36.3m pending approval of slippage requests of £3.9m and approval of a draw down from "Grants and Contributions" reserve of £0.7m.
- 7.2 The budget is forecasting an underspend of £17.1m for 2023/24. Of this, £11.4m is due to delayed starts on various projects and the budget will need to be slipped to future years. Included in this is £2.6m within Childrens Services which will be used in 2024/25 on SEN projects in various schools that are unable to be completed this year due to capacity. Also included is the A4 Cycle Lane project (£6.6m), with preliminary designs being submitted to Cabinet in July; this the project will continue into 2024/25.
- 7.3 There have been savings identified of £5.6m arising from 2 areas; first, the Nova House loan (£4.6m) and secondly the Hub Development (£1.0m). Further reductions to the capital programme relating to the Urban Trees Challenge Fund (£0.1m) are due to this being reclassified as a revenue project, as it did not meet the criteria to be classified as capital.

- 7.4 The slippage and release from reserve figures are subject to approval in the 2022/23 Outturn Report which is also being reported to Cabinet today.
- 7.5 The Capital HRA budget in 2023/24 is £10.1m pending approval of slippage requests of £1.3m.
- 7.6 The budget is forecasting an underspend of £61k, all due to slippage on projects.
- 7.7 The table below summaries the financial position for capital expenditure.

Table 5: Capital Programme

CAPITAL	Current Budget	Slippage to be approved	Release from Reserves to be approved	Revised Budget pending approval	Actuals to date	Projected Outturn	Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
General Fund:							0
Adults	1,169	476		1,645	121	1,616	(29)
Children Services	4,323	100		4,423	18	1,929	(2,494)
Housing, Property & Planning	8,479	520		8,999	265	3,270	(5,729)
Place & Communities	22,346	2,855	677	25,878	1,029	16,963	(8,915)
GF Total	36,317	3,951	677	40,945	1,433	23,778	(17,167)
Housing Revenue Account:							
RMI Capital Programme	6,154	1,022		7,176	457	7,277	101
Planned Maintenance Capital	3,139	245		3,384	44	3,222	(162)
Affordable Homes	800	0		800	131	800	0
HRA total	10,093	1,267	0	11,360	632	11,299	(61)
CAPITAL Total	46,410	5,218	677	52,305	2,065	35,077	(17,228)

8 VIREMENTS

- 8.1 A significant proportion of the budget is held centrally, and needs distributing to directorates. There is £22.2m held centrally intended for distribution as follows:
- £12.4m general contingency
 - £ 6.9m for contract inflation
 - £ 2.8m for pay inflation
- 8.2 The Adult Social Care budget contains income for three grants. Two are ring-fenced and carry expenditure commitments where no allowance was made for the expenditure, mainly increased fees to providers. Virements in respect of these increase the Directorate's spending power in line with grant requirements. The other where the income should instead be treated in the accounts as "Sources of Finance". A virement here is an accounting adjustment. The grants are as follow:

Market Sustainability & Improvement Fund	£1,207,019
Adult Social Care Discharge Fund	£ 559,310
Social Care Grant	<u>£7,759,622</u>
Total	<u>£9,525,951</u>

- 8.4 It is recommended that Cabinet authorises virements from the centrally held Inflation Contingency to increase the Adult Social Care expenditure budgets by £1.8m in respect of the first two grants and authorises the movement of the Social Care grant to “Sources of Finance” to ensure its proper accounting treatment.
- 8.5 It is recommended virements are authorised in respect of contract inflation. The principle applied in arriving at these recommendations is that the increase in cost is on the basis of contractual increases that are unavoidable, where a corresponding decrease in volume is not viable, or where refusing fee uplifts could lead to higher prices due to the risk of provider withdrawal (in particular for Social Care).
- 8.6 The table below summarises the proposed virements by Directorate, with Appendix 8 providing the detail by contract. As can be seen there is £1.9m that can be retained. In the light of the overspend on service budgets contained within this report it is proposed that this is added to the General contingency.

Table 6: Virements from Contingency (Inflation)

Directorate	22/23 Cost (£m)	% Uplift	Increase (£m)	Notes
Place & Communities	8.96	13.33	1.19	RPI and RPI + x% in contracts; plus Business Rates and Council Tax costs for internal buildings
People (Adults)	34.56	4.80	1.66	Uplift of 4.8% on care expected on top of Market Sustainability Grant
People (Children)	3.74	9.56	0.36	Adoption Agency, Home to School
Housing Property & Planning	0.11	10.10	0.01	CPI
Corporate Resources	0.42	12.06	0.05	Renewal Prices
Total Bids Available			3.27	after allowing for Adults grants
Remaining Budget			5.15	
			1.88	

- 8.7 It is recommended allocations are made from general contingency to address pressures that have arisen, and currently showing in Directorate overspends. The principle applied is that pressures either had to have been identified as calls on the contingency budget when setting the approved Council budget, or that pressures that have emerged are considered unavoidable. In addition, pressures need to be considered permanent in order for a permanent budget virement to be approved.
- 8.8 The table shows £1.6m where a virement is considered appropriate to address the budget pressure that has arisen. Appendix 9 shows a full list of identified potential calls on the Contingency budget in future periods, amounting to £8.0m

Table 7: Virements from Contingency (General)

Directorate	Identified Pressure	Approved Amount (£m)	Notes
Corporate	SCF Non Exec Director	0.023	Identified as a call on contingency in budget build papers
Corporate	Revs and Bens icloud system	0.131	Previously identified as a possible call on contingency when building 23/24 budget. Considered essential expenditure
Corporate	Insurance Premium increase	0.500	New pressure. Considered unavoidable. Is showing as an overspend on this year's budget
Corporate	Insurance imprest	0.350	New pressure. Considered unavoidable. Is showing as an overspend on this year's budget
Corporate	Bad Debt Allowance	0.500	In base budget but needs re-coding to avoid confusion
Strategy & Improvement	Annual cost of laptop refresh on cyclical basis	0.100	Previously identified as a possible call on contingency when building 23/24 budget. Considered essential expenditure
Total Bids		1.604	
Available		12.435	
Remaining		10.831	

9 FUNDING

9.1 At this stage it is considered prudent to forecast receipts from Council Tax and Business Rates to be on budget. The Capitalisation Direction has changed in the light of the in year position. The forecast overspend increases the Budget Gap from £31.6m to £36.9m, and also has implications for future financial years. The information below is only for indicative purposes and to ensure that the potential financial risks of the Council are understood, if the Council does not take action to address the current financial risks being highlighted.

9.2 In updating the Capitalisation Direction figures, the model shows what the implications are if the overspend is both permanent and not managed down. Mitigating actions are necessary to bring the overspend down, and the Capitalisation Direction and these actions must be on a sustainable basis.

Table 8 : Funding

Service Budgets	2022-23	2023-24					
	Draft Outturn	Current Budget	Projected Outturn	Variance	Previous Variance	Potential Virements	Adjusted Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Financing							
Council Tax	(69,179)	(72,995)	(72,995)	0	0	0	0
Business Rates	(40,168)	(30,591)	(30,591)	0	0	0	0
Collection Fund Deficit	10,611	0	0	0	0	0	0
Revenue Support Grant	(6,451)	(7,302)	(7,302)	0	0	0	0
Other Government Grants	(4,291)	(914)	(914)	0	0	0	0
Total Financing	(109,478)	(111,802)	(111,802)	0	0	0	0
Capitalisation Direction	(58,256)	(31,575)	(36,870)	(5,294)	(11,561)	0	(8,430)
Total Funds	(167,734)	(143,378)	(148,672)	(5,294)	(11,561)	0	(8,430)
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

- 9.2 The table below shows at a very highly summarized level, the changes to the Budget Gap model brought about by the slightly better than expected outturn position, and the current forecast overspend position. This year's overspend is, within the model, treated as a permanent feature; it rolls forward and therefore adds to the Budget Gap by a similar figure in future years meaning it takes one further year to completely clear the Budget Gap, and the total Budget Gap increases.

	Up to 2021/22 £m	Outturn 2022/23 £m	Budget 2023/24 £m	Projected 2024/25 on £m	Total £m
Original submission	223.1	84.1	78.5	396.2	781.8
January 2023 revised submission	210.5	56.6	31.6	58.4	357.1
July 2023 revised position	210.5	59.2	36.9	86.2	392.7
Change since January	0.0	2.6	5.3	27.8	35.7

- 9.3 There are many assumptions contained in the model, which are outlined below the next table, which details the different cost drivers and funding flows that comprise the estimated Budget Gap.

Reason for capitalisation adjustment	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	2029/30 £'000	2030/31 £'000	Note
Roll forward of budget pressures	59,202	36,870	29,373	23,212	18,454	12,563	2,595	-	1
Forecast Outturn Position	5,249	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Emerging Pressures, Contingencies, and Provisions	10,722	(976)	400	2,100	(5,000)	-	-	-	3
Additional Growth for new years of MTFs	9,718	14,000	11,400	11,400	11,400	11,400	11,400	11,400	4
Companies	(3,352)	(1,230)	(700)	(1,113)	4,580	(5,000)	-	-	5
Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)	(4,280)	(2,871)	(745)	(434)	36	734	411	187	6
Fund Redundancy Costs for 2 years	(7,500)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
Settlement	(4,067)	80	84	89	93	98	-	-	8
Council Tax	(6,400)	(3,600)	(3,700)	(3,900)	(4,100)	(4,300)	(4,600)	(4,800)	9
Savings required	(22,422)	(12,900)	(12,900)	(12,900)	(12,900)	(12,900)	(9,806)	(6,787)	10
Budget Gap	36,870	29,373	23,212	18,454	12,563	2,595	-	-	
Total all years	392,638								

1. The following year's budget gap rolls forward and is then subject to incremental changes
2. It is assumed that every financial year balances against the assumptions made in the model, that there is no over or underspend.
3. The Emerging Pressures covers this year's contingency budget, the loss of income from assets as they are sold, the removal of time-limited Transformation budgets, and the transfer of debt from short to long term.
4. There is additional growth required every year to cover pressures from demography, inflation and other new pressures of £10m (this was included in the original model)
5. In addition there is £1.4m per year included to reflect pay up lifts; this is higher (£2.8m) in 2024/25 and other on-going changes of £1.2m in 2024/25

6. The Companies line is mostly in respect of the repayment of a loan to Slough Children First
7. The Minimum Revenue Provision requirements will reduce every year as capital asset sales are used to pay down debt
8. The creation of a reserve to fund redundancy and other transition costs.
9. The Settlement figure reflects the increase in Grant funding this financial year, offset by the costs of the Council Tax Support Scheme which is expected to increase slightly each year
10. Council Tax has been assumed to increase by 4.99% every year from 2024/25 onwards.
11. Savings of £12.9m are required every year until 2028/29, the final year when a Capitalisation Direction would be needed.

10 IMPLICATIONS OF THE REPORT

10.1 Financial Implications

10.1.1 These are fully set out within the report.

10.2 Legal Implications

10.2.1 Section 31 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the Council to set a balanced budget at the start of each financial year. Section 28 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires all local authorities to review actual expenditure against this budget on a regular basis during the year. Where it appears that there has been a deterioration in the financial position, the local authority must take such action as is necessary to deal with the situation.

10.2.2 The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities made a direction under s.15 of the Local Government Act 1999 on 1 December 2021 (which has subsequently been updated). The Direction required an action plan to achieve financial sustainability and to close the long-term budget gap. This report contains significant information on the work undertaken to achieve financial sustainability and to close the long-term budget gap, although the Council will still need a capitalisation direction for some years to come. In addition, the appointed commissioners have reserve powers to exercise the function of proper administration of the Council's financial affairs and all functions associated with the strategic financial management of the Council, including providing advice and challenge of the budget and scrutinising all in-year amendments to annual budgets.

10.2.3 The Council's best value duty requires it to keep under review its services to ensure continuous improvement. This includes having a financial strategy and budgets which are clearly aligned with strategic priorities and a robust process for reviewing and setting the budget. There should be a robust system of financial controls and reporting to ensure clear accountability and a clear strategy to maintain adequate reserves. There should be collective accountability for the budget and MTFs both at officer and political level. Regular financial reporting to Cabinet ensures

members are aware of the issues mid-year and the mitigating measures in place, as well as providing for public accountability.

10.3 Risk Management Implications

10.3.1 There is clearly a risk that the revenue savings for 2023/24 will prove difficult to deliver. Realising the forecast outturn depends on:

- achieving the predicted level of savings shown in Table 2
- absorbing within existing expenditure any emerging cost pressures
- Achieving the planned level of asset sales
- the Capitalisation Direction being sufficient to cover on a permanent basis any deficits, shortfalls in savings delivery, new pressures, cost of living and economic impacts that may arise

10.3.2 To mitigate these risks the Council is

- Progressing with the preparation and audit of prior year accounts in order to establish with certainty the historic financial position
- Moving forward with the Finance Improvement Plan
- Undertaking Deep Dive Reviews of directorate budgets, led by the Executive Director of Finance and the relevant service Executive Director to seek opportunities for both immediate and longer-term savings

10.4 Environmental implications

10.4.1 There are no specific environmental implications arising from this report.

10.5 Equality implications

10.5.1 There are no specific identified equality implications from this report. Equality impact assessments are undertaken for any savings proposals, or, where relevant, any corrective actions to reduce the overspend.

10.6 Procurement implications

10.6.1 There are no specific procurement implications arising from this report.

10.7 Workforce implications

10.7.1 There are no specific workforce implications arising from this report.

10.8 Property implications

10.8.1 These are set out within the report.

Appendix 1 Adult Social Care

Table 1 – Monitoring Forecast

PEOPLE (Adults)	Current Budget £'000	Actuals to date £'000	Projected Outturn £'000	Variance £'000	Previous Variance £'000	Risks £'000	Opps £'000	Notes
Commissioning	(934)	(1,689)	(1,340)	(406)	223	0	0	1
Community Team for People with Learning Disabilities	11,526	2,601	12,780	1,254	2,209	0	0	2
Localities Social Work	13,831	6,059	19,879	6,048	2,305	0	0	3
Mental Health	4,565	1,355	6,628	2,063	2,323	0	0	4
People Adults Management	(12,229)	(558)	(12,233)	(4)	(481)	0	0	5
Public Health	0	(668)	0	0	(596)	0	(596)	6
Rehabilitation, Recovery and Reablement & Long Term Occupational Therapy	(550)	997	1,828	2,378	1,938	0	0	7
Safeguarding Partnership Team	428	121	342	(86)	0	0	0	8
Grand Total	16,638	8,218	27,883	11,245	7,921	0	(596)	

Notes

1	The projected outturn reflects additional receipt of grants including the Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant (£0.475m) and Supplementary Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery Grant (£0.296m).
2	The projected outturn reflects an overspend relating to Direct Payments to clients of 11% which demonstrates the drive to increase independence and choice by giving individuals the control to purchase and manage their own support to meet their needs; the overall projected expenditure is significantly lower than 2022/23 reflecting the planned delivery of the Transformation Savings plans relating to reduced reliance upon Nursing and Residential care.
3	The projected outturn reflects an overspend relating to payments to third party organisations who provide accommodation and support which is reporting a 26% against budget; the overall projected expenditure is in line with 2022/23 reflecting increased service cost pressures which offset against the Transformation Savings plans which include increasing Health contributions and reduced reliance upon Nursing and Residential care.
4	The projected outturn reflects an overspend relating to payments to third party organisations who provide accommodation and support which is reporting a 45% against budget; the overall projected expenditure is significantly lower than 2022/23 reflecting the planned delivery of the Transformation Savings plans relating to increased scrutiny and review of care packages.
5	No material projected variance reported for this service area.
6	Public Health projected outturn should match the budget, however, there may be opportunity to invest some of the Public Health grant in prevention programmes within Adults on a replacement funding basis, however, would have to consider impact on other funding streams. This strategy is reflected as an opportunity rather than included within the projected outturn whilst discussions are ongoing.
7	The projected outturn reflects increased employee and operational costs of 90%. The short-term service supports Hospital discharge and other temporary services and should be funded from the BCF and the discharge fund.
8	No material projected variance reported for this service area.

Table 2 – ASC Saving RAG Rating.

Savings Description	Total £000's	Already Delivered	On Track to be delivered	Some risk to delivery	Major Risk of Delivery	Mitigating Savings	Savings Forecast	Over / (Under) delivery	Notes
People (Adults)									
Reablement Efficiencies	650			300			300	(350)	1
Accommodation with Support	652	205	447				652	-	2
Joint Funding	330	18	285	27			330	-	3
Practice and Process Development	810		405	405			810	-	4
Better use of Disabled Facilities Grant and equipment	100		100				100	-	
Align and integrate the range of ASC and PH services with the NHS and/or across East Berks Councils/better use of PH Grant	250						-	(250)	5
Mental Health	500	75	194	231			500	-	
Transitions	400			400			400	-	6
Diverting demand	270		270			163	433	163	7
Review of hospital discharge/6-week review	350			350			350	-	
Financial Assessments	150		150			150	300	150	
Direct Payment recoupment	200		200			300	500	300	8
Levying the OPG determined charge rate	100		100				100	-	9
Further cost reductions, efficiencies and vacancy factor	300			300			300	-	
Assistive Technology	420			420			420	-	10
Reduce Block Beds	206		103	103			206	(0)	
People (Adults) Total	5,688	298	2,254	2,536	-	613	5,701	13	

Notes

1. The reablement service model is predicated on recruiting staff, which is proving difficult, resulting in reduced throughput of clients than planned or required
2. The project has already delivered efficiencies from activity that commenced towards the end of 2022/23.
3. Ongoing work from 2022/23 to recover costs from the ICB.
4. Agreed validation methodology, initial analysis supports delivery through tracking clients from contacts through to end provision, if any. More clients were diverted away from requiring a paid support package however, some question about the value of the impact is being reworked
5. This is part of the wider Corporate exercise on integration.
6. Linked with Accommodation with Support/Shared lives, potential for this workstream to be at risk due to procuring additional provision.
7. Mitigating savings due to additional savings from client reviews
8. This over achieved in 2022/23 and is currently projecting £70k recouped so far in 2023/24.
9. This savings will be delivered through the Appointee Team, to be transferred to Finance (under Andy Jeffs).
10. Delays in progressing the workstream will likely impact delivery.

Appendix 2 Children

Table 1 – Budget Monitoring Position

PEOPLE (Childrens)	Current Budget	Actuals to date	Projected Outturn	Variance	Previous Variance	Risks	Opps	Notes
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Children's Centres / Family Hubs	524	(77)	524	0	8			
Early Help Hub	156	(342)	167	11	11			
Inclusion	1,199	324	1,234	35	24			3
People Children Management	2,521	(1,040)	2,397	(124)	2,836			1
Music Service (Traded)	0	30	0	0	0			
School Effectiveness	279	108	99	(180)	(180)			2
School Services	3,477	226	3,480	3	4			
Grand Total	8,156	(771)	7,901	(255)	2,704	0	0	
DSG	(336)	(6,578)	(809)	(473)	552			4
General Fund & DSG Total	7,820	(7,349)	7,092	(728)	3,256	0	0	

Notes

1	The underspend of £124k represents the additional contribution being made by the 3 PFI schools in 2023/24 from their delegated schools budget. This will contribute to closing the historical gap of £1.2 million on the schools overall PFI contract.
2	The £180k underspend in the School Effectiveness area is due to holding vacancies against a savings relating to the restructure of the Education and Inclusion Directorate which has been delayed.
3	Expecting Inclusion services to Overspend in SEND area due to high staff turn over and additional cost of recruiting interims.
4	The underspend on the DSG is due to a savings on the schools growth fund which is used to fund bulge classes. This funding is unlikely to be needed in the next academic year. The DSG is ring-fenced so has to stay the overall DSG reserves.

Table 2 – Savings Position

Savings Description	Total £000's	Already Delivered	On Track to be delivered	Some risk to delivery	Major Risk of Delivery	Mitigating Savings	Savings Forecast	Over / (Under) delivery	Notes
People (Children)									
Home to School Transport - various initiatives to reduce spend	595	480	115				595	-	1
Education & Inclusion Staff Restructure	210				0	105	105	(105)	2
People (Children) Total	805	480	115	-	-	105	700	(105)	

Notes

1. On track - £480k already delivered is the 2022-23 outturn underspend
2. Staff restructure is delayed. £105k expected to be saved from one-off staff savings in 2023-24. Full on-going savings to be achieved in 2024-25.

Appendix 3 – Place & Community

Table 1 – Budget Monitoring Position

PLACE & COMMUNITIES	Current Budget £'000	Actuals to date £'000	Projected Outturn £'000	Variance £'000	Previous Variance £'000	Risks £'000	Opps £'000	Notes
Carbon & sustainability	184	28	228	44	94			
Community Safety, Housing Regulation & Enforcement	1,528	(564)	1,740	212	374			1
Economic Development	44	100	44	0	0			
Environmental Services	10,676	2,017	11,767	1,091	658	400		2
Learning, Skills & Employment	79	(306)	67	(12)	(900)			
Localities, Libraries & Leisure	88	160	(851)	(939)	122			3
Place Management	(848)	59	922	1,770	1,849			4
Public Protection	547	104	475	(72)	308			
Transport & Highways Operations	1,486	(618)	2,123	637	1,762			5
Grand Total	13,784	980	16,515	2,731	4,267	400	0	

Notes

1	£140k budget pressure carried forward from last year in Resilience & Enforcement as double recharge built in for HRA
2	Contract Inflation of £800k already in spend, Cemeteries over by £350k due to grounds maintenance, licencing, and unrealistic income targets. Lower than budgeted take-up of Green Waste Service (14,000 customers budgeted but 8,500 taken up) £275k. Alternate Weekly Waste forecast needs further examination hence £400k is a risk.
3	Underspend in Leisure Services due to £700k increased management fee income contract increase
4	£2.1m unachievable internal recharge income target/ £425k line for unspecified saving / £160k HRA recharge line will not be made offset slightly by Project Work not being spent of £300k
5	Bus Lane enforcement fines under by £230k due to increased compliance. Multi Storey parking fees under recovered by £100k and £250k inflation required

Table 2 – Savings Position

Savings Description	Total £000's	Already Delivered	On Track to be delivered	Some risk to delivery	Major Risk of Delivery	Mitigating Savings	Savings Forecast	Over / (Under) delivery	Notes
Place & Community									
Reduce staff costs in Planning Development	100	100					100	-	1
Adopt fortnightly waste collections	424		424				424	-	2
Chalvey HWRC Management Fee	40		40				40	-	3
Borough Wide Controlled Parking Zones	200			200			200	-	4
Dimming of streetlighting and park lighting after midnight	25	25					25	-	5
Stop Bus Subsidy - Service 4, 5 and 6	160	160					160	-	6
Government tapering of concessionary fares	300	300					300	-	7
Library Service model	276		276				276	-	
Improve Trade Waste Business	10		10				10	-	8
Increase charges for Parking permits	48		48				48	-	9
Streetworks Section 50 licences	35		35				35	-	10
Streetworks Road Closure fees	65		65				65	-	11
Transport and Highways grant swap	1,071		1,071				1,071	-	12
Green waste collection charges	700		425		275		425	275	13
Reduce Highways maintenance works	100	100					100	-	14
All leisure services to be externally funded	20		20				20	-	
Stop SBC funded CCTV Monitoring of public spaces	26		26				26	-	
Delete vacant AD post	100	100					100	-	15
Place & Community Total	3,700	785	2,440	200	275	-	3,425	275	

NOTES

1. Confirmation required on whether there is a reduction in spend. Saving needs moving to Housing, Property & Planning
2. Goes live in 26th June - £700k a year - pro rata savings in MTFS- includes agency staff and reduction in fleet. Check £0.5m in capital programme
3. Household waste management centre- new charge introduced for tipping waste. 28% of waste RBWM. Management fee charge- possibly higher.
4. Consultation starting - implement 6 zones by July / August, further 4 next year. Resident permits to be issued. Enforcement and permit fee income. Based on lowest uptake level. This is fully year effect.
5. May be challenged by members; a further £100k is planned in 24/25
6. Bus operators now receive subsidy from Heathrow - external funding received
7. Paying on tapering basis DfE changed rules
8. Businesses contribute to trade waste- under consideration for scrapping the scheme
9. Existing residence permits - fee increase 300-400%
10. Generated by applications - S50 - road closures/licence to do work - Council fee charged- charge doubled in the last year
11. Generated by applications - S50 - road closures/licence to do work - Council fee charged
12. Highway maintenance block - Grant utilised to resurface the roads- - Eligible Transport highway expenditure chargeable to grant
13. Based on 50% of households (14,000 of 28,000) taking up the subscription service. Currently at 8,500
14. Residual saving is linked to grant swap (12 above)
15. Post has been deleted

Appendix 4 - Housing, Planning and Property

Table 1 Budget Monitoring Position

HOUSING PLANNING & PROPERTY	Current Budget £'000	Actuals to date £'000	Projected Outturn £'000	Variance £'000	Previous Variance £'000	Risks £'000	Opps £'000	Notes
Housing (excluding HRA)	882	2,769	3,823	2,941	3,247			1
Planning	523	(66)	760	237	(57)			2
HP&P Management	706	190	716	10	197			3
Property	(4,146)	(936)	(3,615)	531	1,396			4
Building Management	5,571	(309)	5,849	278	592			5
Grand Total	3,536	1,648	7,533	3,997	5,375	0	0	
Housing Revenue Accounts (HRA)	(801)	(7,798)	(919)	(118)	(118)			

Notes

- The projected £2.9m adverse variance to budget is an improvement of £829k compared to p3. It is due to increased confidence of management to deliver the Temporary Accommodation service with lower overall cost and higher rent income collection levels by a combination of a greater focus on user eligibility, appropriate property use and recognising full rent collection from service users (a net minimum benefit of £500k). Advanced review work in progress has already shown there are a considerable number of vacant properties incurring costs and rent collectable is not fully on the current system. Homeless Prevention Grant received (£1.03m to date) will also support prevention work to achieve the above initiatives. Pressure on non-HRA housing costs has also been reduced by agreeing a recharge for asset contract management to the HRA (£300k). The resultant projected adverse variance to budget shown this period (£2.9m) mainly relates to currently unachievable recharge income and legacy savings targets (£2.1m); excluding these leaves a forecast balance of £800k attributable to underlying homeless cost increases incurred.
- The £237k forecast overspend within Planning is due mainly to unachievable income. Planning relies heavily on income generation to balance its budget but the national economic situation has impacted negatively on the income to be generated. For instance, £278 Inspection Fees income are expected to reduce by £30k, Building Control Fees are expected to be down by £190k, Local Land Searches Fees are expected to reduce by £35k. Further adding to the pressure is the unachievable legacy savings in the budget of £102k. Some of the overspend is offset by staffing underspend in the Planning Policy Team.
- The period 4 projected variance to budget is currently a nominal overspend of £10k as it has been agreed to recharge a portion of Executive Director & Assistant Director (Housing) salary to HRA.
- The projected £531k adverse variance is an improvement of £500k compared to p 3, and is due to a realistic assessment of income achievable this year based on year to date and the potential to review rent increases and collection levels. The remaining £531k projected variance to budget is due to a combination of factors such as legacy income budget issues in respect of recharges to Capital and HRA which are not realisable. Underspend in staffing costs is helping to offset some of the overspend.
- The £278k forecast overspend is the TUPE implication of taking on 35 extra staff following the decision to end the Bouygues contract by bringing the facilities management function in-house. The timing of the delivery of the asset disposal programme will also impact on the overspend. Depending on when the restructure of the service is implemented, a part year savings may be achieved, though the forecast assumes a worst case scenario of the restructure not being completed in 2023/24.

Table 2 – Savings Position

Savings Description	Total £000's	Already Delivered	On Track to be delivered	Some risk to delivery	Major Risk of Delivery	Mitigating Savings	Savings Forecast	Over / (Under) delivery	Notes
Housing, Property & Planning									
Reduce spend on repairs and maintenance at Corporate Buildings	280			100	180		100	(180)	1
Reduce spend on cleaning at Corporate Buildings	200			100	100		100	(100)	2
Corporate Contract efficiencies	50	50					50	-	
Savings from reduction in building management costs	100		60		40		60	(40)	3
Savings from additional efficiencies in facilities management	100		60		40		60	(40)	3
Reduce spend on repairs and maintenance at Corporate Buildings	20				20		0	(20)	1
Housing, Property & Planning Total	750	50	120	200	380	-	370	(380)	

NOTES

1. This is dependent upon the timing of the sale of Corporate Buildings, with prospects are that this will be slower than envisaged
2. This is dependent upon the timing of the sale of Corporate Buildings, with prospects are that this will be slower than envisaged
3. Dependent upon a restructure and review of TUPE'd Ts and Cs, the saving delayed until probably October, and therefore the full year effect would not come in until 2024/25

Appendix 5 – Strategy & Improvement

Table 1 Budget Monitoring Position

STRATEGY & IMPROVEMENT & MONITORING OFFICER	Current Budget	Actuals to date	Projected Outturn	Variance	Previous Variance	Risks	Opps	Notes
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Chief Executive	352	43	352	0	0			
Communications	235	94	235	1	0			
Customer Services	1,964	179	2,087	123	(16)			1
HR Core	2,369	530	2,271	(98)	(83)			2
IT	6,454	3,271	6,502	48	47	500		3
Strategy	(500)	(5)	(368)	133	133			4
Strategy & Innovation	725	234	769	44	36			5
Grand Total	11,599	4,348	11,849	249	117	500	0	
ED Monitoring Officer								
Democratic Services	1,839	848	1,653	(186)	(52)			6
Grand Total MO	1,839	848	1,653	(186)	(52)	0	0	
Grand Total	13,438	5,195	13,502	64	65	500	0	

Notes

1	Cabinet approved £0.136m overspend on additional 18 interim staff for the contact centre from April to June however underspends within the overall service (from vacancies within the year and unfilled posts for all year) has offset this overspend to nil with further surplus of £0.016m in P2. However, a further extension for 12 of the supplementary staff has been approved from July to October at a cost of £0.134m resulting in the P3 overspend of £0.123m
2	Underspend £0.098m arises from reduced spend on the training programme £0.067m which is directly attributable to posts filled by interim staff when recruitment of permanent staff was unsuccessful and £0.031m from part year vacancies.
3	The £0.048m adverse variance arises from £0.100m forecast spend on IT hardware equipment refresh for staff for ageing equipment without an allocated budget. The initial outlay for all staff laptops was capitalised, and laptops should be refreshed on a 4year cycle (300 per year). This is offset by underspends from staff vacancies as a result of challenges in attracting and recruiting staff with the necessary skillset. It is anticipated that last financial year's underspend arising from delays on the modernisation programme (due to the nature of the projects) will be carried forward in earmarked reserves to be utilised in this financial year.
4	The Service estimates that there are risks in the delivery of the full £0.265m Support Services saving thus it projects a 50% achievement of the saving consequently creating a pressure of £0.133m
5	The £0.044m pressure is due to one post that transferred from the Children's directorate without a corresponding budget to fund the post
6	The £0.186m underspend results from posts unfilled for part of the year due to challenges in recruiting staff with the right calibre coupled with the contribution of grant £0.080m received from the government and the parishes to cover part of the all-out elections in May. Forecast assumes that all vacant posts (4fte) will be filled within the year

Table 2 Savings

Savings Description	Total £000's	Already Delivered	On Track to be delivered	Some risk to delivery	Major Risk of Delivery	Mitigating Savings	Savings Forecast	Over / (Under) delivery	Notes
Strategy & Improvement									
Events and Slough Citizen	150	150					150	-	1
IT contract savings	505		505				505	-	2
Vacancy factor	500		500				500	-	3
Reduction in services and efficiencies	668	668					668	-	4
Strategy & Improvement Total	1,823	818	1,005	-	-	-	1,823	-	

Notes

1. Budget has been removed, and activities have ceased
2. Some savings have been delivered, other elements are on track, but at this stage not yet delivered. Should be able to split of this for p4
3. Vacancy factor is mostly on track; some of this saving is wrt the removal of AD posts which is now subject to a separate Corporate exercise; this will constrain the possible savings for that Corporate exercise, need to avoid double counting
4. Budget removed, posts deleted and therefore delivered

Appendix 6 – Finance

Table 1 Budget Monitoring Position

FINANCE OUTTURN 2023-24	Current Budget £'000	Actuals to date £'000	Projected Outturn £'000	Variance £'000	Previous Variance £'000	Risks £'000	Opps £'000	Notes
Commercial	751	212	808	57	147			1
Finance	481	5,071	1,255	774	1,076			2
Financial Governance	697	1,936	1,572	875	617			3
Revenues, Benefits & Charges	1,663	19,836	2,416	753	202			4
Strategic Finance	41	185	215	174	101			5
Transactional Services	665	118	707	42	89			6
Grand Total	4,299	27,358	6,973	2,674	2,230	0	0	

Notes

1	The £0.057m overspend arises from 2 TUPE transfers from the outsourced RSM procurement now transferred inhouse. The 2 staff are paid on a day rate basis however efforts to recruit permanently has failed on 2 rounds of recruitment and the service is now progressing on a third recruitment campaign. The forecast assumes that one of the TUPE staff will be in post till year end
2	The overspend stems from the following: staff costs for finance are above budget (£3.9m) by £0.346m. Forecast assumes a 64% (31fte) permanent staff against 36% (18fte) interim staff across the financial year with permanent staff replacing all interim staff on the SFM and FM levels from December 2023. There is one fte over establishment working on the asset disposal. The £0.235m Support Services saving is currently proposed as unachievable. The Forecast takes account of a contribution from corporate budgets of £0.231m to cover: the costs for the NED for SCF (£0.023k), £0.128k to bridge the DFE grant gap in relation to additional overhead costs for running SCF, £0.050m for finance recruitment support and £0.030m for CIPFA training.
3	The overspend of £0.025m arises from a legacy income budget issues from court proceeds in the Investigations – Corporate Fraud service which is not expected to be delivered. There is also a £0.500m (30%) increase in the insurance premium and £0.350m Imprest claims which are not budgeted for
4	The £0.753m pressure arises from the amount of Housing Benefit subsidy recovered from the DWP being less than that which is actually paid to residents. This is due to a combination of local authority error payments and claimant overpayments being made. Claimant overpayments can be recovered from them, and this is actively progressed. Any payments recovered go to offset the loss in subsidy from the DWP. The budget assumes we recover a total of £0.410m more than actually paid. Currently the council is only collecting 71.5% of debt invoiced in-year which is well below other councils. A project will commence soon that once complete will increase this to 96.5% initially, and then eventually to over 100%, which the budget assumes.
5	The £0.026m surplus variance stems from a one-off credit arising from closure of unused SBC bank accounts. There is also a £200k overspend forecast due to needing to bridge the savings gap against the External audit fees budget.
6	The £0.042m pressure is generated mainly from the use of interim staff. Of the 15fte posts within the service only 2 (13%) are interim. The reduction from last month is because the forecast assumes that both interim staff will be replaced by permanent staff in Dec 2023.

Table 2 Savings

Savings Description	Total £000's	Already Delivered	On Track to be delivered	Some risk to delivery	Major Risk of Delivery	Mitigating Savings	Savings Forecast	Over / (Under) delivery	Notes
Finance & Commercial									
Staffing reduction - Fraud dept	12	12					12	-	1
Vacancy factor	399				399		-	(399)	2
Increased taxbase and collection rate	917		917				917	-	3
Reduced audit fee, reduced duplicate payments and income	400		400				400	-	4
Single Person Discount monitoring and other initiatives	600		600				600	-	5
Budgeted overheads cleanse	788		788				788	-	
Efficient working practices in Revenues and Benefits	440		440				440	-	6
Revenues and Benefits agency savings	450		450				450	-	
MRP reduction as a consequence of asset disposal decisions	3,500		3,500				3,500	-	7
Finance & Commercial Total	7,506	12	7,095	-	399	-	7,107	(399)	
Other Corporate Budgets									
Fees & Charges increases	900					37	37	(863)	8
Review of Strategic Commissioning	750						-	(750)	
Support Services	500		133	368			500	-	9
Other Corporate Budgets Total	2,150	-	133	368	-	37	537	(1,613)	
Finance & Commercial & Other Corporate Budgets Total	9,656	12	7,228	368	399	37	7,644	(2,012)	

Notes

1. Relevant post holder has started working 4 days a week in January 23
2. Given recruitment problems in finance, and the use of interims, it is unlikely this can be met this year
3. Assumes increase in no of properties + Collection rate. Confident will be delivered but need to check assumptions and monitor
4. Savings taken out of Audit budget. There is accrued provision of £1.7m to cover prior years. £100k overpayment is one off.
5. Confident will be delivered but need to check assumptions and monitor
6. If delivery is delayed then the balance will be delivered in 24/25. Service is projecting a pressure of £201k in P2 budget monitoring
7. Dependent on Asset sales
8. £0.037m of this saving relates to the Registrars in S&I which is currently flagged as unachievable however some posts are being held unfilled for part of the year to cover this
9. Savings split £0.265m to S&I of which 50% is currently tagged as unachievable and £0.235m to Finance, currently flagged as unachievable

Appendix 7 – Capital Monitoring

Table 1 – General Fund

CAPITAL PROJECTS	Current Budget	Slippage - to be approved	Reserves release - to be approved	Revised Budget	Actuals to date	Projected Outturn	Variance	Notes
	£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
GENERAL FUND								
Learning Disability Change Programme	29	0		29	0	0	(29)	
HOLD (Hold Ownership for people with Long-term Disabilities)		204		204		204	0	
Disabled Facilities Grant	1,140	272		1,412	121	1,412	0	
Adults TOTAL	1,169	476		1,645	121	1,616	(29)	
Primary Expansions	167	0		167		80	(87)	
Schools Modernisation Programme	810	90		900	10	772	(128)	
SEN Resources Expansion	1,250	0		1,250		466	(784)	
Special School Expansion-Primary,Secondary & Post 16	1,675	10		1,685	8	531	(1,154)	
Secondary Expansion Programme	315	0		315		0	(315)	
Schools Devolved Capital	80	0		80		80	0	
323 High St/Haybrook	26	0		26			(26)	
Children's Services TOTAL	4,323	100		4,423	18	1,929	(2,494)	1
Loan to GRES-for Nova House remedial work	5,000	0		5,000	400	400	(4,600)	2
Capital Works following Stock Condition Survey	400	247		647	14	647	0	
Hub Development	1,047	273		1,320		273	(1,047)	3
B4899 Localities Strategy North (Britwell)					40		0	
B4902 Localities Strategy Central (SMP)					(670)		0	
Thames Valley University Site	0			0		100	100	
Leisure Centre Farnham Road	100			100			(100)	
Asset Disposal				0	480		0	4
Urban Tree Challenge Fund	82			82	0		(82)	5
Cornwall House-Fire Strategy	950			950	1	950	0	
Office Accommodation Strategy	900			900		900	0	
Housing, Property & Planning TOTAL	8,479	520		8,999	265	3,270	(5,729)	
Refuse fleet & Grounds Plant equipment		114		114	85	114	0	
Local Sustainable Transport Fund	222	0		222		222	0	
Flood Defence (Sponge City)	1,482	766		2,248	148	1,221	(1,027)	
Zone 1 - Sutton Lane Gyrotary (MRT)		868		868	164	868	0	
Zone 4 - Stoke Road (Stoke Rd TVU junction)	2,500	393		2,893	180	2,893	0	
Langley High Street Improvements LEP		511		511	79	511	0	
A4 Safer Roads	1,511	137		1,648	1	1,000	(648)	
A4 Cycle Lane	10,168	0		10,168	150	3,568	(6,600)	6
Electric Vehicle Network	157	0		157		157	0	
Car Club	100	0		100		100	0	
Carbon Management - Public Sector Decarb. Scheme	22	0		22		22	0	
Reading Archives - Extension (SBC Contribution)	188	0		188		188	0	
Traffic Signals Maintenance Grant		66		66	56	66	0	
Cemetery Extension	100	0		100		100	0	
Additional Transport & Highways Grant funded projects	2,489		(545)	1,944	164	1,943	(1)	
Patching, surfacing and highway replacement works			261	261		261	0	
LTP Implementation Plan	139		284	423	2	284	(139)	
Eden School			308	308		308	0	
Emergency Active Travel Fund			369	369		369	0	
DSO Replacement Fleet	500			500			(500)	
Destination Farnham Road	2,768			2,768		2,768	0	
Place & Communities TOTAL	22,346	2,855	677	25,878	1,029	16,963	(8,915)	
GENERAL FUND TOTAL	36,317	3,951	677	40,945	1,433	23,778	(17,167)	

Notes

1	Childrens' Services have a forecast underspend of £2.6m. This is to be used in 24/25 on SEN projects in various schools that were unable to be completed in 23/25 due to capacity.
2	Loan to GRE5-for Nova House remedial work. No further costs expected for this project. Mediation now reached on insurance so will repay bulk of loan to GRE5 - budget of £4.6m no longer required.
3	Hub Development. Budget duplication has now been amended to correct figure.
4	Asset Disposal. The forecast for this is currently being worked on to validate the expected net receipts for 23/24
5	Urban Tree Challenge Fund. This has been reclassified and will now sit within the PLACE revenue forecast.
6	A4 Cycle Lane. Preliminary designs for this project have been submitted to Cabinet for approval in July, the project will therefore have a delayed start and run into 24/25.

Table 2 - HRA

HRA							
RMI Capital Programme							
Commissioning of Repairs Maintenance and Investment Contract	250			250		50	(200)
Boiler Replacement and heating	317			317	65	317	0
Kitchen & Bathroom Replacement	415	31		446	1	446	0
Electrical Systems	138	0		138	1	138	0
External rendering, repairs and redecoration of housing block	2,134	0		2,134		2,519	385
Garage & Environmental Improvements		527		527	264	527	0
Capitalised Repairs	100	210		310	38	300	(10)
FRA & Asbestos Removal Works	2,000	173		2,173	70	2,180	7
Major Aids & Adaptations	300	0		300	18	300	0
Decarbonisation Works	500	81		581		500	(81)
RMI Capital Programme Total	6,154	1,022	0	7,176	457	7,277	101
Planned Maintenance Capital							
Windows and Door Replacement	842			842		842	0
Roof Replacement	1,726	136		1,862		1,800	(62)
Structural	211	109		320	37	240	(80)
Security & Controlled Entry Modernisation	300			300	7	300	0
Capitalised voids	60			60		40	(20)
Planned Maintenance Capital Total	3,139	245	0	3,384	44	3,222	(162)
Affordable Homes							
Tower and Ashbourne	0			0	24		0
Affordable Homes	800			800	107	800	0
Total Affordable Homes	800	0	0	800	131	800	0
HRA TOTAL	10,093	1,267	0	11,360	632	11,299	(61)
CAPITAL PROJECTS TOTAL							
	46,410	5,218	677	52,305	2,065	35,077	(17,228)

Appendix 8 – Detailed Bids for Inflation Funding

Directorate	Contract	22/23 Cost	% Uplift	Increase	Notes
Place & Communities	Parking	1,942,396	12.60	244,742	RPIx
Place & Communities	Cemeteries & Crematorium	84,082	13.50	11,351	RPI
Place & Communities	Waste Disposal	5,682,098	14.20	806,858	RPI
Place & Communities	Maintenance	325,456	2.00	6,509	CPI capped
Place & Communities	Traffic Signals	284,000	13.40	38,056	RPI
Place & Communities	Business Rates	35,000	10.00	3,500	Business Rate increase
Place & Communities	Business Rates	59,700	10.00	5,970	Business Rate increase
Place & Communities	Business Rates	140,900	10.00	14,090	Business Rate increase
Place & Communities	Business Rates	6,000	10.00	600	Business Rate increase
Place & Communities	Business Rates	49,100	10.00	4,910	Business Rate increase
Place & Communities	Business Rates	50,400	10.00	5,040	Business Rate increase
Place & Communities	Business Rates	8,700	10.00	870	Business Rate increase
Place & Communities	Business Rates	101,000	10.00	10,100	Business Rate increase
Place & Communities	Council Tax	7,500	15.00	1,125	Council Tax increase
Place & Communities	Council Tax	3,600	15.00	540	Council Tax increase
Place & Communities	Council Tax	3,600	15.00	540	Council Tax increase
Place & Communities	Street Lightng	177,000	22.32	39,506	
People (Adults)	All Care Contracts	27,316,100	4.80	1,311,173	Further uplifts beyond 4.8%
People (Adults)	Direct Payments	5,340,800	4.80	256,358	are funded from use of
People (Adults)	Other Contracts	1,899,600	4.80	91,181	MS&IF and Discharge Fund
People (Children)	Adoption Agency	580,600	18.02	104,624	Historic under funding, 5% in year
People (Children)	Home to School Transport	3,157,400	8.00	252,592	Fuel and cost of living pressures
Housing Property & Planning	APAS	53,194	10.10	5,373	CPI
Housing Property & Planning	AI validator	15,000	10.10	1,515	CPI
Housing Property & Planning	Chatbot	18,600	10.10	1,879	CPI
Housing Property & Planning	Agile Assets	16,194	10.10	1,636	CPI
Housing Property & Planning	Land Charges Software	9,020	10.10	911	CPI
Corporate Resources	IT	323,995	14.13	45,796	Based on renewal prices
Corporate Resources	Finance - Audit Fees	98,193	5.20	5,106	Based on renewal prices
Original Budget Available				6,918,000	
less funding specific Adults grants				1,766,329	
Budget Available				5,151,671	
Total Bids				3,272,450	
Available				1,879,221	

Appendix 9 – Detailed Potential Calls on Contingency Funding

Directorate	Identified Pressure	Bid (£)	Approved Amount (£)	Notes
Corporate	SCF Non Exec Director	23,000	23,000	Identified as a call on contingency in budget build papers
Corporate	External Auditors Fees	200,000	0	Audit fees budget cut by £250k, but one off money required; as a one off should not be funded by permanent virement from Contingency
Corporate	Reduction in DFE grant for running SCF company	128,000	0	Could be funded from a balance sheet reserve for Client Management of SCF but obviously that's one-off
Corporate	HR support to finance recruitment	50,000	0	One off, therefore should not be funded from a permanent virement from contingency
Corporate	Revs and Bens icloud system	131,000	131,000	Previously identified as a possible call on contingency when building 23/24 budget. Considered essential expenditure
Corporate	Insurance Premium increase	500,000	500,000	New pressure. Considered unavoidable. Is showing as an overspend on this year's budget
Corporate	Insurance imprest	350,000	350,000	New pressure. Considered unavoidable. Is showing as an overspend on this year's budget
Corporate	Training	30,000	0	Not identified as a call on contingency in budget build papers
Corporate	Council Tax support scheme	440,000		To be confirmed
Corporate	Bad Debt Allowance	500,000	500,000	In base budget but needs re-coding to avoid confusion
Housing, Property & Place	Temp Accommodation	1,063,000		Identified as a potential call on contingency in budget build papers, but costings need to be provided to evidence the bid
Housing, Property & Place	Housing needs officers	308,000		Identified as a potential call on contingency in budget build papers, but costings need to be provided to evidence the bid
All	Non-deliverability of 23/24 savings	3,000,000		Some savings targets considered high risk; these need to be accepted as non deliverable for budget to be diverted to them
Housing, Property & Place	Rent reductions from asset disposals	1,200,000		A consequence of asset sales; authority to vire money in respect of losses here should be delegated to the s151 officer
Strategy & Improvement	Annual cost of laptop refresh on cyclical	100,000	100,000	Previously identified as a possible call on contingency when building 23/24 budget. Considered essential expenditure
Total Bids		8,023,000	1,604,000	
Budget Available		12,435,000	12,435,000	
Balance Available		-4,412,000	-10,831,000	

In the table above one-off pressures are highlighted in blue

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Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Cabinet
Date:	18.09.2023
Subject:	Updated Corporate Plan
Lead Member:	Leader
Chief Officer:	Sarah Hayward, ED Strategy & Improvement
Contact Officer:	Dean Tyler, AD Strategy
Ward(s):	All
Key Decision:	NO, due to decision being reserved to Full Council.
Exempt:	NO
Decision Subject To Call In:	YES
Appendices:	A – Draft Corporate Plan 2023-27 B – Slough Insights Pack C – Consultation results summary D – Equality Impact Assessment

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report sets out an updated corporate plan, following the recent public consultation (Appendix A).

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to agree the Corporate Plan attached at Appendix A and recommend it for approval to Full Council.

Reason:

Developments in the council's recovery and improvement programme, and newly available evidence and datasets, present an opportunity to revisit the council's purpose, approach and strategic priorities, as expressed in its current corporate plan. The council is at the start of a new 4-year period following the elections and having a new corporate plan setting out the council's overall vision and priorities will ensure an appropriate strategic focus throughout this term.

Commissioner Review

Commissioners have reviewed this report and feedback has been incorporated.

2. Report

Introductory paragraph

2.1 The updated corporate plan (Appendix A) lays out proposals for the council's core purpose, its approach and an updated set of strategic priorities, which develop upon those set out in the current plan *Doing right by Slough*. The consultation on the draft corporate plan concluded on 7th August, with the majority of respondents supporting the proposed council purpose, approach and priorities. Further feedback from respondents has been incorporated into the updated plan.

Options considered

- a) Do nothing – maintain the current corporate plan *Doing right by Slough* – this is not recommended as it does not take account of the most up to date insights resulting from the 2021 Census, nor was it subject to public consultation.
- b) Agree for the updated corporate plan to be sent to Full Council for consideration and approval – **recommended**. The draft updated corporate plan reflects the latest data on Slough's population and has been subject to engagement with residents and other stakeholders. It also reflects progress which has been made since the current plan was approved.

Background

2.2 In May 2022, the council approved its new corporate plan for 2022-25 – 'Doing Right by Slough', which incorporated the recovery and improvement plan the council was required to produce in accordance with the Government's Directions. The plan, in its essence, has two core components:

- Four new strategic priorities, which replaced the previous plan's priority outcomes.
- Seven recovery themes, which sought to incorporate the Government directions and provide a structure for the council's improvement.

Service planning was subsequently undertaken against this framework.

2.3 There are several factors which present the council with an opportunity to produce the next iteration of this plan:

- There have been significant developments in the council's recovery and improvement programme over the past year, and changes in emphasis since the creation of the seven recovery themes, and the authority now has a far better understanding of the work needed to recover;
- A new executive leadership team is now in place;
- The council has moved to four-yearly elections and a new political administration is in place. It is common for councils to align their corporate plans to this cycle (current corporate plan covers 2022-25).

- 2.4 The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has also released data from the 2021 Census – the first up to date population data the council has had for 10 years - which presents an opportunity for SBC to review its strategic priorities based upon the latest available evidence. This data, and further key sources of information, have been distilled into a *Slough Insights* pack (Appendix B), which provides an evidence base for the refresh of the corporate plan. Better use of evidence in decision making is also one of the Government's directions.
- 2.5 Highlights from the Insights Pack were shared with senior managers at a workshop on 28th February and then at staff roadshows in March. Key challenges for Slough identified from the data include:
- Health inequalities;
 - A very young population;
 - Comparatively high levels of deprivation;
 - Increasing levels of overcrowding;
 - High rates of unemployment / economic inactivity;
 - High levels of homelessness;
 - High numbers of Children in Need;
 - A substantial income gap between residents and all those who work in Slough; and
 - High levels of crime.
- 2.6 The workshop also reviewed emerging areas of pressure and challenge within service areas, to identify further priorities that were not included in *Doing right by Slough*, or that need greater emphasis. These included:
- Sustainability & climate change adaptation;
 - Protecting and supporting vulnerable adults;
 - Engaging young people in the community and on decisions affecting them;
 - The affordability and quality of housing in Slough; and
 - Economic development and engagement with businesses.
- 2.7 In January and February, the Local Government Association (LGA) conducted fieldwork on SBC's behalf with residents, using questions that were also asked in the national Residents Satisfaction Survey. This has highlighted key concerns regarding the public's confidence and trust in the council, which will need to be addressed in the corporate plan:
- 30% of Slough respondents said they were very or fairly satisfied with the way SBC runs things compared to 60% of national respondents.
 - 21% of Slough respondents strongly agreed or tended to agree that SBC provides value for money compared to 46% of national respondents who strongly agreed or tended to agree that their council provides value for money.
 - 28% of Slough respondents said that SBC acts on their concerns to a great deal or a fair amount compared to 52% of national respondents.
 - 25% of Slough respondents said that they trust Slough Council a great deal or a fair amount compared to 59% of national respondents.

2.8 A proposed structure for the refreshed corporate plan was then developed comprising three key elements:

- **Our purpose:** this section provided the overall driving focus and vision for the council: *Closing the healthy life expectancy gap, by focussing on children*. This reflects the fact that Slough has poor healthy life expectancy compared to neighbouring areas and one of the youngest populations in the country. A child's early development and experiences play a key role in determining future health and wellbeing, and the council and its partners can together influence the wider determinants of health.
- **Our approach:** this section further developed the recovery themes established in *Doing right by Slough* and picked up the issues identified from the Residents Survey. It describes the type of council we wish to be, our values, how we will work and our relationship with residents:
 - Resident focussed;
 - Providing financial sustainability;
 - Enabling residents and communities;
 - Strengthening partnerships; and
 - Building trust.
- **Our priorities:** the strategic priorities of *Doing right by Slough* were retained, though updated to take account of the new council purpose and the further challenges that have been identified in the data and evidence:
 1. A borough for children and young people to thrive;
 2. A town where residents can live healthier, safer and more independent lives; and
 3. A cleaner, healthier and more prosperous Slough.

2.9 This draft structure was approved by Cabinet on 19th June to go out for a 6-week period of public consultation, to gather feedback on this draft structure. The consultation launched on 26th June and ran until 7th August via its online Citizen Space platform. The consultation was promoted by the council via social media, and was shared with and promoted by a number of local groups, including:

- Slough Council for Voluntary Service
- Slough Poverty Forum
- Slough Co-Production Network
- Slough Residents Board
- Aik Saath
- Slough Borough Council Staff (via Insite)

2.10 In addition to the online consultation submissions, one respondent submitted comments via the consultation email address. These comments were loaded onto the Citizen Space platform for analysis.

2.11 There were 169 responses in total. Respondents were asked to state the extent to which they agreed with the elements of the draft structure set out in section 2.8. A breakdown of the results is included in appendix C; overall there was support for all elements of the plan, with the following proportions either agreeing or strongly agreeing:

- Our purpose: Closing the life expectancy gap by focusing on children – 52.7%
- Our approach: Resident Focussed – 64.5%
- Our approach: Providing Financial Sustainability – 68.1%
- Our approach: Enabling Residents and Communities – 60.4%
- Our approach: Strengthening Partnerships – 59.17%
- Our approach: Building Trust – 64.5%
- Our priorities: 1. A borough for children and young people to thrive – 66.9%
- Our priorities: 2. A town where residents can live healthier, safer and more independent lives – 72.7%

Our priorities: 3. A cleaner, healthier and more prosperous Slough – 74.0%

2.12 Respondents also had the opportunity to comment on the plan in their own words, and express their views on what should be included. The table below shows the top 10 themes raised by respondents, sub-themes and the number of residents who raised them. A brief summary of how these themes relate to the updated corporate plan is also included.

Theme, Sub-themes	SBC Updated Corporate Plan
<p>SBC culture and behaviours - 45</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust - 22 • Being active / present in community - 17 • Customer service - 8 • Respect for residents - 4 • Greater ambition - 1 	<p>The new corporate plan builds on the previous plan's commitments to improve our culture as an organisation, and the approach section sets out the type of organisation we wish to be.</p> <p>Building trust is one of the key aspects of this approach, and this section describes how we will seek to restore confidence in SBC.</p> <p>We will be active and present in the community – and the corporate plan includes commitments to build community capacity and develop platforms that allow our community to shape Slough's future.</p> <p>A further key aspect of this new approach is being resident focussed, and the updated plan now includes further commitments to improving response times and customer service.</p>
<p>Children & young people - 39</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth centres & activities - 10 • Education and school facilities - 9 • Support for parents - 8 • Children's centres - 6 • Special Educational Needs and Disabilities - 5 • Play areas - 5 • Youth participation - 3 • Children's mental health - 3 • Children's social services - 1 	<p>Children and young people are a key focus of the new corporate plan – both in the overall purpose section and the priorities.</p> <p>The council's first strategic priority is to work towards a borough where children and young people can thrive. There are further commitments to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing quality services for vulnerable children and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) • Improving outcomes for disadvantaged children and young people • Tackling high rates of child obesity • Increasing children and young people's participation in decisions that affect them and in shaping the future of Slough <p>SBC will also be working with partners to develop a Children and Young People's plan, which will provide more detail on how we will work together to improve outcomes, and address the themes raised here.</p>

<p>Town image - 36</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleanliness & litter - 22 • Town centre / high street - 13 • Retail - 4 	<p>The updated corporate plan recognises the impact of the environmental quality and the quality of public spaces on a persons' health and wellbeing.</p> <p>The corporate plan includes a commitment under the third strategic priority to provide 'clean, quality public spaces and working with developers to deliver a modern town centre for future generations.</p>
<p>Crime and Community Safety - 27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drugs & alcohol misuse - 11 • Antisocial behaviour - 8 • Violence and knife crime - 2 	<p>The corporate plan includes a commitment to 'improving community safety and tackling anti-social behaviour – providing a safer town to grow-up' and recognises the impact of community safety on a person's wellbeing.</p> <p>The Slough Wellbeing Board is currently also developing a new action plan, which will include a greater focus on substance misuse and alcohol related conditions.</p> <p>The council will also be working with partners to strengthen the Safer Slough Partnership.</p>
<p>Financial management - 24</p>	<p>The new corporate plan recognises that SBC must continue to demonstrate tangible progress towards our recovery if we are able to effectively deliver for our residents and achieve our strategic objectives for the town.</p> <p>Providing financial sustainability is a key pillar of the new 'approach' for the council set out in the plan, which includes commitments to live within our means, balance our budget and be honest and open about the difficult decisions that we will need to make.</p>
<p>Health & wellbeing - 20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health centres - 8 • Obesity - 7 • Mental health - 3 	<p>Improving healthy life expectancy is central to the new purpose for the council set out in the new corporate plan and is woven throughout all three strategic priorities.</p> <p>We will be working with partners on the Slough Health & Wellbeing Board to develop a new action plan, to deliver rapid progress.</p> <p>As part of this plan, we will be seeking to co-host a summit on tackling obesity, to bring partners and the community together to tackle this important issue.</p>

<p>Waste collection - 19</p>	<p>The comments in this theme primarily related to the recent change to collecting refuse and recycling waste on alternate weeks.</p> <p>[Response to summarise response to petition on waste collection also going to Full Council on 28th September]</p> <p>Please also see above on response to comments relating to the theme of 'Town image'.</p>
<p>Vulnerable adults - 19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elderly residents - 18 • Disabled residents – 3 	<p>Given the borough's specific demographic profile, and the history of intervention in children's services in Slough, the council feels that a specific focus on children and young people is important to addressing the challenges Slough faces.</p> <p>However, the corporate plan does include a commitment to support residents to be as independent as possible, whilst providing quality services for the most vulnerable adults. Maximising independence, confidence and capacity for self-management has been demonstrated to enable people to live the life they want, stay independent at home for longer and reduce the need for emergency and statutory services.</p>
<p>Housing - 14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing availability - 10 • Housing quality - 10 • Social housing services - 3 	<p>The corporate plan recognises the important role played by housing in determining a person's health and wellbeing.</p> <p>The plan includes a commitment prioritising 'affordable, safe and healthy homes – improving the quality of council housing stock and the private rented sector'.</p> <p>SBC is currently also developing a new Housing Strategy, which will provide further detail on the action the council will be taking in this area.</p>

<p>Growth - 9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment & skills - 8 • Local economy - 2 	<p>The corporate plan includes a commitment to 'engaging with businesses to create new employment opportunities for Slough families and routes to upskill'.</p> <p>Over the coming months the council will look to form new alliances with businesses to tackle skills gaps, and the council is currently developing a new economic development strategy, which will provide further detail on the action SBC will be taking in this area.</p>
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- 2.13 The updated corporate plan includes further detail on the following, compared to the version that was submitted for consultation:
- The council's recovery and improvement
 - Evidence for why the selected priorities are necessary to deliver on the council's purpose
 - The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) against which the council's performance in delivering our priorities will be determined
 - The council's equality commitments
- 2.14 Service delivery plans are currently being developed, which will capture further detail on how the council will look to implement the plan for the remainder of the 2023-24 municipal year.
- 2.15 The council's performance against the KPIs included in the plan, alongside further corporate health indicators, will be included in the council's Corporate Management Information Scorecard, which is reviewed by CLT and the council's Improvement and Recovery Board monthly.
- 2.16 The council's performance against these measures will also be presented to Cabinet on a quarterly basis, starting from October 2023, and a report on progress against the corporate plan will be presented to Full Council annually.
- 2.17 Further work to implement and measure delivery and success of the corporate plan will come through appropriate council governance.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1 Financial implications

- 3.1.1 The refreshed Corporate Plan will retain the commitments in *Doing Right by Slough* to financial prudence and providing best value. The MTFs and the Council's Corporate plan have to be fully aligned and the delivery of the plan will need to be in line with approved budgets. Resources also therefore need to be prioritised and aligned with the commitments within the plan
- 3.1.2 The plan states that SBC will 'build on our work to provide financial sustainability for the council and embed good practice for local government: living within our means, balancing our budget and being honest and open about the difficult decisions that we will need to make over the coming years.'
- 3.1.3 24 respondents to the consultation made comments relating to the importance of good financial management – see appendix C, section 3b.

3.2 Legal implications

- 3.2.1 Whilst there is no legal requirement to adopt a corporate plan, it is considered good practice and Article 4 of the Council's Constitution includes the corporate plan as a policy which should be approved by a resolution of Full Council.
- 3.2.2 The council has a duty under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Local authorities are under a duty to consult representatives of a wide range of local persons, including council tax payers, service users and those appearing to have an interest in any of the local authority's functions. The results of the consultation should be taken into account and inform the final version of the corporate plan. The draft updated best value guidance sets out best value themes. In relation to continuous improvement, it is recommended that there is an organisational-wide approach to this, with frequent monitoring, performance reporting and updating of the corporate and improvement plans. Under Leadership, it is recommended that the corporate plan is evidence based, current, realistic and enables the whole organisation's performance to be measured and held to account. Under service delivery, it is recommended that service plans are clearly linked to a local authority's priorities and strategic plans.
- 3.2.3 The CIPFA/SOLACE Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework – 2016, includes "Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits" as a key principle necessary for good governance. It states that the long-term nature and impact of many of local government's responsibilities mean that it should define and plan outcomes and that these should be sustainable. Decisions should further the organisation's purpose, contribute to intended benefits and outcomes, and remain within the limits of authority and resources. Input from all groups of stakeholders, including citizens, service users, and institutional stakeholders, is vital to the success of this process and in balancing competing demands when determining priorities for the finite resources available.

3.3 *Risk management implications*

3.3.1 Not refreshing the corporate plan at this time would present a risk that the council would not have a clear strategic direction, or the framework for recovery and improvement needed to become a sustainable authority.

3.4 *Environmental implications*

3.4.1 The updated corporate plan retains and expands upon the environmental commitments in *Doing right by Slough*, with the following objective sitting under the third priority:

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

3.5 *Equality implications*

3.5.1 The Council has a duty contained in section 149 of the Equality Act to have due regard to the need to:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The protected characteristics are:

- Age;
- Disability;
- Gender reassignment;
- Marriage and civil partnership;
- Pregnancy and maternity;
- Race;
- Religion or belief;
- Sex; and
- Sexual orientation.

3.5.2 The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day-to-day business and to keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services.

3.5.3 The proposed corporate plan structure includes key equalities objectives:

- Providing quality services for vulnerable children and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- Improving outcomes for disadvantaged children and young people
- Working with partners to target health inequalities and promote wellbeing

3.5.3 An EQIA has been produced to accompany this report – appendix D. Further assessments will need to be conducted in the production of further key strategies and key programmes, needed to deliver the corporate plan.

3.5.4 The corporate plan is a high level strategy setting out the key priorities for the Council. It does not seek to replicate or replace existing strategies or policies on specific areas of service, but will help ensure alignment of financial resources with strategic priorities. The impact of the plan will affect all residents and service users, although key priorities will impact on particular groups more than others. It is anticipated to improve equality for in the following ways:

- The focus on children and young people is anticipated to have a particularly positive impact on this group and for those with care experience.
- The focus on tackling health inequalities between different groups is anticipated to have a positive impact on improving equality between those of different races.
- The focus on health inequalities is also expected to have a particular positive impact on those with disabilities, who suffer disproportionately from these. As noted, above it is anticipated that the plan will have a particularly positive impact for children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).
- The commitment under the third strategic priority to engage with businesses to create new employment opportunities for Slough families and routes to upskill is anticipated to have a positive impact for those on low incomes, who may be more likely to come from certain ethnic groups.

3.5.5 Respondents to the consultation had the opportunity to comment in their own words, and the following equalities issues were highlighted (for further detail please see appendix C, for how these are responded to in the corporate plan please see section 2.12 of this report):

- Some respondents were concerned that the focus on children and young people would disadvantage elderly residents and other vulnerable residents, such as those with disabilities or noted a lack of reference to them in the plan.
- Five respondents raised the theme of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services.
- Eight respondents raised issues relating to support for parents.
- One respondent highlighted the need to tackle inequality, by tailoring services to meet the needs of different communities.
- One respondent commented on specific health challenges faced by those of Asian ethnicity in Slough.

3.5.6 This impact has been fed into the assessment. The perceived negative impact on older residents, including those with disabilities, due to a focus on children, has been addressed by clarification that other priorities do focus on healthy lifestyles and independence. In summary, the refreshed corporate plan is focused on advancing equality of opportunity for groups in the community who are more at risk of inequality, which will assist the Council to meet its equality duties.

3.6 *Workforce implications*

- 3.6.1 The council's purpose and priorities – as expressed in the draft corporate plan will play a central role in shaping and setting staff members' individual objectives, against which they will be assessed in their appraisals.
- 3.6.2 Staff members will be expected to embody the values of the council – as expressed in the 'approach' section of the corporate plan. The new service delivery planning template will require service leads to state how these values will be embedded within their areas.

4. Background Papers

None.

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Slough Borough Council

A fresh start – Corporate Plan 2023-27

Introduction from the Leader

[Holding space for introduction from the Leader]

What is a Corporate Plan?

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

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



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



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



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

Recovery & Improvement

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

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

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

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

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

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

How was the strategy developed?

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

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

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

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

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

[Holding line for engagement with Cabinet on political priorities]

About Slough - 10 key facts

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DRAFT

Our Approach

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



RESIDENT
FOCUSED



PROVIDING
FINANCIAL
SUSTAINABILITY



ENABLING
RESIDENTS AND
COMMUNITIES



STRENGTHENING
PARTNERSHIPS



BUILDING TRUST

Resident Focused

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

How we will do this:

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

Providing financial sustainability

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

How we will do this:

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

Enabling residents and communities

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

How we will do this:

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

Strengthening partnerships

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

How we will do this:

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

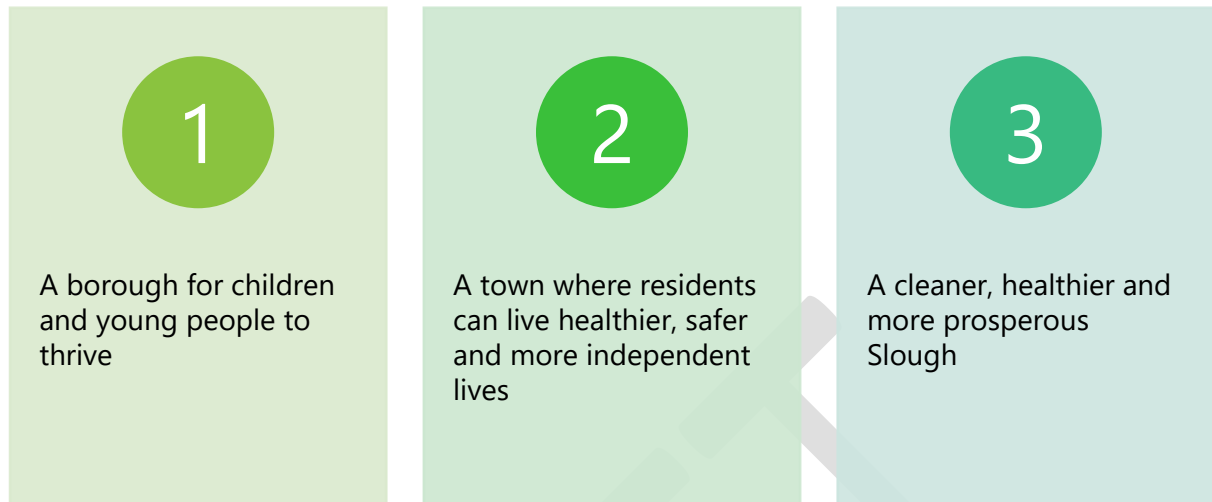
Building trust

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

How we will do this:

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

Our strategic priorities



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

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

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

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

1. A borough for children and young people to thrive

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

Improving outcomes for disadvantaged children and young people

Tackling high rates of child obesity

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

Why this is important?

Research from the King's Fund has shown that:

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

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

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

How we will measure success:

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

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

Working with partners to target health inequalities and promote wellbeing

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

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

Why this is important?

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

How we will measure success:

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

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3. A cleaner, healthier and more prosperous Slough

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

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

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

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

Why this is important?

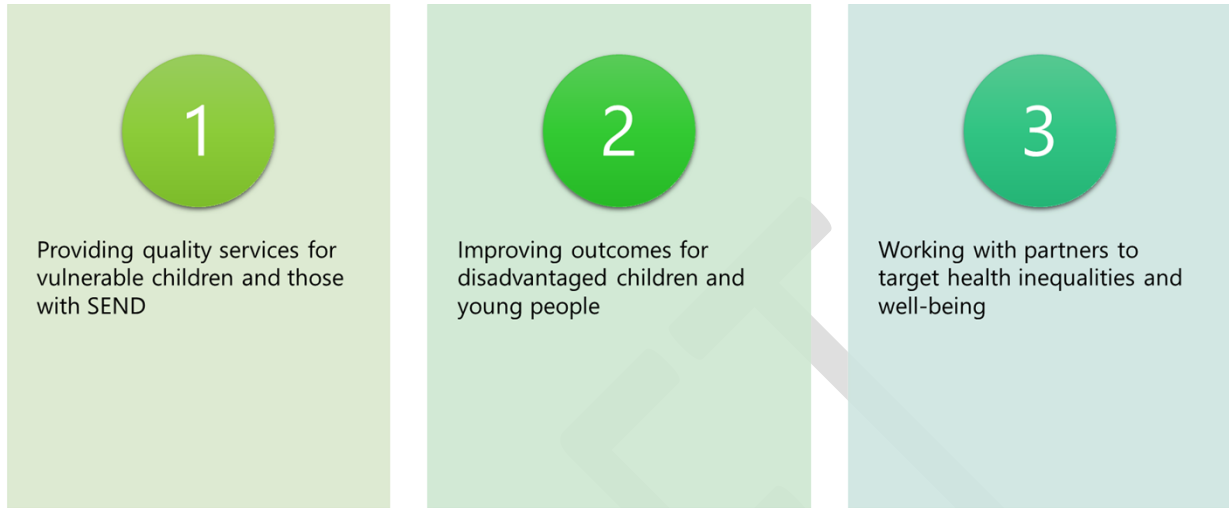
- Poor quality housing, with issues such as damp, can lead to a number of health problems, including respiratory issues, physical pain, and headaches, particularly affecting children.
- Children living in crowded homes are more likely be stressed, anxious and depressed, have poorer physical health, and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

How we will measure success:

- Number of Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) approaches
- Number of homeless cases prevented or relieved
- Total number of homeless households placed in temporary accommodation
- Standard voids at month end
- Average re-let time in days for standard voids
- Percentage of SBC housing repairs completed within timescale by Osbourne
- Percentage of SBC housing repairs completed within one visit by Osbourne
- Percentage of decisions made on major planning application within 13 weeks or timescale agreed with applicant"
- Percentage of decisions made on non-major planning application within 8 weeks or timescale agreed with applicant
- **Indicator around air quality**
- Number of public transport local bus journeys undertaken
- Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling, or composting
- Missed refuse bins per 100,000 collections
- Missed recycling bins per 100,000 collections
- Number of incidents of fly-tipping reported
- Unemployment rate: Number of 16-64 year olds claiming unemployment related benefits as a percentage of working age population
- Number of businesses (enterprises) registered

Equality commitments

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



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

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

Finance / the budget

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

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

[Holding page for any further info finance wishes to include]

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Slough Insights

About this pack...

This pack has been created to provide some insights on Slough, our residents and the borough's economy. It draws upon new data from the 2021 Census, as well as other key sources of information.

It is intended to be viewed as a first point of reference, to provide high-level insights on key challenges and key strengths for the town, and is designed as a tool to support the council in the development of our strategies and in making evidence-based decisions.

This pack should be used alongside other key sources of information, such as the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), equalities data, resident consultations and other service-level sources of data.

In order to save room – data sources and definitions are in the 'notes section' of the slides, and links to our data sources can be found on the final slide.

Headlines

- Slough has a diverse, young population.
- Slough has pockets of severe deprivation.
- Slough has high levels of overcrowding and the largest average household size in England and Wales.
- There has been a larger increase in economically inactive people than active people in Slough since 2011.
- Slough has a high proportion of children in low income families and pensioners in poverty in Berkshire.
- There is a gap in income of £84 per week between Slough residents and those who commute into Slough for work.
- There are high levels of crime, including violent crime.
- Slough has generally good levels of educational attainment but is below the national average for post-16 education and qualifications.

Contents (1)

Population slides 6-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Population size• Population density• Age• Country of birth• Ethnicity• National identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Language• Religion• Sexual orientation & gender identity• Deprivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health inequalities• General health & wellbeing• Disability• Unpaid care
Built & Natural Environment slides 28-35	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Household size• Overcrowding• Tenure• Accommodation & affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Housing benefit, central heating & household car use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Environmental & housing deprivation measures• Green spaces & pollution
Work & Labour Market slides 36-44	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Economic activity• Unemployment & job density• Industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Occupation• Salaries• Vacancies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skills
Vulnerability slides 45-51	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Family income, fuel poverty & loneliness• Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support• Vulnerable children	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adult needs (aged 18-64)• Adult needs (aged 65 and over)

Contents (2)

Income

slides 52-54

- Weekly earnings
- Income deprivation

Crime

slides 55-56

- Crime rates

Education

slides 57-65

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
- Key Stage 2
- Key Stage 4
- Post-16
- Qualifications
- SEND
- EHC plans
- SEN support & EHC plan attainment

Population



Population - Residents & Households

Slough population: 158,500



Females
80,005
(50.5%)



Males
78,495
(49.5%)



52,423 Households

3 people per Household

Slough's population in the 2021 Census was 158,500. This is an increase of 13.0% from 2011, compared to increases of 7.5% in the South East and 6.6% in England. This growth is also larger than our neighbouring authorities:

- Buckinghamshire - 9.5%
- Hillingdon – 11.7%
- Spelthorne – 7.7%
- Windsor & Maidenhead – 6.2%

Slough is now the 127th largest local authority by total population size, up 13 places from 2011.

There are now 52,423 households in Slough containing at least one person – a growth of only 3.3% on 2011, compared to 6.1% in England and Wales.

Slough has a mean household size of 3 people per household. This is the largest mean household size in England and Wales. The mean for England and Wales is 2.4.



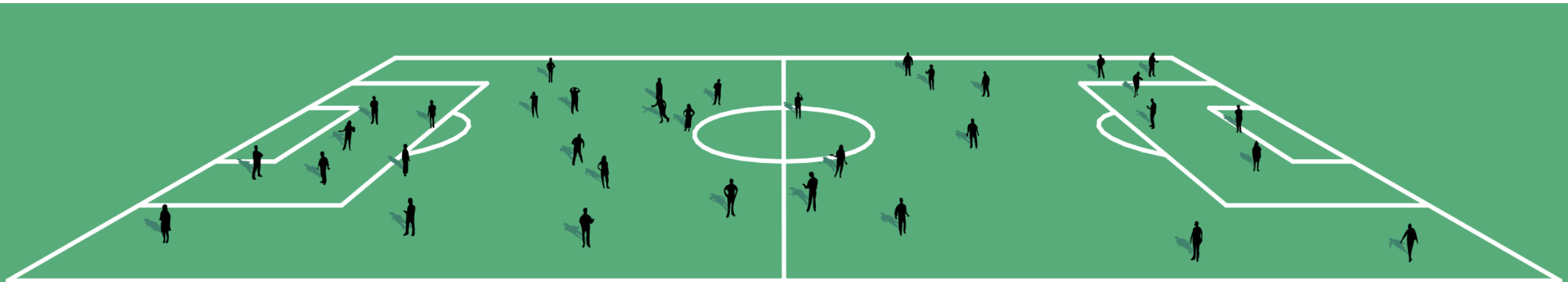
Population - Density

Slough is the third most densely populated LA in the South East, with 4,871 usual residents per square kilometre (48.7 per hectare compared to 45.8 in 2011, South East: 4.87, England: 4.34).

This is the equivalent of around 35 people living on each football pitch-sized area of land, compared to an average of just 3 across England.

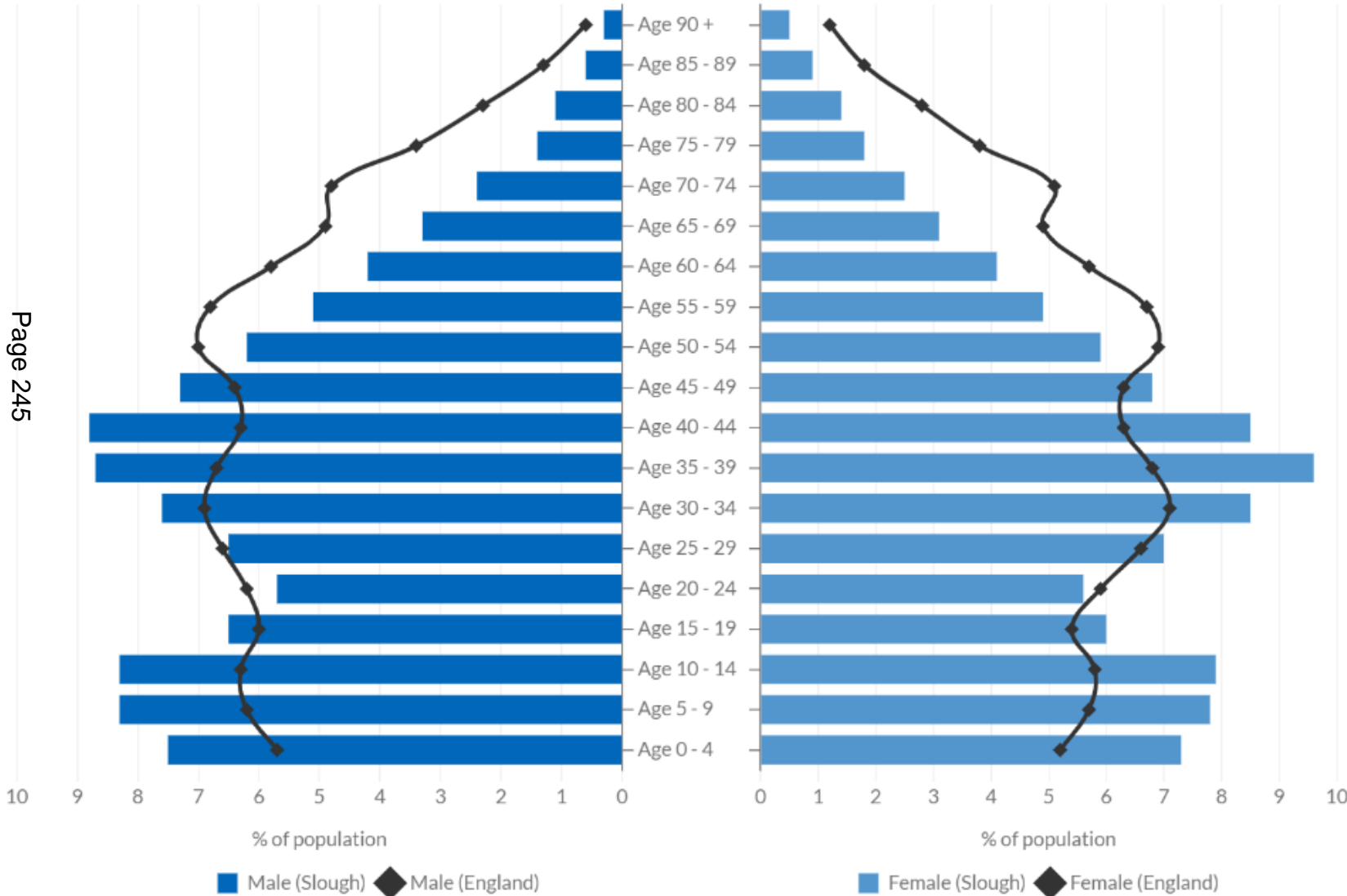
Slough is the fifth most densely populated Local Authority outside of London.

Slough has the third smallest population within Berkshire but is the most densely populated.





Population - Age



25% of Slough's residents are aged 0-15, 65.4% are aged 16-64, and 9.7% are aged 65 or over.

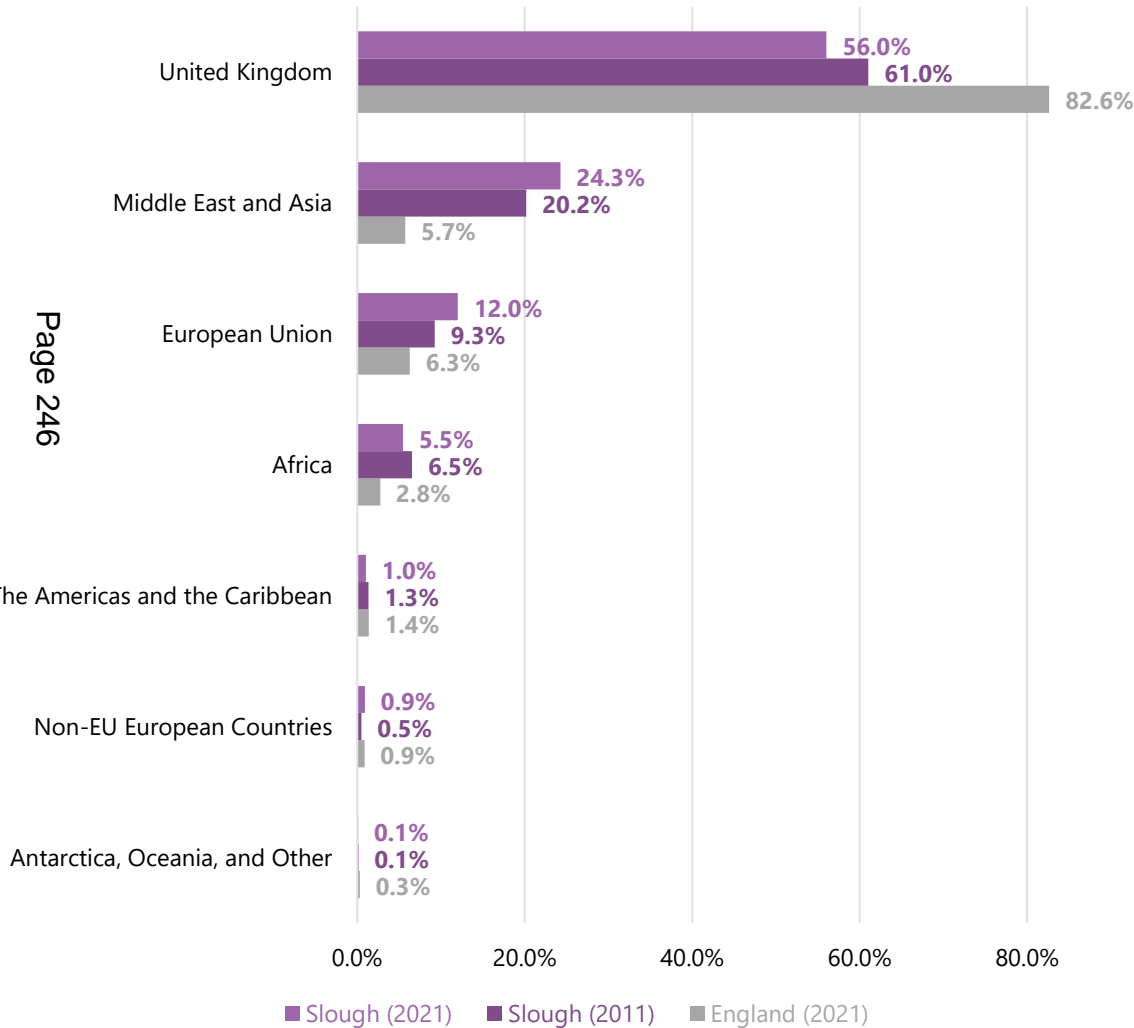
Slough's average age is 34, compared to 41 for the South East and 40 for England.

Slough has the second largest proportion of children aged 15 or under in England and Wales, behind only Barking and Dagenham.



Population – Country of Birth (Broad)

Broad Country of Birth



56% of Slough’s population were born in the UK, 24.3% were born in the Middle East and Asia, and 12.0% were born in the EU.

Broad Country of Birth: Number of Slough Residents	2021	2011	Change
United Kingdom	88,806	85,553	+4%
Middle East and Asia	38,461	28,304	+36%
European Union	19,042	12,996	+47%
Africa	8,662	9,179	-6%
The Americas and the Caribbean	1,633	1,886	-13%
Non-EU European Countries	1,454	728	+100%
Antarctica, Oceania, and Other	161	195	-17%



Population – Country of Birth (Detailed)

After England, the most selected countries of birth for residents in Slough were:

1. India
2. Pakistan
3. Poland
4. Romania
5. Kenya

10.5% of Slough’s population arrived in the UK aged 0-15, 33.2% arrived aged 16-64, and 0.3% arrived aged 65 or over.

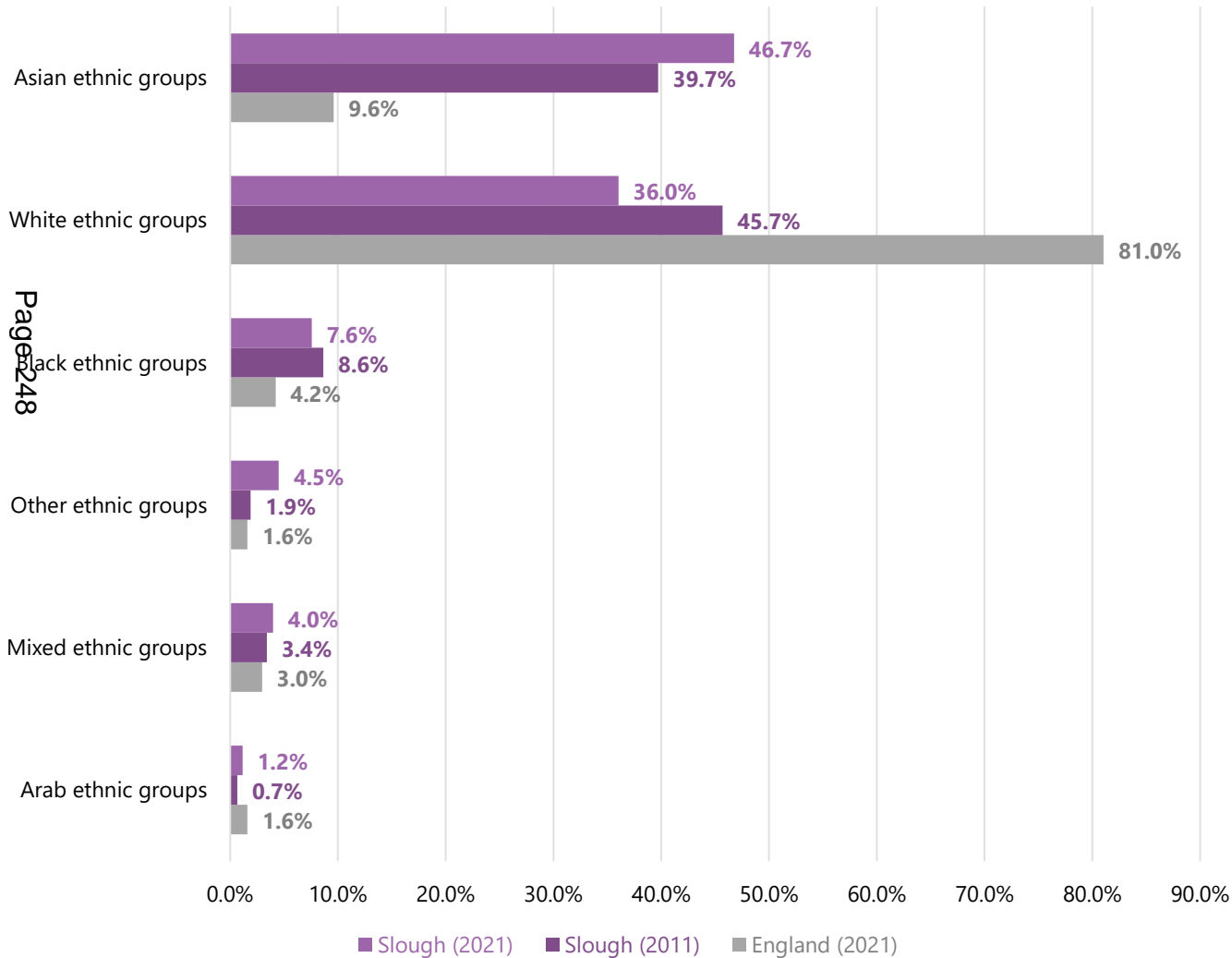
64.1% of the migrant population in Slough have resided in the UK for 10 or more years, 15.6% for 5-9 years, 11.3% for 2-4 years, and 9% for less than 2 years.

Broad Country of Birth (2021)	Detailed Country of Birth	Slough Number	Slough %
United Kingdom	England	87,350	55.1%
Middle East and Asia	India	17,107	10.8%
Middle East and Asia	Pakistan	14,418	9.1%
European Union	Poland	8,912	5.6%
European Union	Romania	3,551	2.2%
Africa	Kenya	1,940	1.2%
Middle East and Asia	Sri Lanka	1,385	0.9%
Non-EU Europe	Other Europe	1,384	0.9%
Africa	Somalia	1,336	0.8%
Africa	Other South and Eastern Africa	1,228	0.8%



Population – Ethnicity (1)

Broad Ethnic Groups



46.7% of Slough’s population are from Asian ethnic groups and 36.0% are from White ethnic groups.

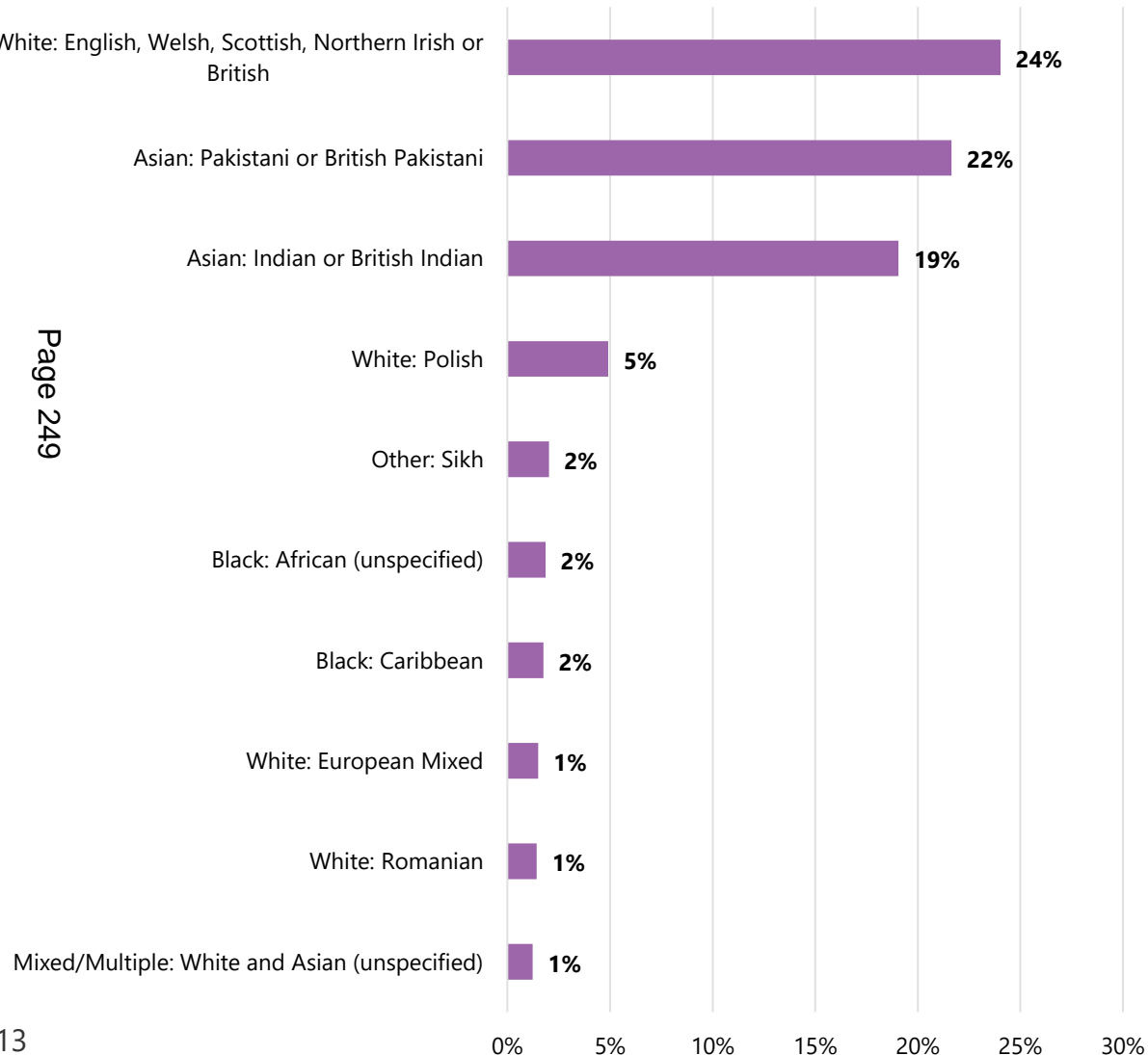
Broad Ethnic Groups: Number of Slough Residents	2021	2011	Change
Asian ethnic groups	74,093	55,697	+33%
White ethnic groups	57,134	64,053	-11%
Black ethnic groups	11,992	12,115	-1%
Other ethnic groups	7,144	2,628	+172%
Mixed ethnic groups	6,311	4,758	+33%
Arab ethnic groups	1,826	954	+91%

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Population – Ethnicity (2)

Ten Largest (Detailed) Ethnic Groups in Slough in 2021

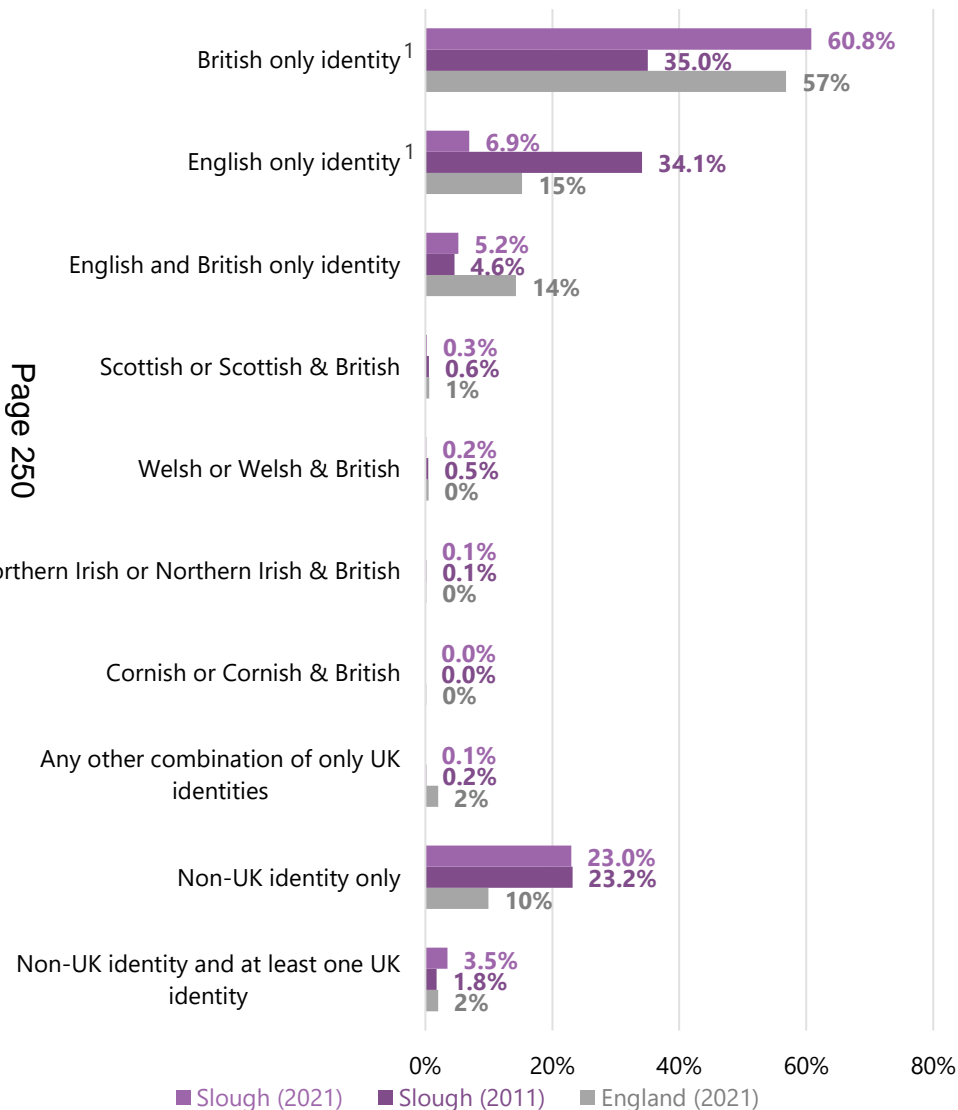


Ten Largest (Detailed) Ethnic Groups in Slough in 2021	No. Residents
White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	38,093
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Pakistani or British Pakistani	34,317
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh: Indian or British Indian	30,209
White: Polish	7,778
Other ethnic group: Sikh	3,200
Black, Black British, Black Welsh of African background: African unspecified	2,933
Black, Black British, Black Welsh or Caribbean background: Caribbean	2,769
White: European Mixed	2,363
White: Romanian	2,258
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups: White and Asian (unspecified)	1,945



Population – National identity

National Identity



23% of Slough’s population identify as a non-UK identity only

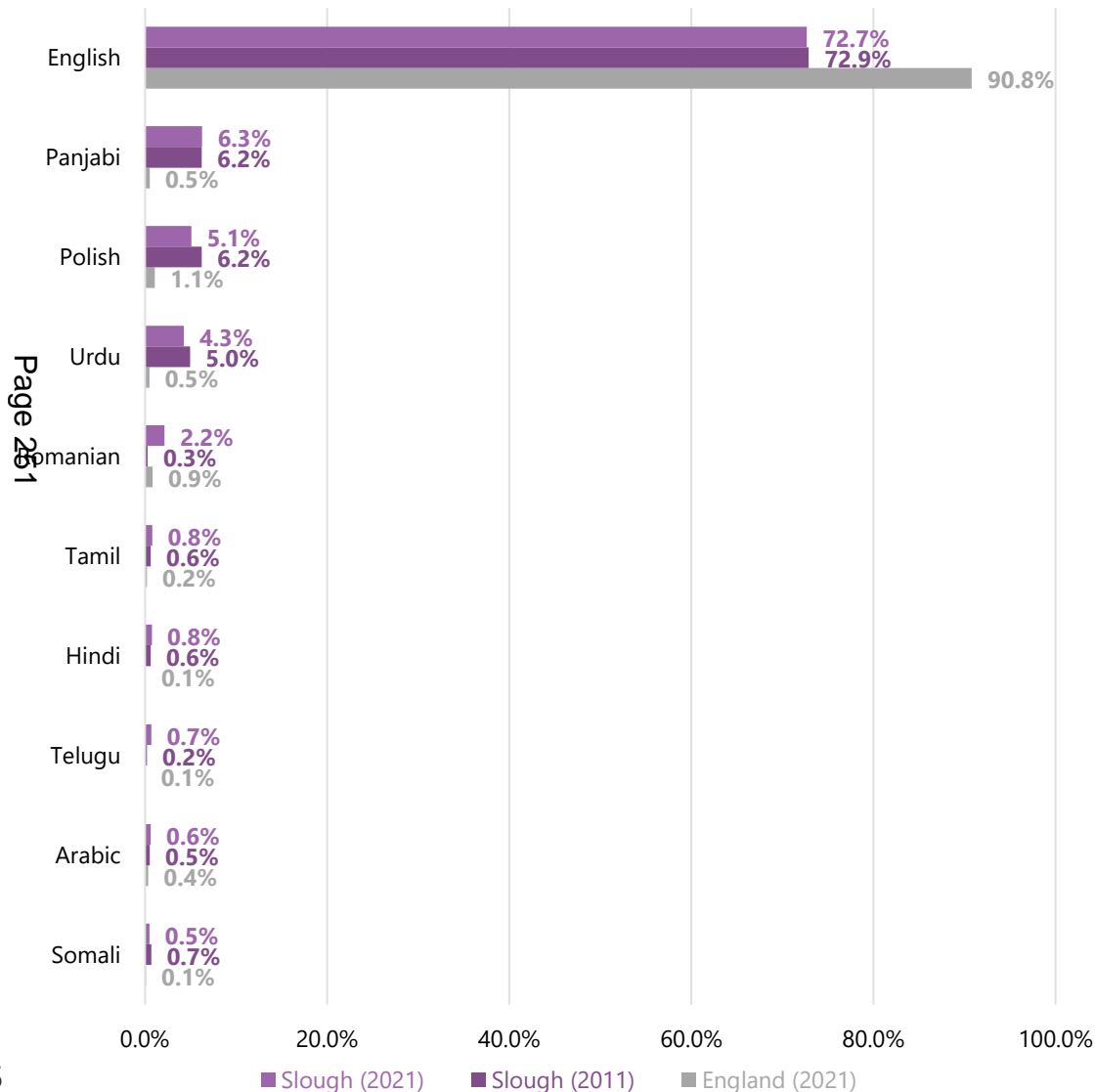
- 7,767 people (4.9%) identify as Polish only
- 6,866 (4.3%) identify as Indian only
- 3,828 (2.4%) identify as Pakistani only
- 3,295 (2.1%) identify as Romanian only

National Identity: Number of Slough Residents	2021	2011	Change
British only identity ¹	96373	49093	+96% ¹
English only identity ¹	11000	47868	-77% ¹
English and British only identity	8248	6416	+29%
Scottish or Scottish & British	402	778	-48%
Welsh or Welsh & British	274	634	-57%
Northern Irish or Northern Irish & British	125	199	-37%
Cornish or Cornish & British	9	11	-18%
Any other combination of only UK identities	98	223	-56%
Non-UK identity only	36460	32490	+12%
Non-UK identity and at least one UK identity	5509	2493	+121%



Population - Language

Main Language



72.7% of Slough's population aged 3 and over speak English as their main language (England: 90.8%).

68 people in Slough use a Sign Language as their main language (57 use BSL).

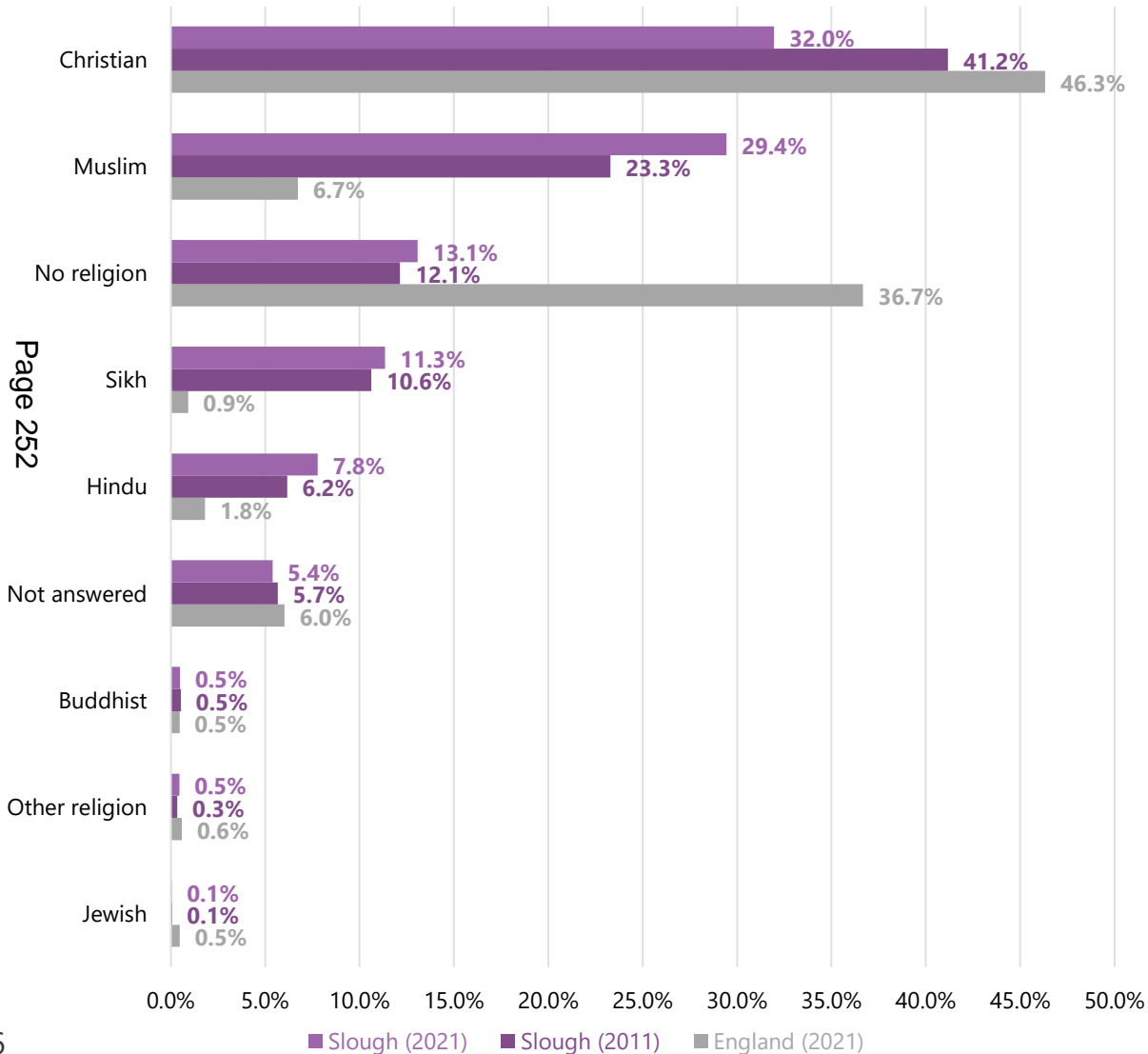
Of those that did not speak English as their main language in Slough, 42.8% can speak English very well, which is an increase of 34% from 2011.

Main Language: Number of Slough Residents	2021	2011	Change
English	110,212	96,508	+14%
Panjabi	9,527	8,247	+16%
Polish	7,724	8,249	-6%
Urdu	6,497	6,568	-1%
Romanian	3,275	401	+717%
Tamil	1,224	860	+42%
Hindi	1,148	825	+39%
Telugu	1,066	275	+288%
Arabic	983	703	+40%
Somali	772	938	-18%



Population - Religion

Religion



The number of Christians in Slough has decreased by 12.2% since 2011, while the number of Muslims has increased by 42.9% and the number of Sikhs has increased by 20.8%.

Slough has the 11th fewest people nationally who stated they have no religion (13.1% of Slough's population, compared to 36.7% for England).

Religion: Number of Slough Residents	2021	2011	Change
Christian	50,664	57,726	-12%
Muslim	46,661	32,655	43%
No religion	20,726	17,024	22%
Sikh	17,985	14,889	21%
Hindu	12,343	8,643	43%
Not answered	8,544	7,956	7%
Buddhist	776	743	4%
Other religion	716	482	49%
Jewish	85	87	-2%



Population - Sexual orientation & gender identity

1.9% of Slough's population identified as an LGB+ orientation (lower than the England average of 3.2%).

0.9% of Slough's population identified as a different gender to their sex registered at birth (same as the England average).

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Sexual Orientation (2021)	Slough Number	Slough %	England %
Straight or Heterosexual	104,943	88.2%	89.4%
LGB+ orientation (total)	2,313	1.9%	3.2%
Gay or Lesbian	806	0.7%	1.5%
Bisexual	1,095	0.9%	1.3%
Pansexual	335	0.3%	0.2%
Asexual	29	0.0%	0.1%
Queer	7	0.0%	0.0%
All other sexual orientations	41	0.0%	0.0%
Not answered	11,677	9.8%	7.5%

Gender Identity (2021)	Slough Number	Slough %	England %
Gender identity the same as sex registered at birth	107,503	90.4%	93.5%
Gender identity different from sex registered at birth (total)	1,081	0.9%	0.9%
Gender identity different from sex registered at birth but no specific identity given ¹	633	0.5%	0.2%
Trans woman	186	0.2%	0.1%
Trans man	206	0.2%	0.1%
Non-binary	25	0.0%	0.1%
All other gender identities	31	0.0%	0.0%
Not answered	10,351	8.7%	6.0%

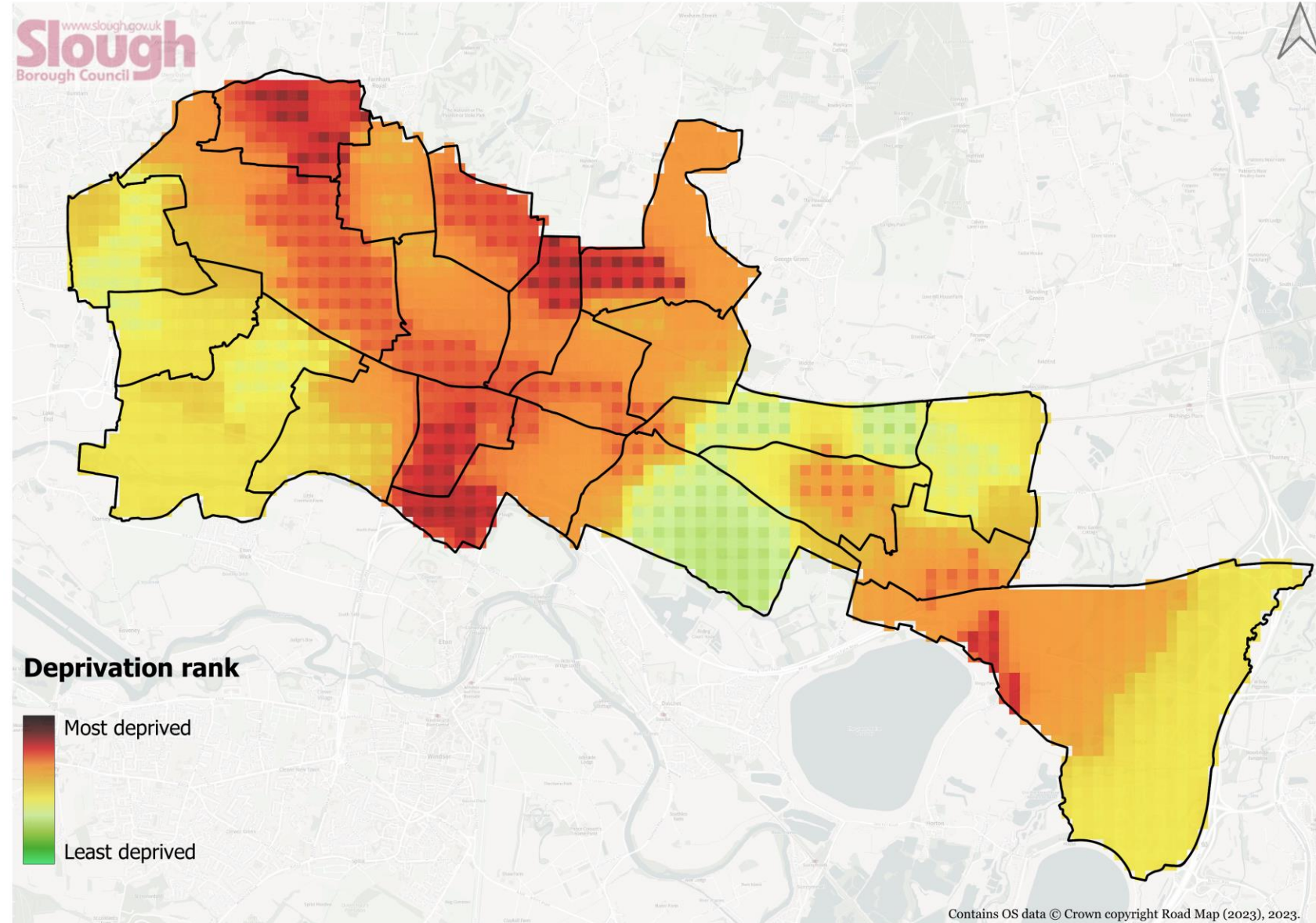


Population – Deprivation (1)

Slough is more deprived than the England average on the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).

Page 254
71% of Slough's Lower-tier Super Output Areas (LSOAs) fall below the national average of the IMD.

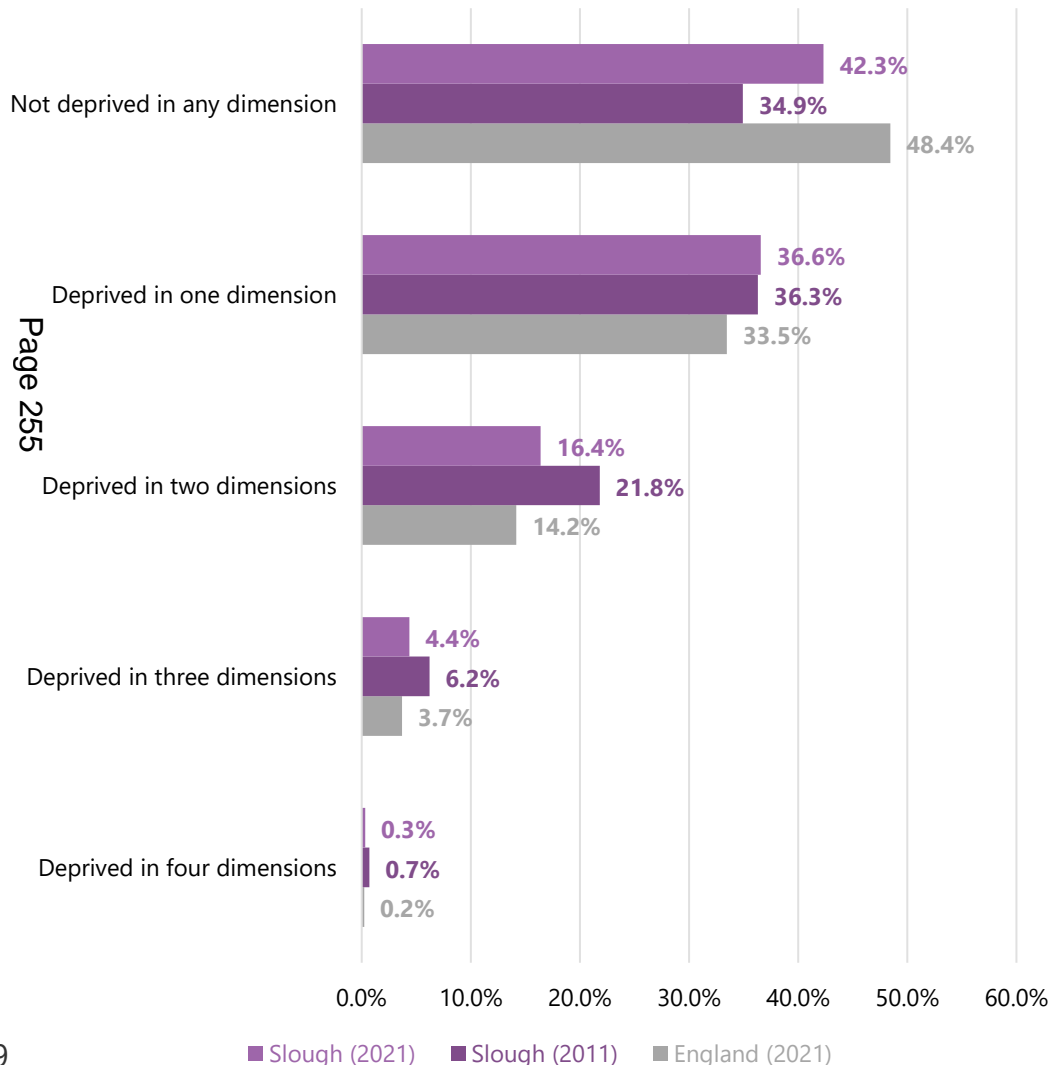
There are particularly severe pockets in Britwell, Chalvey, Herschel Park, Elliman, Wexham Court, and Colnbrook with Poyle.





Population – Deprivation (2)

Household Deprivation









30,240 households in Slough (57.7%) are deprived in one or more dimension (compared to 51.6% in England). This is a decrease of 8% from 2011, when it was 65.1%.

The number of households deprived in one dimension has increased by 4%, but there has been a 24% decrease in households deprived in two or more dimensions and a 25% increase in households that are not deprived in any dimension.

Household Deprivation: Number of Slough Households	2021	2011	Change
Household is not deprived in any dimension	17,733	22,184	+25%
Household is deprived in one dimension	18,437	19,176	+4%
Household is deprived in two dimensions	11,077	8,603	-22%
Household is deprived in three dimensions	3,156	2,293	-27%
Household is deprived in four dimensions	363	168	-54%

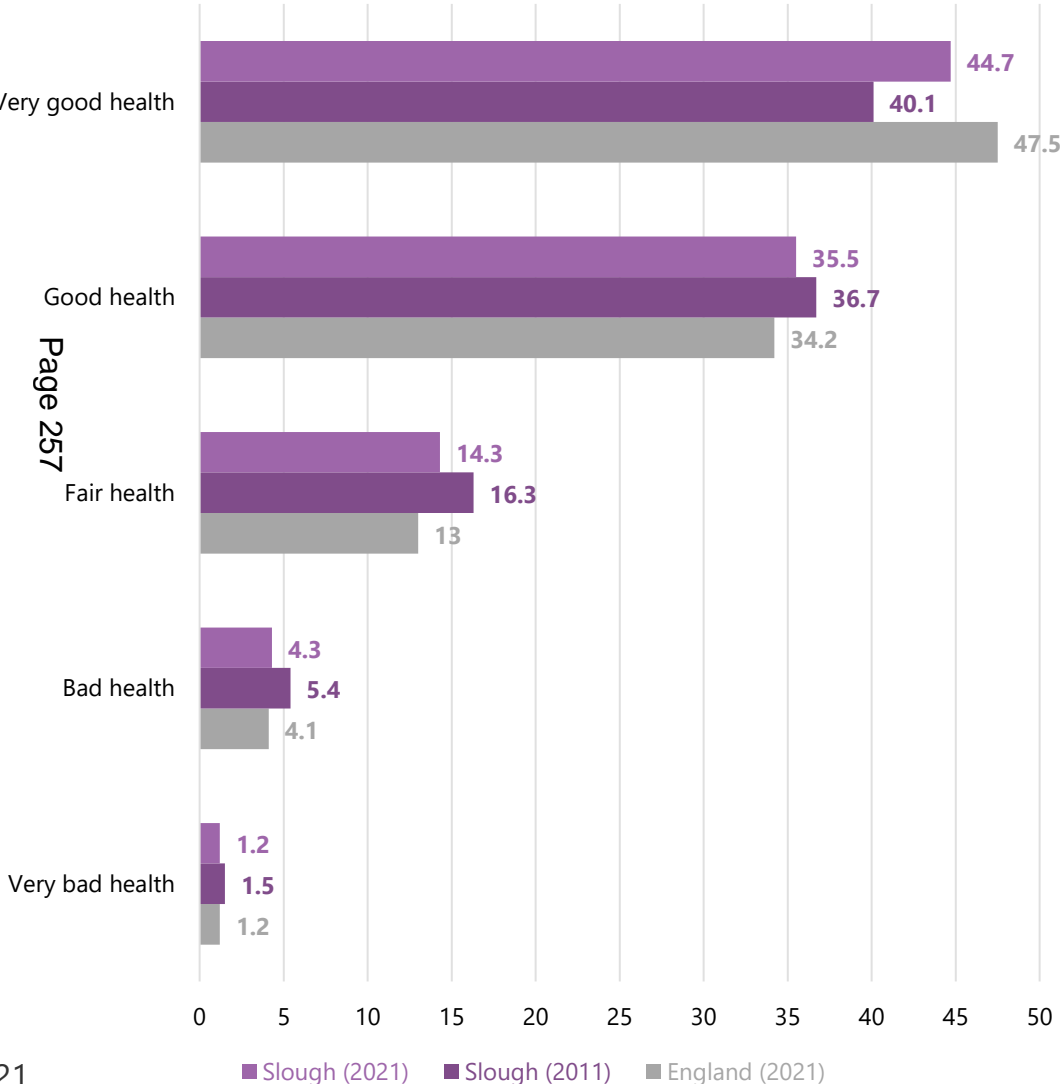
Health Inequalities in Slough

	Health measure	Slough	RBWM	SE
	Healthy life expectancy (M)	58.1	69.7	65.5
	Healthy life expectancy (F)	60.3	70.3	65.9
 Page 256	Mortality rate: cardiovascular (deaths per 100k under 75)	108.9	51.5	63.1
	Year 6: prevalence of obesity (incl. severe obesity)	28.4%	17.5%	20.0%
	Low birth weight: term babies (under 2,500g)	4.4%	2.5%	2.4%
	% physically active adults (150+ minutes activity per week)	51.6%	76.2%	70.5%



Population - General health

General Health (Standardised)¹



Over half of Slough’s population reported “very good” health in 2021. This proportion has increased since 2011.

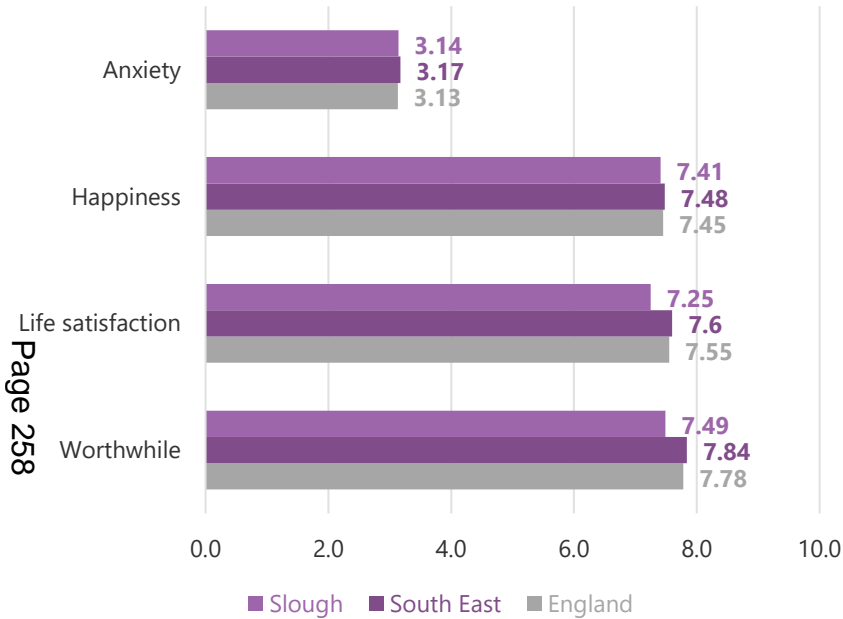
Slough has a smaller proportion of residents reporting they have “very good” health than the England average and a slightly larger proportion of residents with “good” or “fair” health.

General Health (Non-standardised ¹) (2021)	Slough Number	Slough %
Very good health	81,941	51.7%
Good health	53,816	34.0%
Fair health	16,804	10.6%
Bad health	4,625	2.9%
Very bad health	1,314	0.8%



Population - General wellbeing

Average Score



Slough has similar average scores for anxiety and happiness to the South East and England averages, but has lower average scores for life satisfaction and feeling that the things they do are worthwhile.

Slough has smaller proportions of people with “very good” ratings for anxiety, happiness, life satisfaction, and feeling worthwhile than the England average, but has larger proportions of “good” ratings.

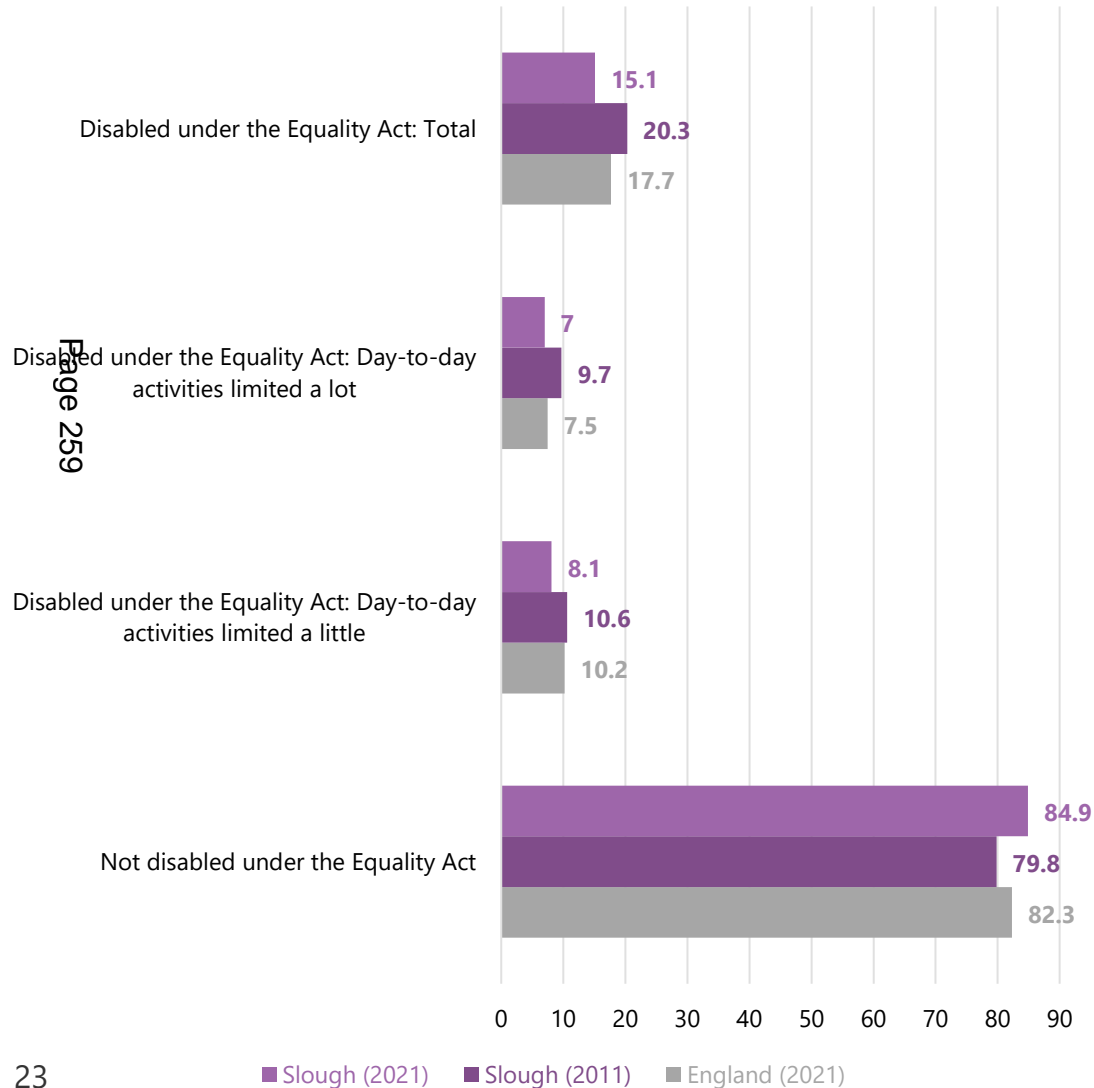
Slough has smaller proportions of “poor” ratings for anxiety and happiness than the England average, but slightly larger proportions for “poor” life satisfaction and feeling worthwhile.

Rating	Slough Anxiety	England Anxiety	Slough Happiness	England Happiness	Slough Life Satisfaction	England Life Satisfaction	Slough Worthwhile	England Worthwhile
Very Good	31.0%	35.7%	31.8%	32.3%	16.0%	26.0%	25.0%	32.6%
Good	29.0%	24.1%	43.8%	42.5%	61.6%	54.0%	53.9%	50.3%
Fair	22.3%	17.6%	16.8%	16.8%	17.0%	15.1%	17.1%	13.1%
Poor	17.8%	22.6%	7.6%	8.4%	5.4%	5.0%	4.1%	4.0%



Population – Disability (1)

Disability (Standardised)¹



The proportion of disabled people in Slough has decreased since 2011. However, it is important to note that the ONS has changed the way it identifies disabled people², which may have impacted the number of people identified as disabled in the data.

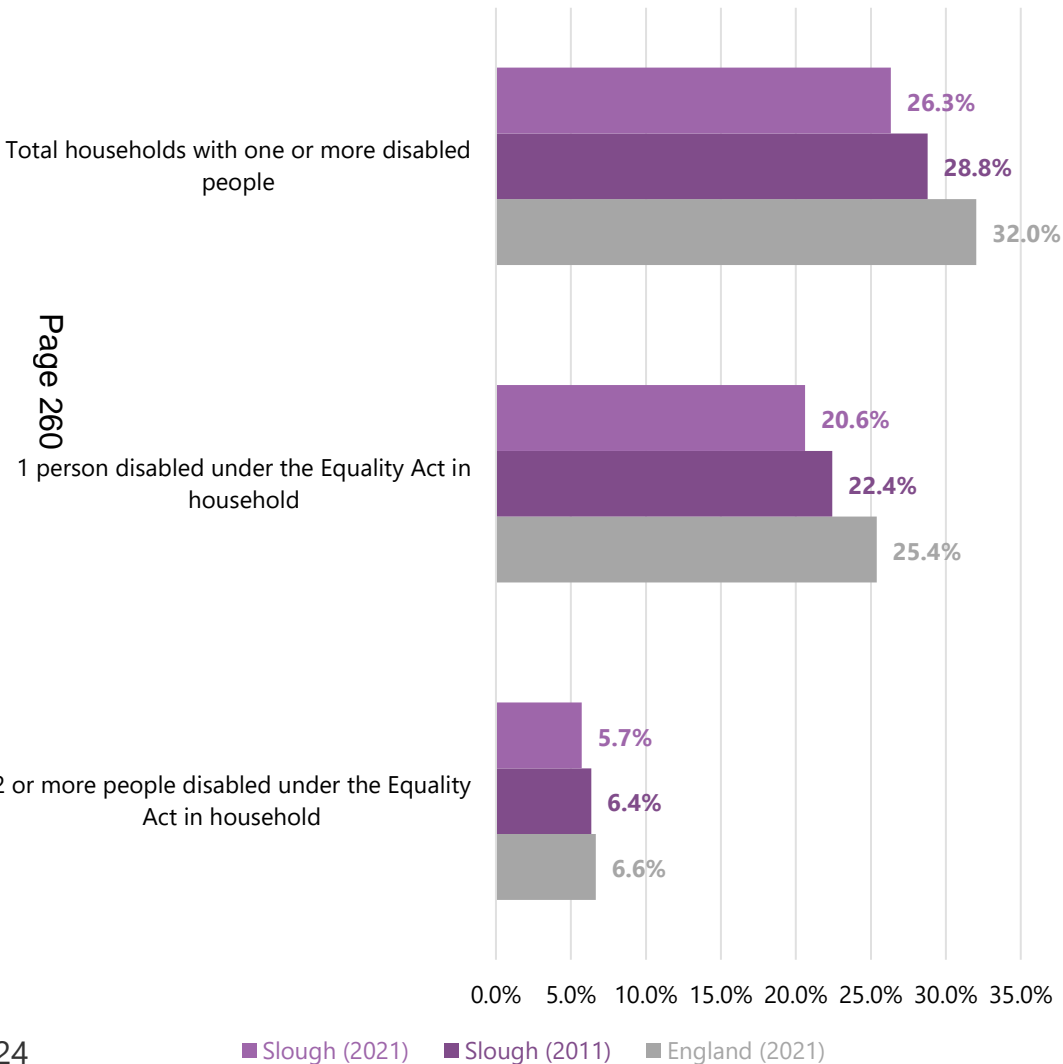
Slough has a smaller proportion of disabled people than the England average.

Disability (Non-standardised ¹) (2021)	Slough Number	Slough %
Disabled: Total	17,975	11.3%
Disabled: Day-to-day activities limited a lot	7,880	5.0%
Disabled: Day-to-day activities limited a little	10,095	6.4%
Not disabled/day-to-day activities not limited	140,523	88.7%



Population – Disability (2)

Number of Disabled People in Household¹



Slough has a smaller proportion of households with disabled residents than the England average.

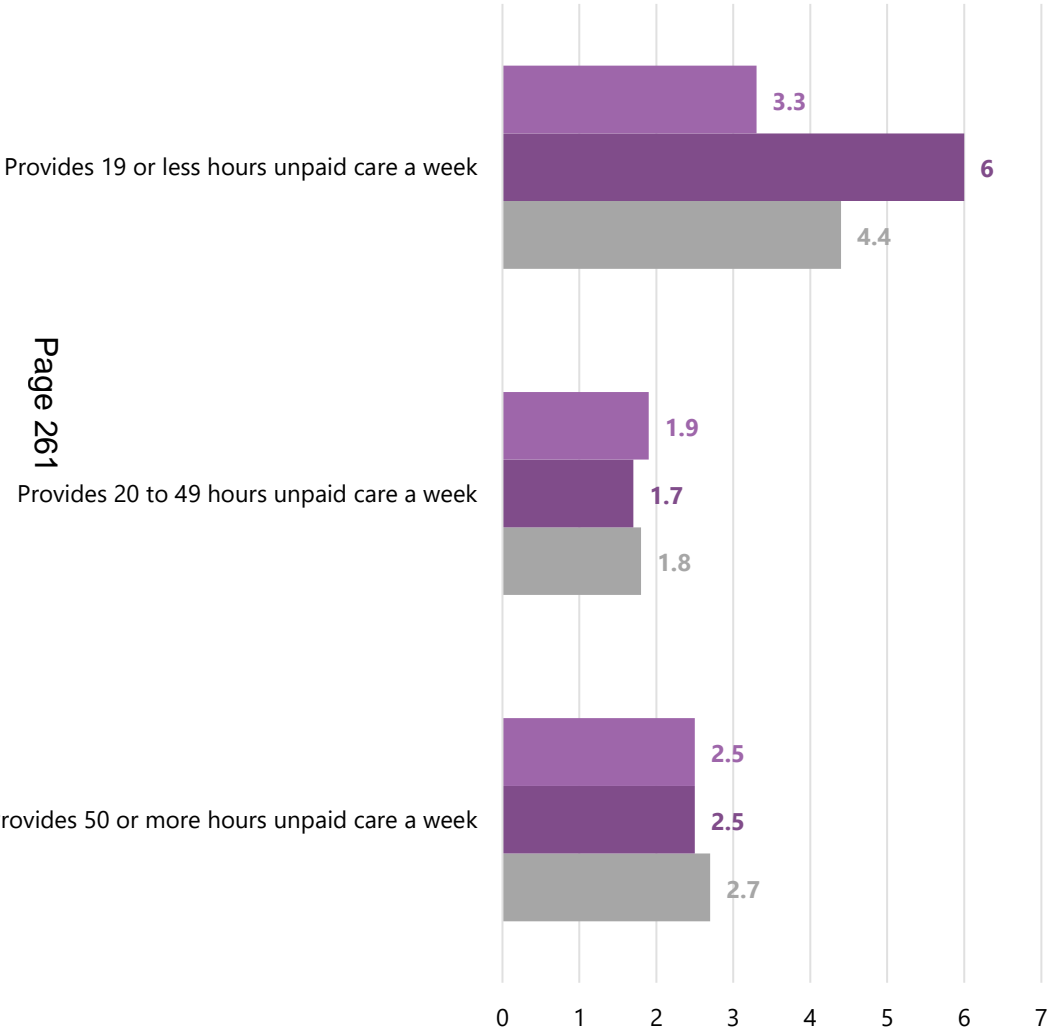
The number of households with one or more disabled people has decreased since 2011. However, it is important to note that the ONS has changed the way it identifies disabled people² since 2011, which may have impacted the number of people identified as disabled in the data.

Number of Disabled People in Slough Households ¹	2021	2011	Change
1 person disabled person in household	10,810	11,388	-5%
2 or more disabled people in household	2,998	3,225	-7%
Total households with 1 or more disabled people	13,808	14,613	-6%



Population – Unpaid care

Unpaid Care (Standardised)¹



The proportion of residents providing 1-19 hours of unpaid care a week has decreased since 2011, but the proportion of residents providing 20-49 hours has increased slightly.

Slough has a smaller proportion of residents providing 19 hours or less of unpaid care a week than the England average.

Unpaid Care (Non-standardised ¹) (2021)	Slough Number	Slough %
Provides 1 to 19 hours unpaid care a week	4,506	2.8%
Provides 20 to 49 hours unpaid care a week	2,644	1.7%
Provides 50 or more hours unpaid care a week	2,994	1.9%

Wider determinants of health

The wider determinants of health are a diverse range of social, economic and environmental factors which influence people's mental and physical health.

Relative contribution of determinants of health:

- 30% - Health Behaviours
- 40% - Socio-economic Factors
- 20% - Clinical Care
- 10% - Built Environment

The Public Health Outcomes Framework uses these six domains to map these determinants.



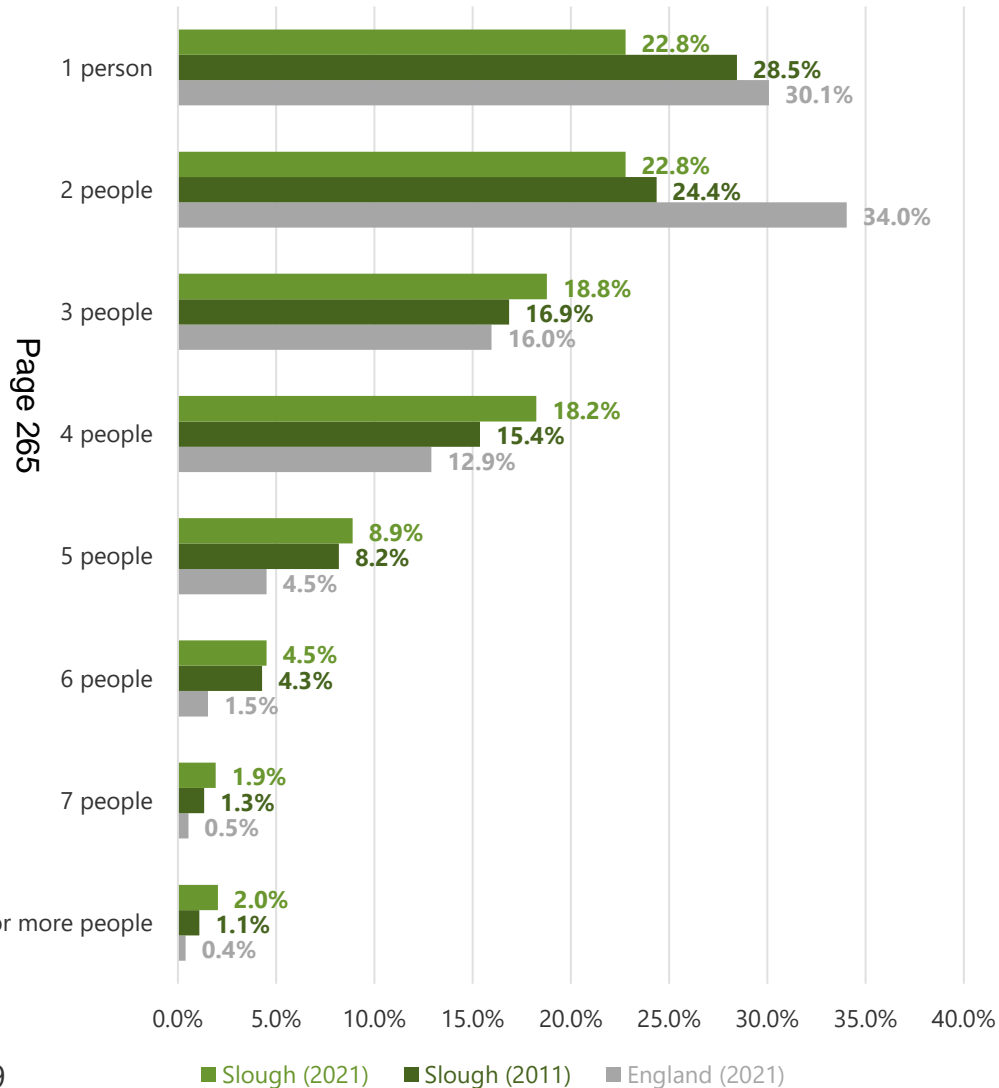
Public Health
Outcomes Framework





Built & Natural Environment – Household size

Household Size



There are 52,423 households in Slough.

Slough has the largest average household size in England and Wales at 3 people per household (England: 2.4).

There has been an increase of 49% in the number of households with 7 people and an increase of 92% in the number of households with 8 or more people.

There are now 2,078 households consisting of 7 or more people.





Built & Natural Environment - Overcrowding

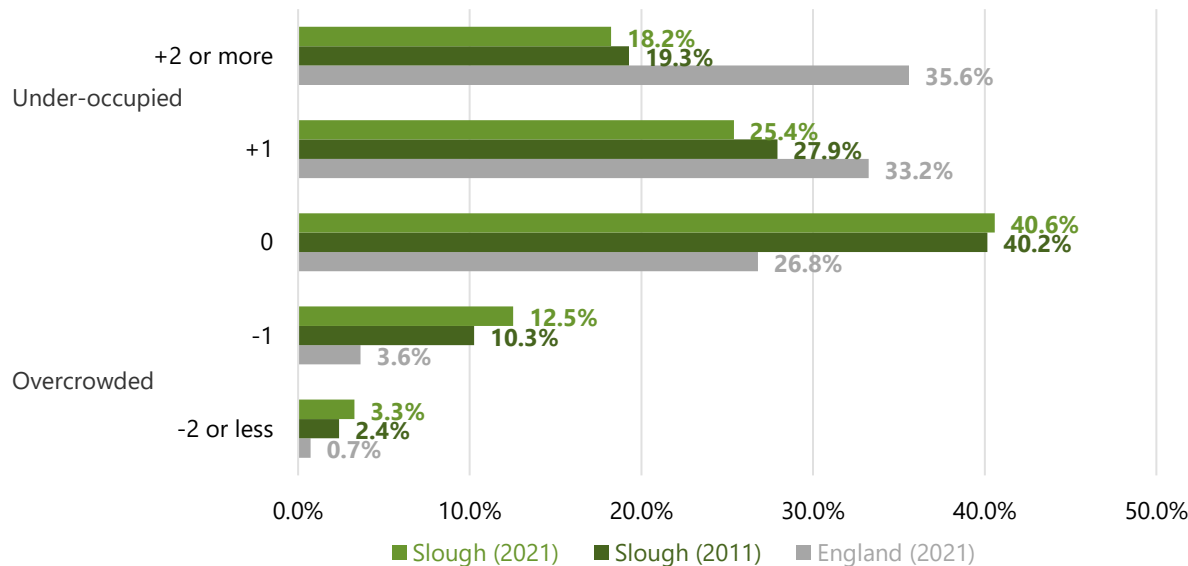
15.8% of households in Slough are overcrowded (England: 4.3%). The number of overcrowded households has increased by 29% since 2011.

Slough has a larger proportion of 1 bedroom households (18.5%) than the England average (11.6%).

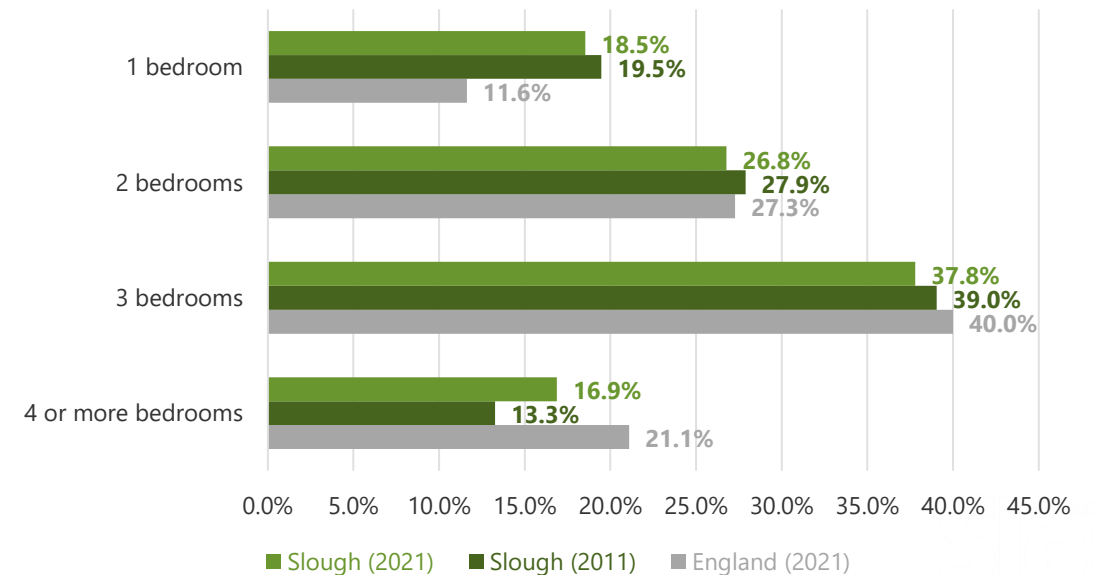
Slough has a smaller proportion of households with 4 or more bedrooms (Slough: 16.9%, England: 21.1%).

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Occupancy Rating for Bedrooms



Number of Bedrooms





Built & Natural Environment - Tenure

Slough has a lower proportion of households that outright own their homes than the South East and England averages and the lowest proportion in the South East.

The proportion of households that own their home on a mortgage or loan is the same as England.

Slough has a larger proportion of households renting their homes than the South East and England averages.

The number of households renting privately has increased by 30% since 2011.

Tenure of Household	Slough	South East	England
Owned outright	19.5%	34.3%	32.5%
Owned with a mortgage or loan	29.0%	31.4%	28.8%
Private rented	30.7%	19.2%	20.5%
Social rented	19.6%	13.6%	17.1%



Built & Natural Environment – Accommodation & affordability

Slough has fewer detached houses/bungalows than the South East and England averages and more purpose-built blocks of flats/tenements and terraced houses/bungalows.

Accommodation type	Slough	South East	England
Detached	10.4%	28.0%	22.9%
Semi-detached	29.6%	28.4%	31.5%
Terraced	26.3%	21.3%	23.0%
In a purpose-built block of flats or tenement	29.6%	16.8%	17.1%
Part of a converted or shared house, including bedsits	2.7%	3.1%	3.5%

The average house price in Slough is 9.96 times the average earnings.

	Slough	South East	England
Average house price	£318,081	£388,873	£303,557
Housing affordability ratio	9.96	10.38	8.28

Slough South East England

People claiming housing benefit	10.4%	7.1%	8.8%
Households with no central heating	2%	1.3%	1.5%
Households with no car	20.3%	16.9%	23.5%

Slough has larger proportions of people claiming housing benefit and households with no central heating than the South East and England averages.

Slough has a larger proportion of households with no car than the South East average but lower than the England average.



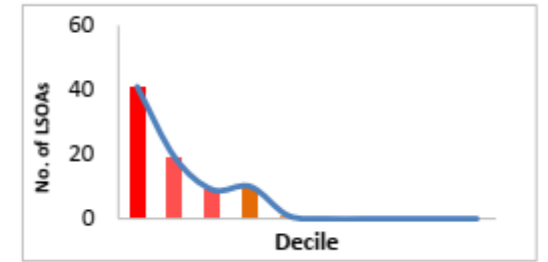


Built & Natural Environment - Deprivation

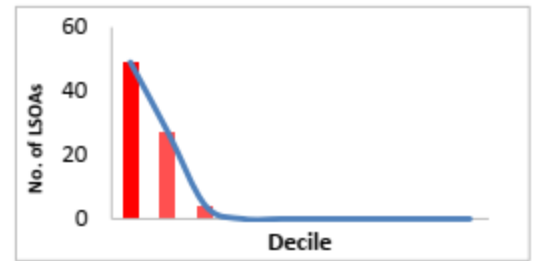
Slough is more deprived than the England average for barriers to housing and services in the 2019 indices of deprivation and is much more deprived than the average for wider barriers (i.e., overcrowding, homelessness, housing affordability). Slough is also more deprived than the England average for living environment (e.g., condition of home, air quality).

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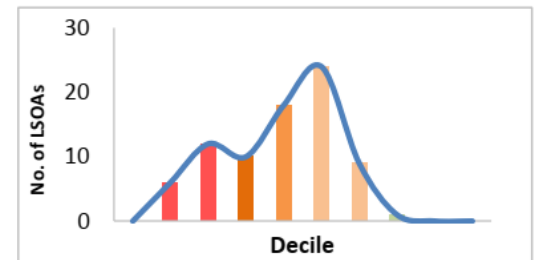
		Most Deprived ← → Least Deprived										
		Decile	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Barriers to Housing and Services	Number of LSOAs		41	19	9	10	1	0	0	0	0	0
	Percentage of LSOAs		51%	24%	11%	13%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Cumulative Percentage of LSOAs		51%	75%	86%	99%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%



		Most Deprived ← → Least Deprived										
		Decile	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Wider Barriers Sub-domain Decile	Number of LSOAs		49	27	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Percentage of LSOAs		61%	34%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Cumulative Percentage of LSOAs		61%	95%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%



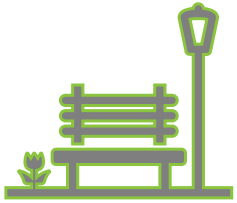
		Most Deprived ← → Least Deprived										
		Decile	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Living Environment	Number of LSOAs		0	6	12	10	18	24	9	1	0	0
	Percentage of LSOAs		0%	8%	15%	13%	23%	30%	11%	1%	0%	0%
	Cumulative Percentage of LSOAs		0%	8%	23%	35%	58%	88%	99%	100%	100%	100%



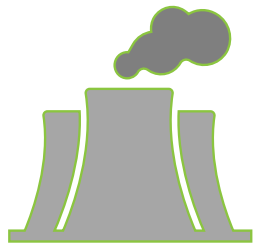
Green spaces and air quality



Slough has 240 hectares of green space (7.4% of the borough, England: 2.2%).



98 hectares of this is public parks and gardens (3% of the borough, England: 0.8%).



However, Slough has higher than average concentrations of Benzene, Nitrogen Dioxide, Particulates and Sulphur Dioxide.

6.3% of mortality in Slough is attributable to particulate air pollution (England: 5.5%).

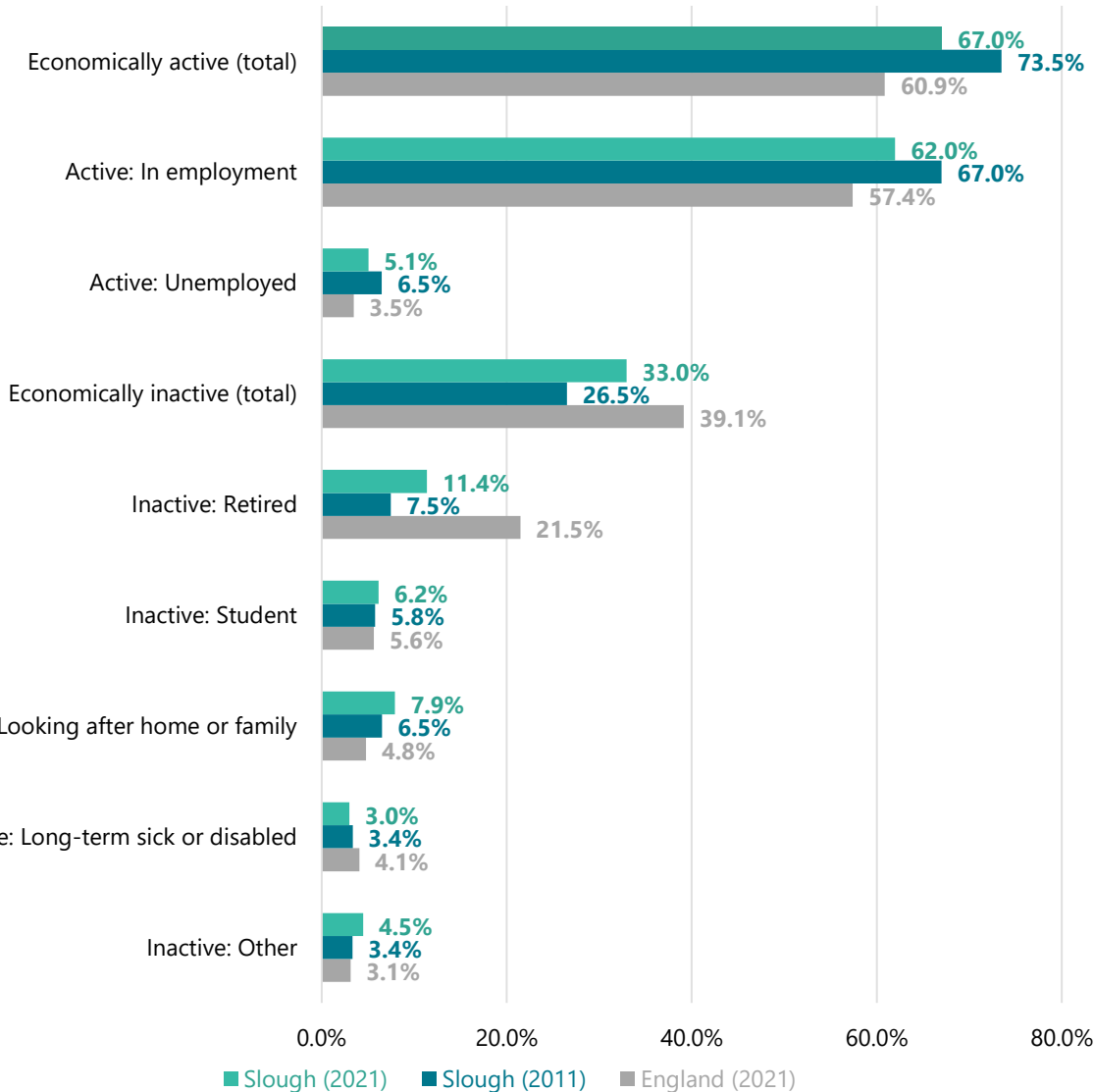






Work & Labour Market – Economic activity

Economic Activity



67% of Slough's population are economically active (England: 60.9%) and 33% are economically inactive (England: 39.1%)

There has been a larger increase in the number of economically inactive people (+47%) than economically active people (+8%) since 2011.



Work & Labour Market – Unemployment & job density

Slough is more deprived than the South East average but less than the England average for employment in the 2019 indices of deprivation.

Slough has a larger proportion of people claiming unemployment benefit than the South East and England averages.

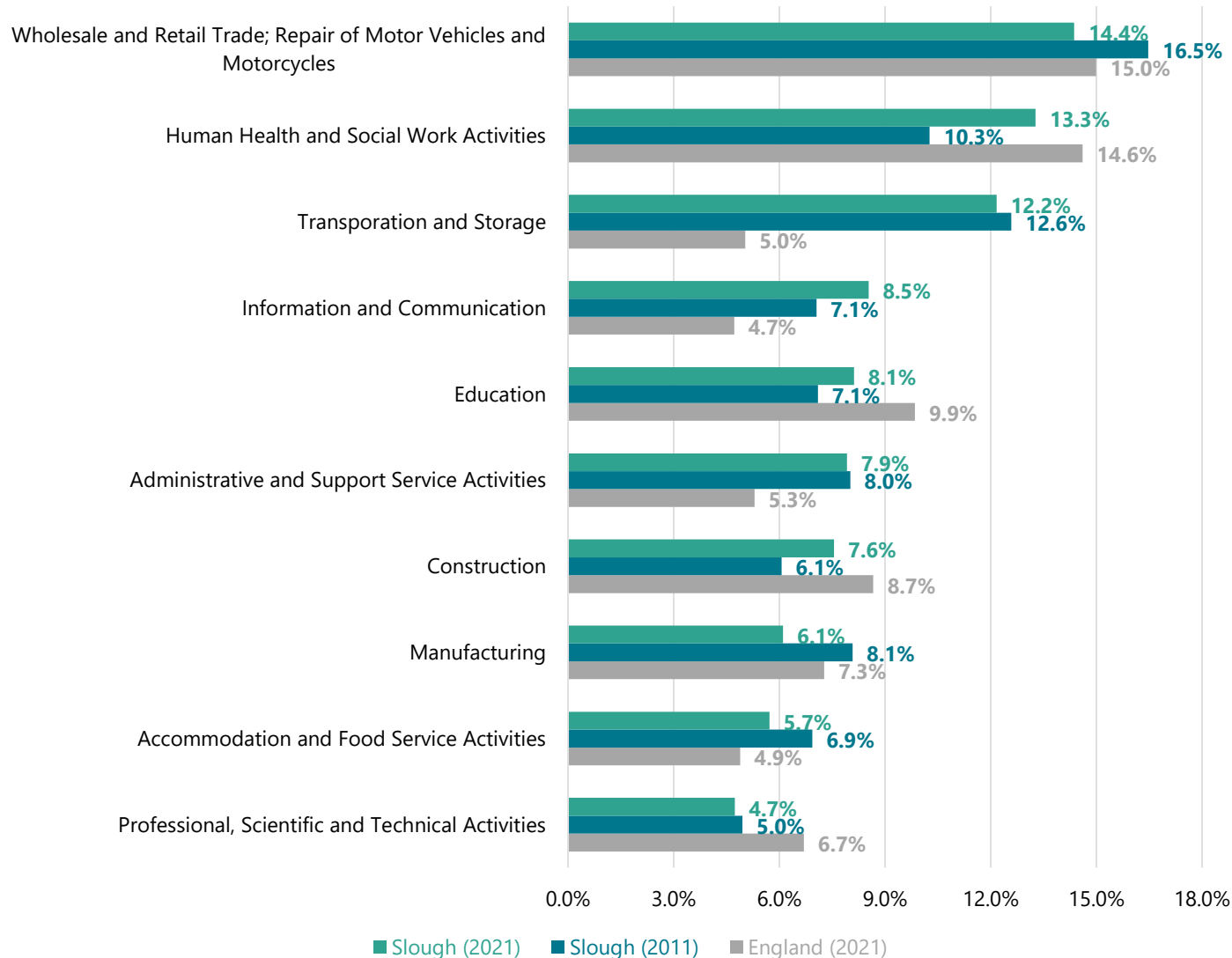
Slough has a higher job density than South East and England averages.

	Slough	South East	England
People claiming unemployment benefit (JSA & UC)	4.9%	2.8%	3.7%
Young people aged 18-24 claiming unemployment benefit (JSA & UC)	5.3%	3.7%	4.8%
Job density (Ratio of jobs to pop aged 16-64)	0.90	0.85	0.85



Work & Labour Market - Industry

Ten Largest (Broad) Industries in Slough

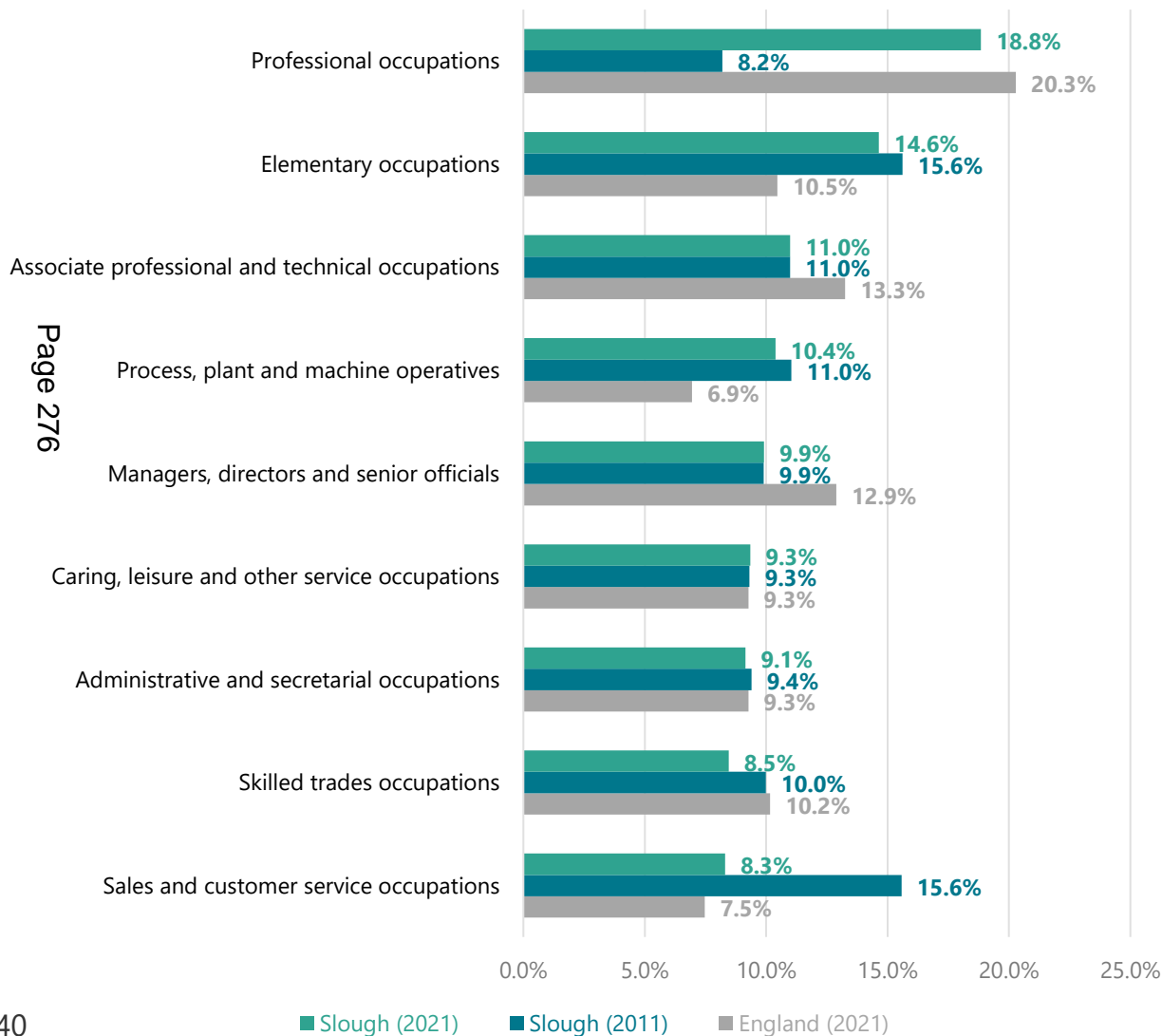


There have been increases of 25% or more in the number of residents working in human health and social work activities, information and communication, education, and construction industries since 2011.



Work & Labour Market - Occupation

Occupation



There has been a 152% increase in the number of residents working in professional occupations.

There has been a 42% decrease in sales and customer service occupations.





Work & Labour Market - Salaries

In January 2023, the median salary of advertised jobs in Slough was £35,000.



The median salary for current SBC employees is £30,095.



Work & Labour Market – Vacancies (1)

Top companies posting job adverts in Slough (Oct 2022 – Dec 2022)

Company	Total Postings	Unique Postings	Posting Intensity	Median Posting Duration (Days)
NHS	4041	644	6:1	35
Academics	1193	349	3:1	52
Reed	835	289	3:1	41
Slough Borough Council	309	132	2:1	60
Mygwork	253	132	2:1	28
Mars Incorporated	218	124	2:1	60
Hays	191	111	2:1	43
O2 Mobile	140	101	1:1	27
Michael Page	183	92	2:1	34
Adecco	275	86	3:1	48
Rise Technical Recruitment Ltd	209	75	3:1	46



Work & Labour Market – Vacancies (2)

Top occupations in job adverts in Slough (Oct 2022 – Dec 2022)

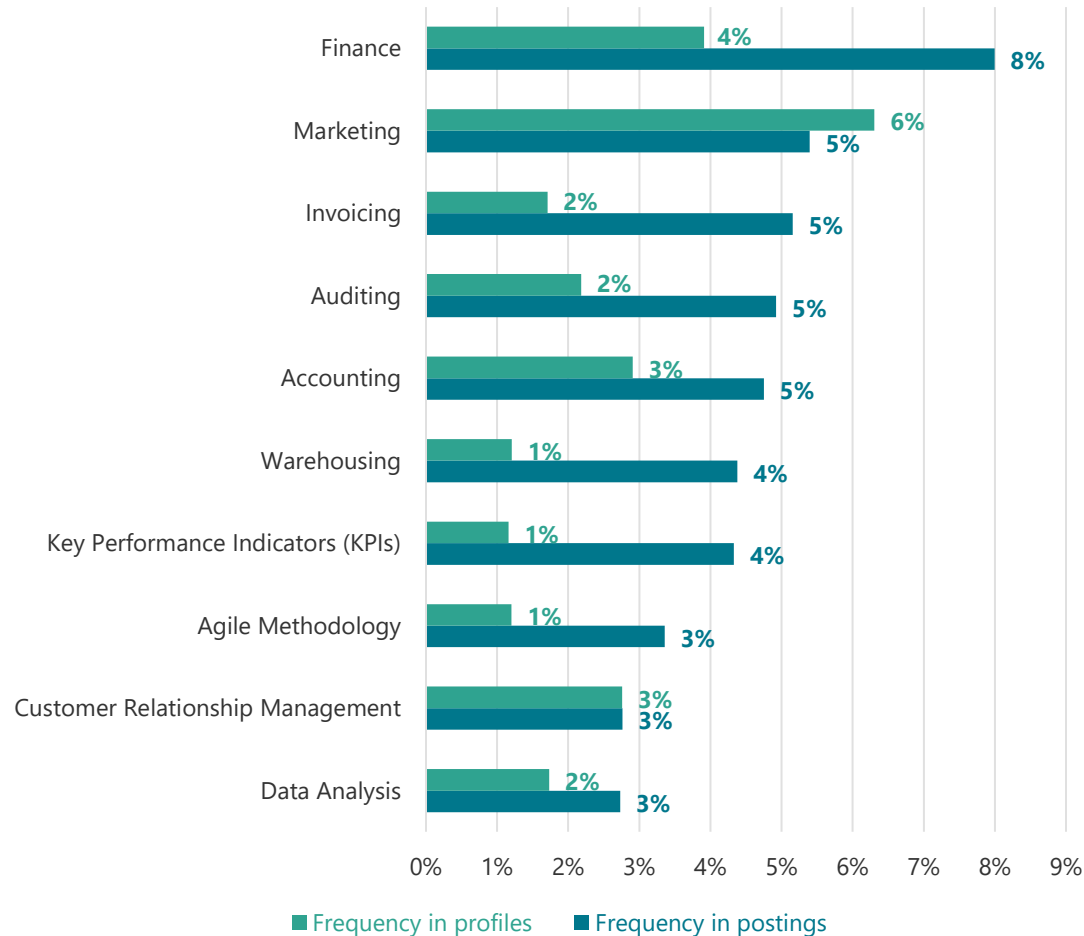
Occupation	Total Postings	Unique Postings	Posting Intensity	Median Posting Duration (Days)
Programmers and software development professionals	667	447	1:1	35
Sales related occupations n.e.c.	847	410	2:1	43
Other administrative occupations n.e.c.	784	351	2:1	40
Customer service occupations n.e.c.	683	300	2:1	46
Teaching assistants	853	299	3:1	41
Marketing and sales directors	490	262	2:1	29
Book-keepers, payroll managers, and wage clerks	488	260	2:1	41
Nurses	2118	255	8:1	32
Elementary storage occupations	552	252	2:1	48
Managers and proprietors in other services n.e.c.	406	206	2:1	34



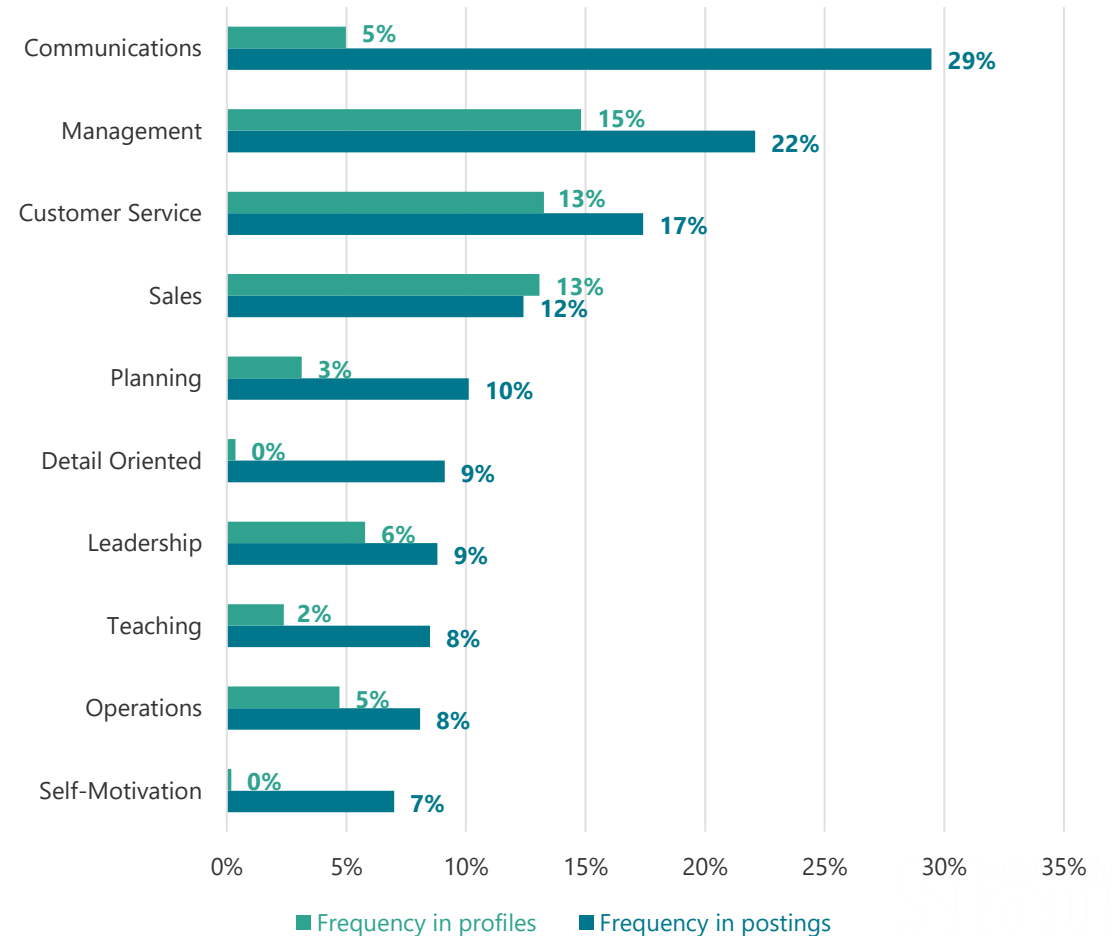
Work & Labour Market - Skills

Top specialised and common skills in job adverts in Slough (Oct – Dec 2022)

Top Specialised Skills



Top Common Skills







Vulnerability – Family income, fuel poverty & loneliness

	Slough	South East	England
Children in relative low-income families	24.4%	14.6%	19.5%
Children in absolute low-income families	17.9%	10.6%	15.0%
Pensioners in poverty (receiving pension credit)	17.7%	9.6%	11.3%
Households living in fuel poverty	9.4%	8.5%	13.3%
Hardship Fund Vulnerability Index score (higher score = more vulnerable)	123	109	131
Loneliness Index score (lower score = more loneliness)	-1.4	0.9	0.1

Slough has the largest proportions of children in relative and absolute low income families and pensioners in poverty in Berkshire and has larger proportions than the South East and England averages.

5,180 households were estimated to live in fuel poverty in 2020. Analysis from Frimley Health and Care estimates a significantly larger proportion of the population is at risk.

Slough scored as more vulnerable than the South East average but less than the England average on the Hardship Fund Vulnerability Index.

Slough has a higher rate of loneliness than the South East and England averages.



Vulnerability - Homelessness

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	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Number of Homeless Reduction Act (HRA) approaches	1745	1822	2086
Preventions	351	212	122
New Homeless cases opened	466	466	252 (Sept)
% Homeless cases agreed	31% (114/373)	38% (170/446)	31% (44/141) (Sept)
Numbers currently in TA	414	462	676 (Estimate)

Slough has a rising number of homeless households and people living in Temporary Accommodation.

There are key challenges around housing supply stock availability and affordability.

The private rented sector is being placed under pressure due to no fault evictions (section 21) and additional expense for landlords, leading many to sell.

The voluntary sector are reporting a significant increase in people struggling with bills and the cost of living.

Around 70% of rough sleepers in Slough currently have No Recourse to Public Funds.



Vulnerability – Support

In 2022, Slough Foodbank provided 601 fuel vouchers (97% increase from 2021) and 4,183 food vouchers (19% increase from 2021).

In Jan-Jun 2023, Slough Foodbank provided 5,710 food parcels (31% increase from Jan-June 2022). 39% of food parcels were for children.

Citizens Advice East Berkshire have reported a significant increase in demand:

- No of clients: doubled.
- No w. debt issues: doubled.
- No w. fuel debt: tripled.
- No seeking benefits advice: 50% increase

In Dec. 22 – Feb. 23, Citizens Advice East Berkshire gave advice to 365 people:

- 62% were women
- 56% were disabled or have a long-term health condition
- 58% were from Black Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds

The top four issues were:

1. Housing – 29%
2. Benefits – 21%
3. Legal – 8%
4. Debt – 7%





Vulnerability – Vulnerable children

Rate (per 10,000 0-17 year olds)	Slough	South East England	
Rate of Targeted Early Help	145.0	125	N/A
Rate of Children in Need	397.5	329.1	334.3
Rate of children subject to Children in Need Plans	109.0	105.8	91.2
Rate of children subject to Child Protection Plans	58.0	43.1	42.1
Rate of Children Looked After	56.8	56	70

Slough has higher than average rates of Children in Need and children receiving Targeted Early Help and Child Protection Plans.

Slough has a lower rate of Children Looked After than the England average and is similar to the South East average.





Vulnerability – Projected adult needs (aged 18-64)

- PANSI projects increases in learning and physical disabilities and mental illness in Slough's population aged 18-64 from 2020 to 2030.
- Most of these increases are in line with the increases for the South East and England.
- However, Slough is predicted to have larger increases in impaired mobility and personal care disabilities in the population than the South East and England.

Projected population change from 2020 to 2030 (Aged 18-64)	Slough Residents 2020	Slough Residents 2030	Slough Change	South East Change	England Change
Learning Disability	2,235	2,268	+1.5%	+1.1%	+1.9%
Down's Syndrome	57	58	+1.8%	+0.7%	+1.5%
Autism	930	953	+2.5%	+1.1%	+2.0%
Common Mental Health Problems	17,191	17,336	+0.8%	+0.6%	+1.4%
Impaired Mobility	4,596	4,846	+5.4%	+2.6%	+3.3%
Personal Care Disability	4,059	4,324	+6.5%	+1.5%	+2.1%



Vulnerability – Projected adult needs (aged 65 and over)

- POPPI projects increases in support needs, health issues, and disabilities in Slough’s population aged 65 and over from 2020 to 2030.
- Most of these increases are in line with the increases for the South East and England.
- However, Slough is predicted to have larger increases in learning disabilities, Autism, depression, and cardiovascular disease in the population than the South East and England.

Projected population change from 2020 to 2030 (Aged 65 and over)	Slough Residents 2020	Slough Residents 2030	Slough Change	South East Change	England Change
Learning Disability	325	404	+24.3%	+20.9%	+20.8%
Autism	146	185	+26.7%	+22.3%	+22.0%
Impaired Mobility	2,749	3,393	+23.4%	+24.1%	+23.0%
Self Care Disability	4,309	5,416	+25.7%	+23.7%	+22.9%
Limiting Long-Term Illness (activities limited a lot)	4,271	5,255	+23.0%	+24.3%	+23.0%
Need help with at least one domestic task	4,323	5,434	+25.7%	+24.0%	+23.1%
Depression	1,326	1,667	+25.7%	+21.2%	+20.9%
Dementia	1,041	1,301	+25.0%	+26.7%	+25.2%
Cardiovascular Disease	4,879	6,158	+26.2%	+22.5%	+22.0%





Income – Weekly earnings

Slough residents earn £27.8 less per week than the regional average.

There is a gap of £84 between Slough residents (£657.5) and all those who work in Slough (£741.5).

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Earnings by Residence: Gross Weekly Pay (£)	Slough	South East	Great Britain
Full Time Earners	657.5	685.3	642.2
Males	683.2	735.4	687.5
Females	625.7	610.7	584.5

Earnings by Place of Work: Gross Weekly Pay (£)	Slough	South East	Great Britain
Full Time Earners	741.5	664.3	642.0
Males	831.7	708.9	686.7
Females	658.1	593.8	584.5

Earnings by Residence: Hourly Pay (£) (excl. overtime)	Slough	South East	Great Britain
Full Time Earners	16.93	17.58	16.37
Male	18.15	18.49	16.97
Females	15.56	16.26	15.49

Earnings by Place of Work: Hourly Pay (£) (excl. overtime)	Slough	South East	Great Britain
Full Time Earners	18.99	16.99	16.37
Male	20.26	17.88	16.96
Females	17.35	15.65	15.48



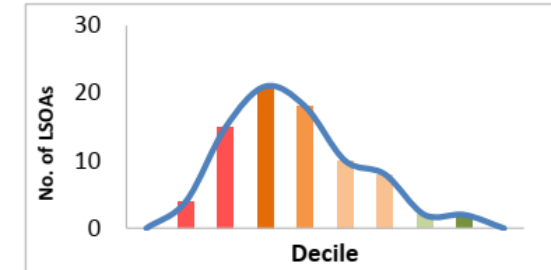
Income – Deprivation

The charts below show where Slough’s neighbourhoods fall on the income domains of the 2019 Indices of Deprivation. For all three, most of Slough’s LSOAs fall below the national average.

For further data on children living in low-income families and pensioners in poverty, please see slide 45.

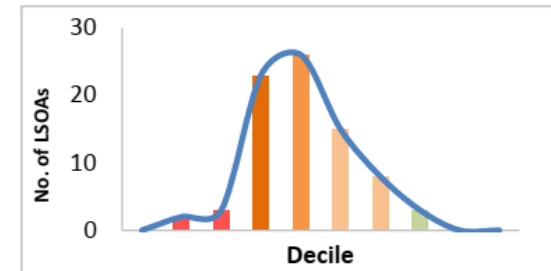
Most Deprived → Least Deprived

Decile		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Page 290 Income	Number of LSOAs	0	4	15	21	18	10	8	2	2	0
	Percentage of LSOAs	0%	5%	19%	26%	23%	13%	10%	3%	3%	0%
	Cumulative Percentage of LSOAs	0%	5%	24%	50%	73%	85%	95%	98%	100%	100%



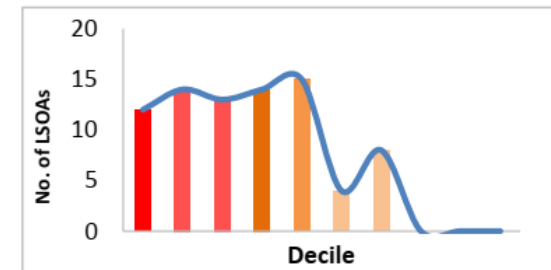
Most Deprived → Least Deprived

Decile		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)	Number of LSOAs	0	2	3	23	26	15	8	3	0	0
	Percentage of LSOAs	0%	3%	4%	29%	33%	19%	10%	4%	0%	0%
	Cumulative Percentage of LSOAs	0%	3%	6%	35%	68%	86%	96%	100%	100%	100%



Most Deprived → Least Deprived

Decile		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Income Deprivation Affecting Older People (IDAOP)	Number of LSOAs	12	14	13	14	15	4	8	0	0	0
	Percentage of LSOAs	15%	18%	16%	18%	19%	5%	10%	0%	0%	0%
	Cumulative Percentage of LSOAs	15%	33%	49%	66%	85%	90%	100%	100%	100%	100%







Crime - Rates

Year ending December 2022

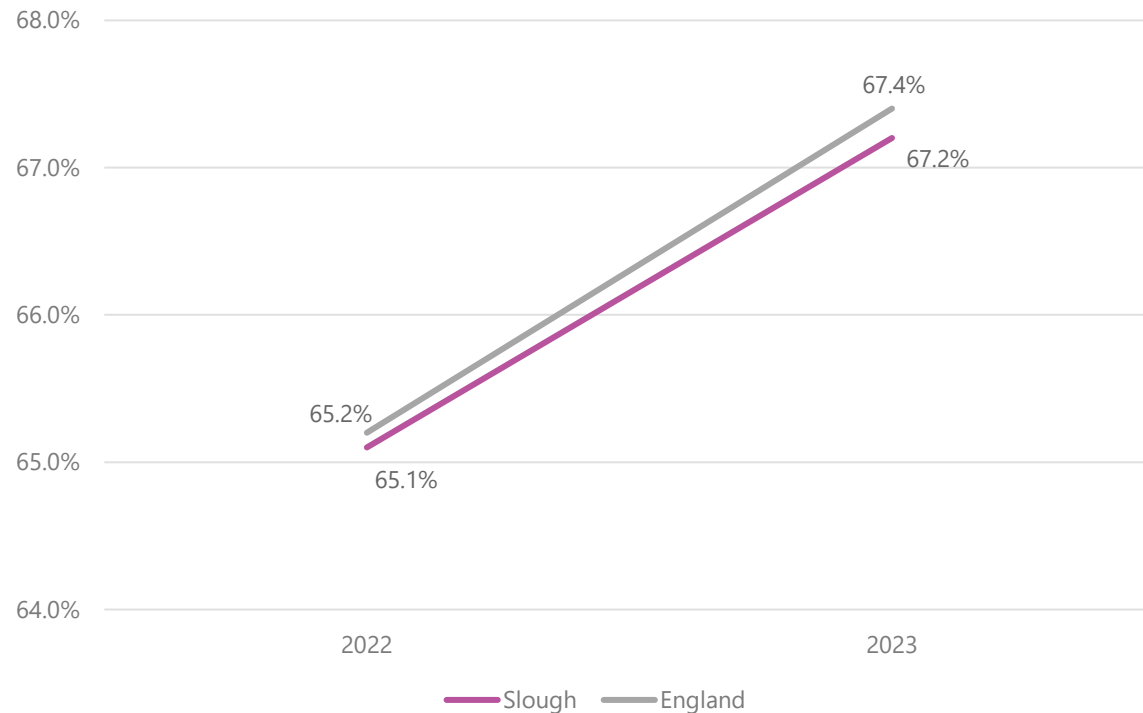
Crime	Slough Number	Slough Rate (per 1,000 pop)	TVP Rate (per 1,000 pop)	Eng & Wal Rate (per 1,000 pop)
Total recorded crime	16,352	103	71	93
Violence against the person	6,281	40	26	36
Sexual offences	479	3	3	3
Theft offences	4,979	31	22	28
Criminal damage	1,532	10	7	9
Drug offences	484	3	2	3
Public order offences	2,045	13	9	10





Education – EYFS

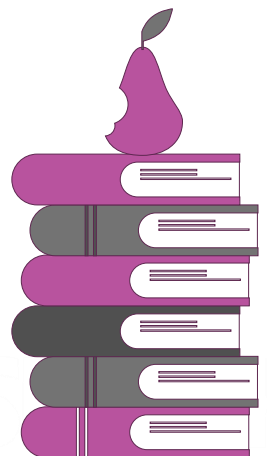
EYFS - Percentage achieving a good level of development



Prior to COVID, Slough was performing in the top quartile nationally for the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development at Early Years Foundation Stage.

Slough is now slightly below the national average.

The 2023 results are provisional.



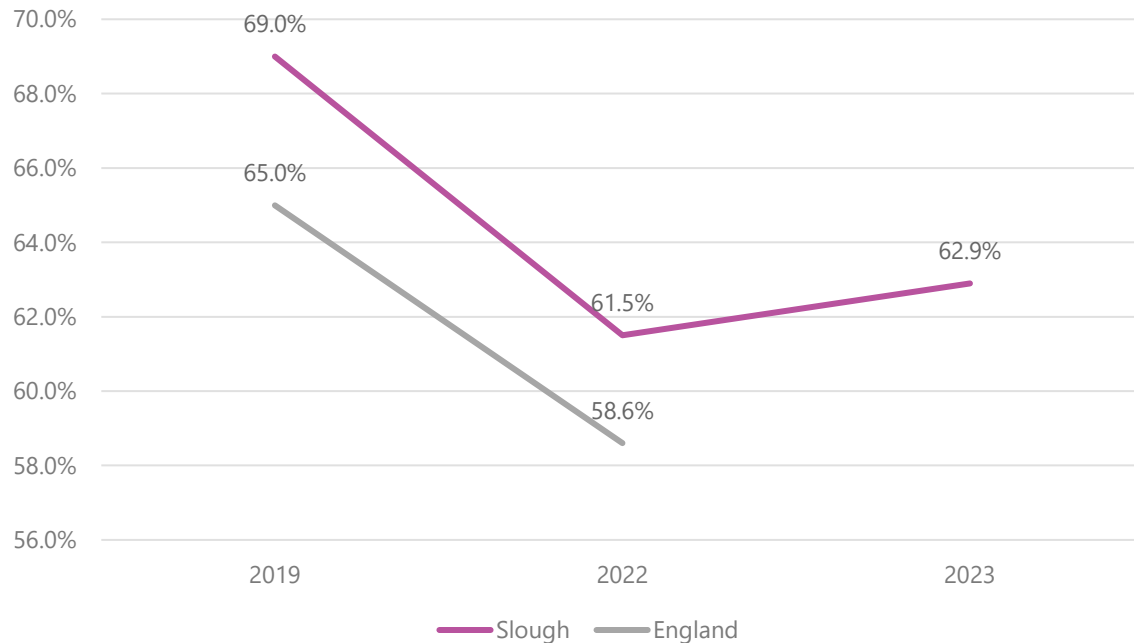


Education – Key Stage 2

Slough significantly exceeds the national average for attainment at KS2.
2023 results are provisional.

KS2 - Percentage achieving expected standard - Reading, Writing and Maths (Combined)

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KS2 - Percentage achieving higher standard - Reading, Writing and Maths (Combined)

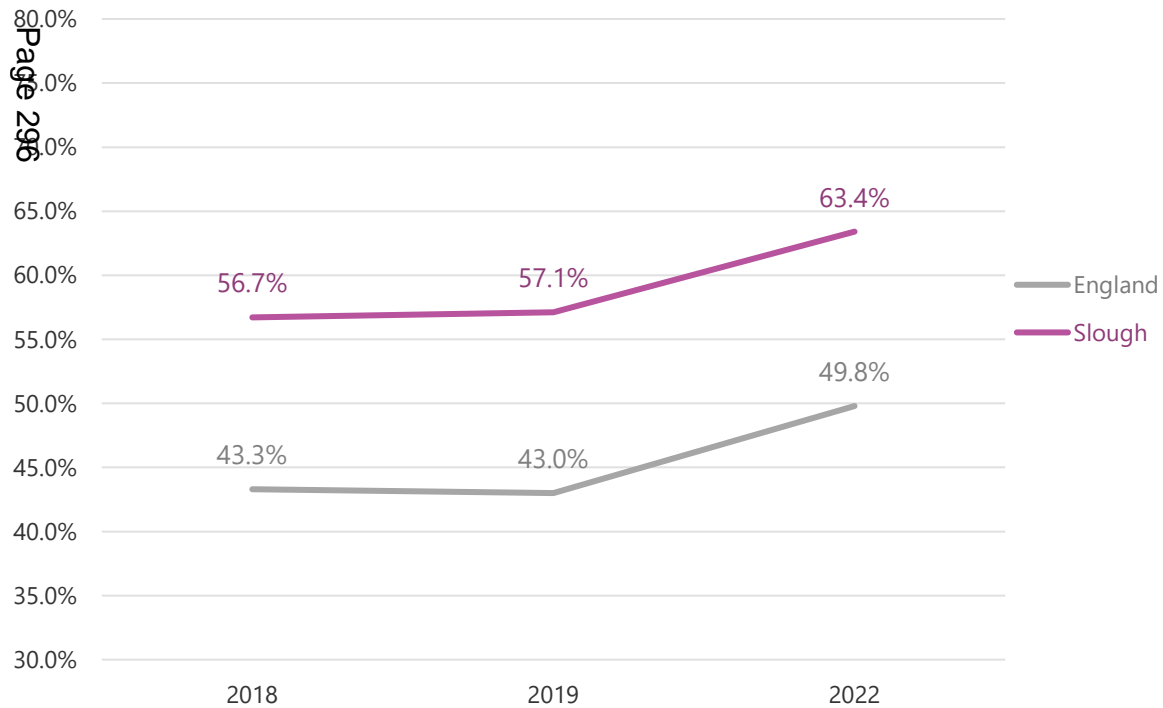




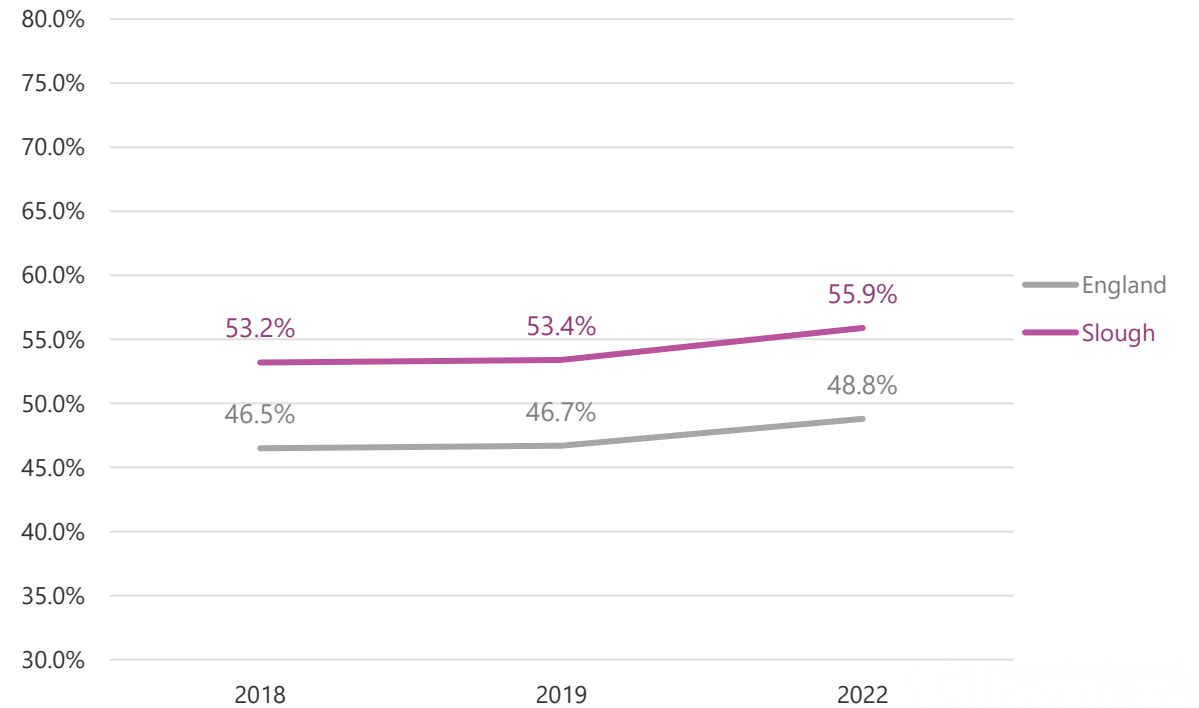
Education – Key Stage 4

Slough's results continue to exceed national averages at KS4, falling in the top quartile.

Percentage Grade 5 or above in English and Maths GCSEs



Attainment 8



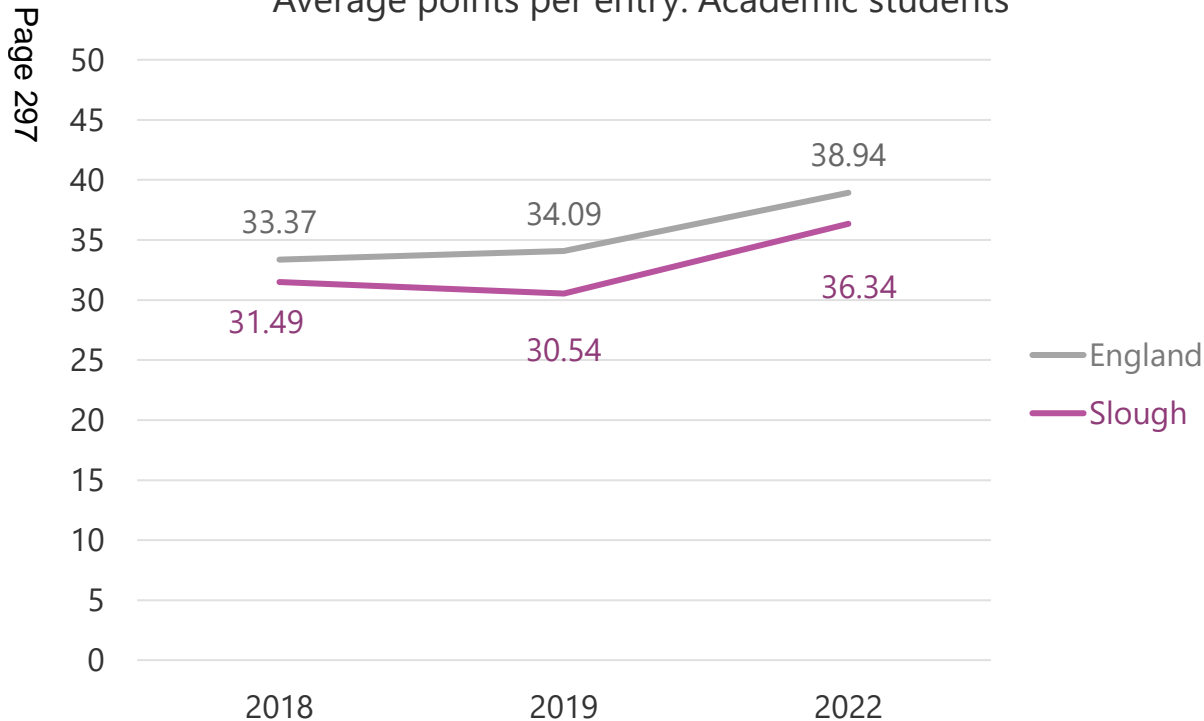


Education – Post-16

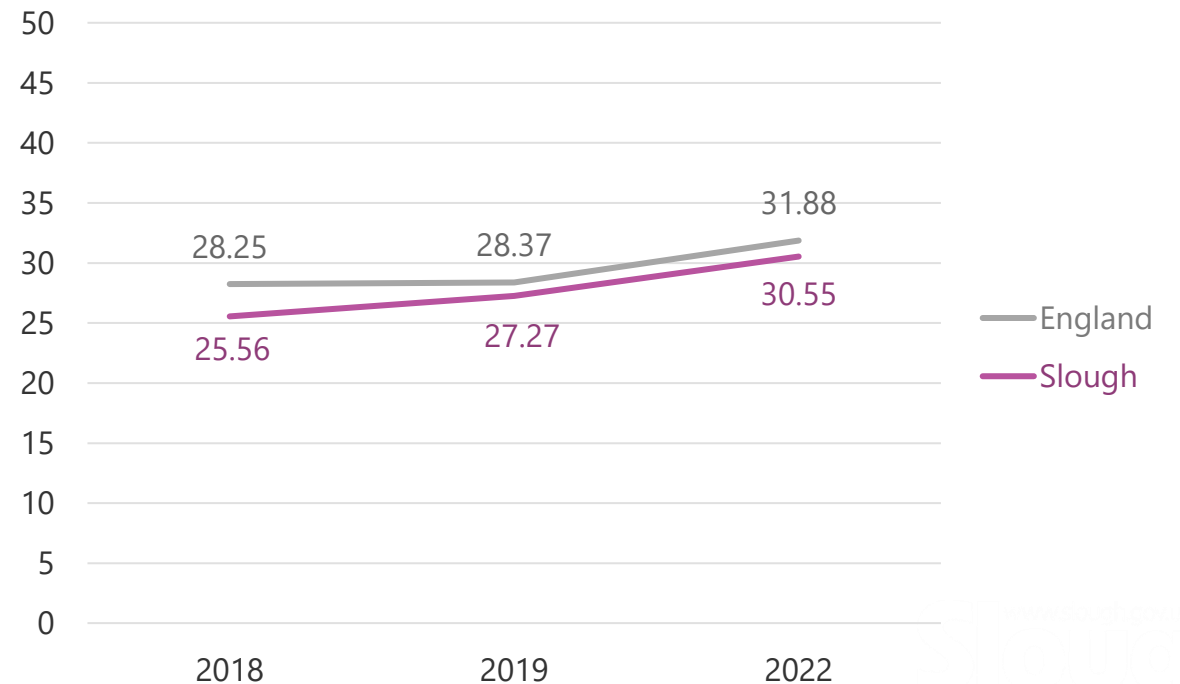
94.3% of 16-17 year olds in Slough are in Education or Training (SE: 92.0%, Eng: 92.9%)

However, Slough is achieving lower grades (fewer average points per entry) at A-level or equivalent than the England average.

Average points per entry: Academic students



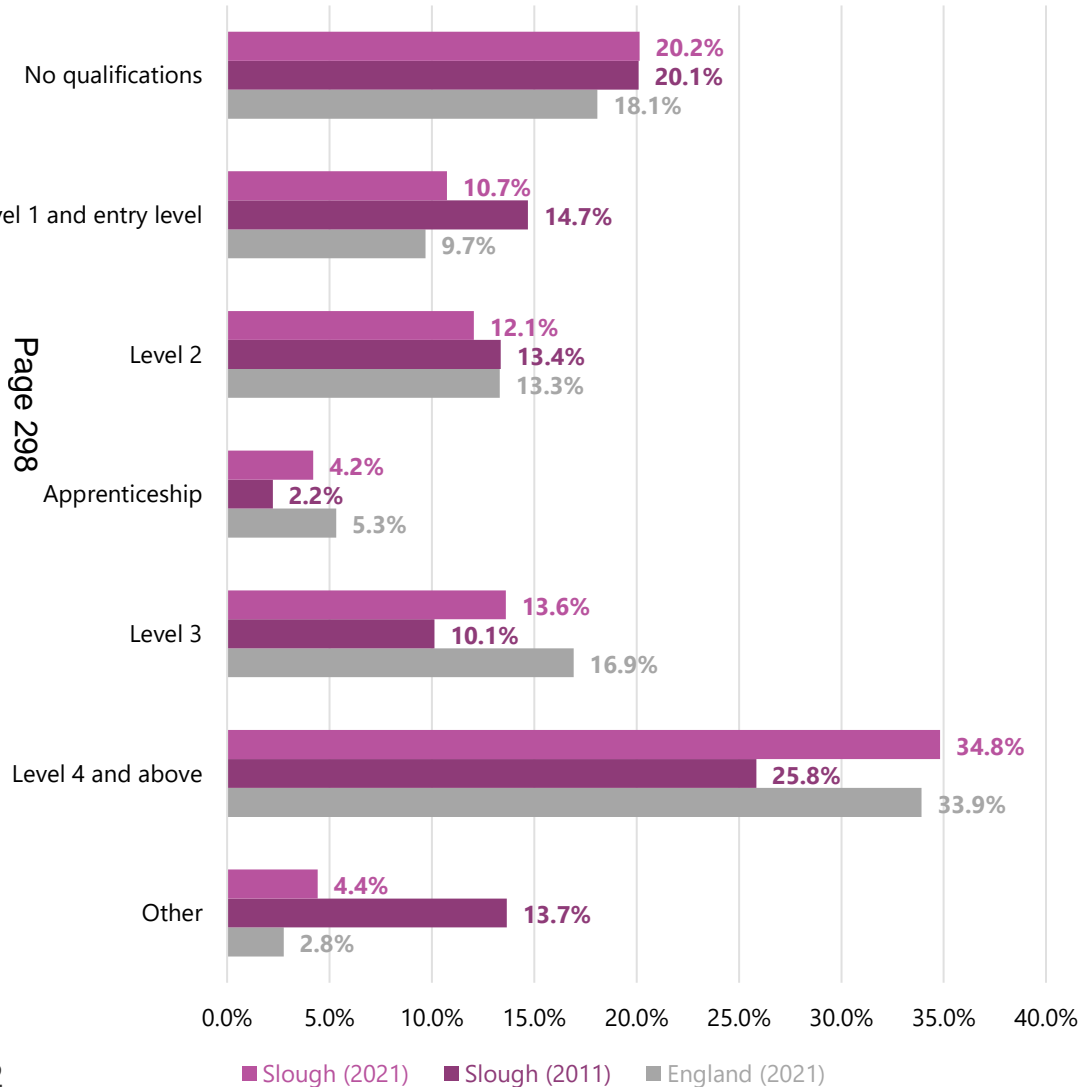
Average points per entry: Applied general students





Education - Qualifications

Highest Qualification



There has been a 50% increase in the number of Slough's residents holding a level 4 qualification (degree equivalent) or above since 2011.

Slough is slightly below the national average in terms of levels of qualification – falling in the 41st percentile nationally.¹

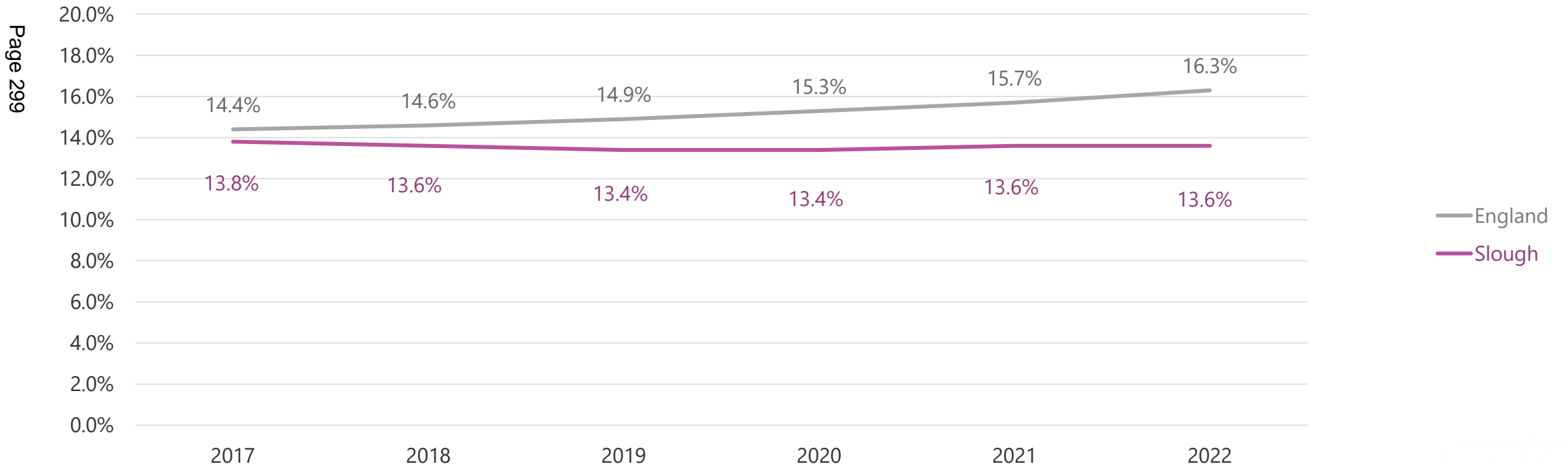
Highest Qualification: Number of Slough Residents (Aged 16 or Over)	2021	2011
No qualifications	23,966	21,434
Level 1 and entry	12,764	15,673
Level 2	14,336	14,256
Apprenticeship	5,004	2,371
Level 3	16,181	10,790
Level 4 and above	41,423	27,560
Other	5,260	14,561



Education - SEND

4,587 (13.6%) of children in Slough schools have a Special Educational Need or Disability. This proportion has remained consistent since 2017 and is below the national average.

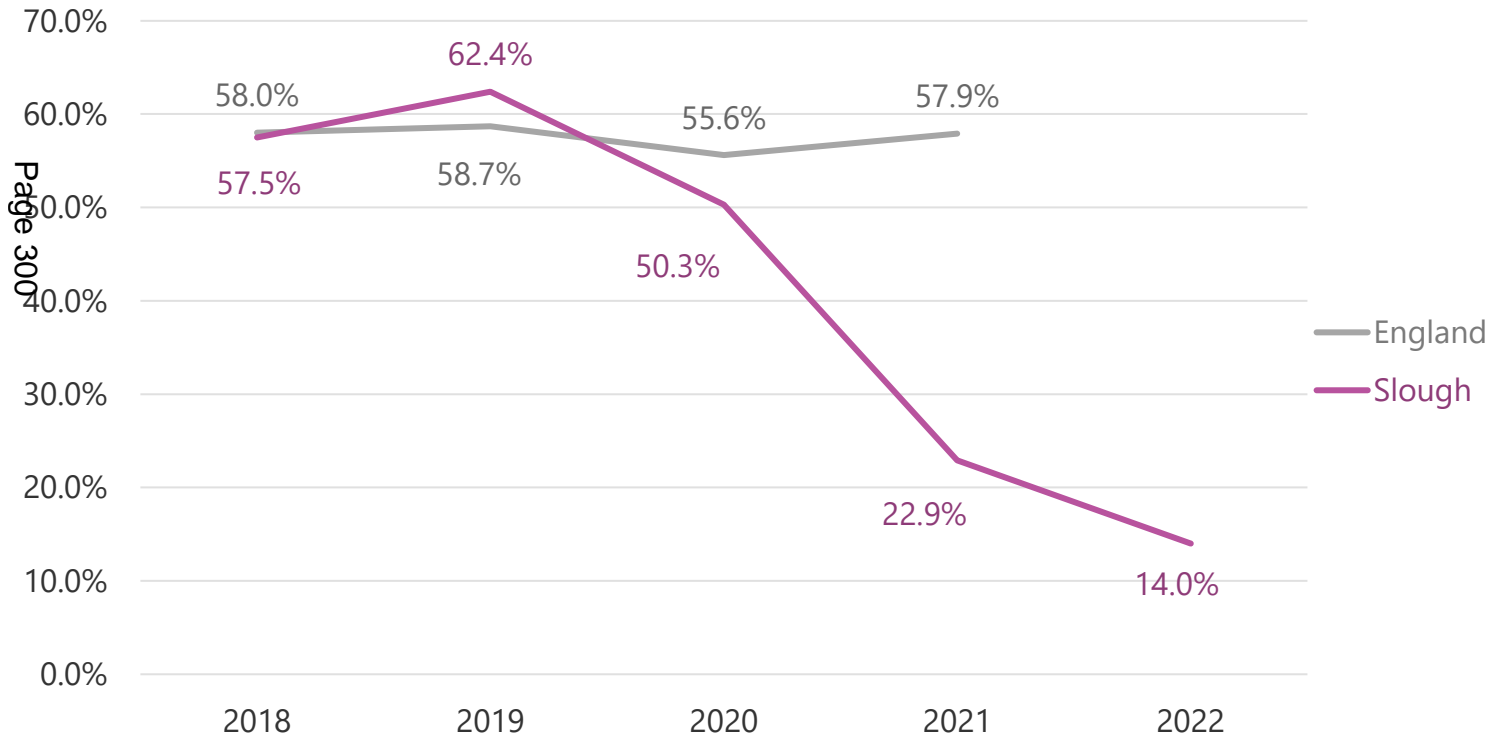
Percentage of pupils with SEND: all Slough schools





Education – EHC plans

Percentage of new EHC plans issued within 20 weeks



Slough has fallen significantly below the national average for the proportion of EHC plans that are completed within the statutory 20 week timescale.

Of the children with an EHC Plan, the most prevalent primary needs are:

- 35.5% are Autistic
- 17.3% have Speech, Language, and Communication challenges
- 7.7% have Social, Emotional, and Mental Health challenges
- 6.8% have Moderate Learning Difficulties



Education – SEN support & EHC plan attainment

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Area	Measure (2021/22)	Slough	SE	England
EYFS	% of pupils w. SEN support : good level of development	20.2%	24.4%	22.9%
EYFS	% of pupils w. EHC plan : good level of development	0.0%	4.4%	3.6%
KS2	% of pupils w. SEN support : expected standard - Reading, Writing, Maths	21.0%	20.0%	21.0%
KS2	% of pupils w. EHC plan : expected standard - Reading, Writing, Maths	10.0%	8.0%	7.0%
KS4	& of pupils w. SEN support : Grade 5+ in English & Maths GCSE	24.1%	22.9%	22.4%
KS4	& of pupils w. EHC plan : Grade 5+ in English & Maths GCSE	12.3%	7.4%	6.9%
NEET	% of 16-17 year olds w. SEN support not participating in education, employment or training	10.3%	9.0%	8.4%
NEET	% of 16-17 year olds w. EHC plan not participating in education, employment or training	9.3%	7.7%	8.6%
Level 3	% of 19 year olds w. SEN support qualified to lv.3	41.3%	35.3%	35.4%
Level 3	% of 19 year olds w. EHC plan qualified to lv.3	16.7%	14.1%	14.0%

Children with SEN in Slough:

- Have relatively lower readiness for school
- attain comparatively strong educational outcomes from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 3
- have a mix of outcomes at Key Stage 4 and transition to adulthood, with lower levels of participation in Education, Employment, or Training
- Comparatively strong educational outcomes for 19 years olds qualified to level 2 and 3

Sources

Data in this pack:

- [2021 Census](#)
- [2011 Census](#)
- [2019 Indices of Deprivation](#)
- [ONS: People, population and community](#)
- [OHID: Fingertips Public Health Data](#)
- [NOMIS: Census & Labour Market](#)
- [Community Safety Partnership Recorded Crime](#)

Other useful sources:

- [Berkshire Observatory](#)
- [Berkshire East JSNA](#)
- [PHOF Wider Determinants of Health](#)
- [Local Insight](#) (login required – contact Strategic Insight Team)

Appendix C - Corporate Plan Consultation Summary

Contact Officer – Tom Overend, Strategy & Policy Lead

1. Overview

Slough Borough Council conducted a consultation on the draft Corporate Plan structure, via its Citizen Space platform. The consultation ran from 26th June to the 7th August 2023. There were 169 responses in total, 159 of which were from residents. A breakdown of the respondents is included in section 4.

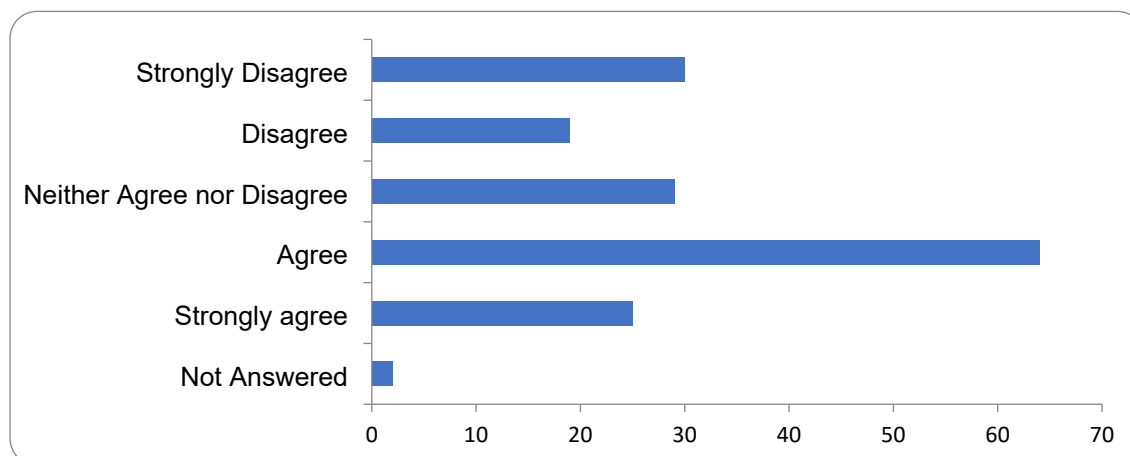
Respondents were given the opportunity to review the Slough Insight Pack evidence base, and the plan's draft structure:

- Purpose – SBC's key mission statement and driving focus for the council
- Approach – five values demonstrating the type of council we wish to be, how we will work and our relationship with residents and partners
- Priorities – three strategic objectives summarising the key challenges we will look to address over the next four years

Respondents were asked to state the extent to which they agreed with the above elements of the plan, and were also given the opportunity to comment in their own words.

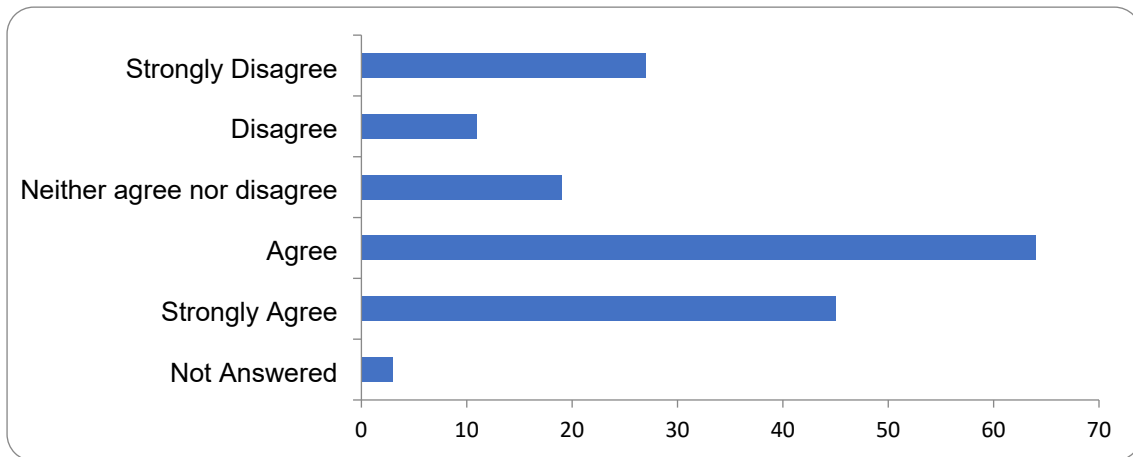
2. Summary

Our Purpose: Increasing healthy life expectancy by focusing on children.



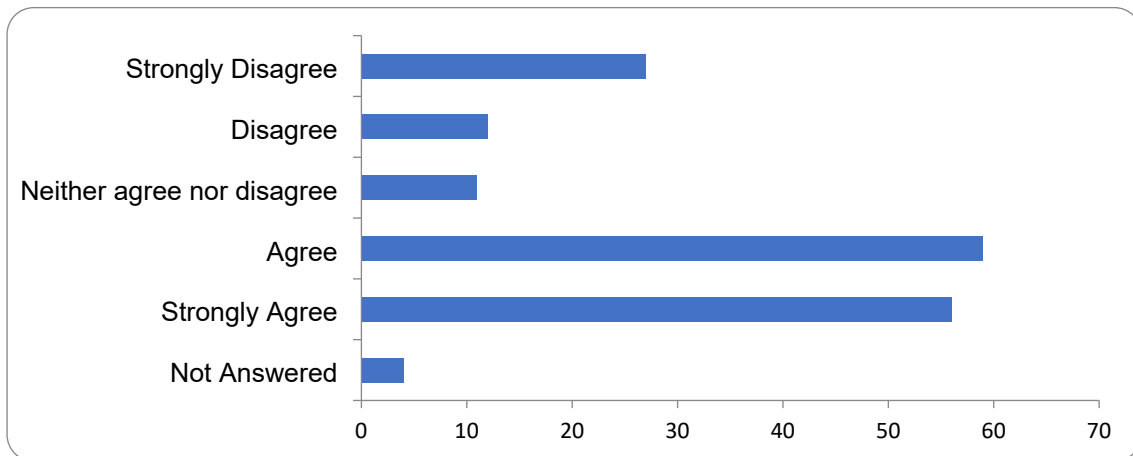
Option	Total	Percent
Strongly Disagree	30	17.75%
Disagree	19	11.24%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	29	17.16%
Agree	64	37.87%
Strongly agree	25	14.79%
Not Answered	2	1.18%

Our approach: Resident Focused



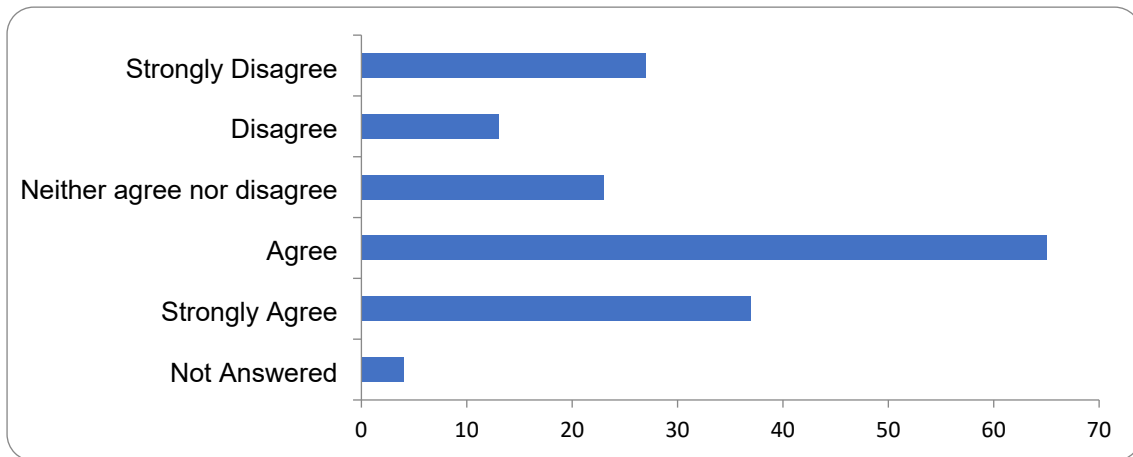
Option	Total	Percent
Strongly Disagree	27	15.98%
Disagree	11	6.51%
Neither agree nor disagree	19	11.24%
Agree	64	37.87%
Strongly Agree	45	26.63%
Not Answered	3	1.78%

Our approach: Providing Financial Sustainability



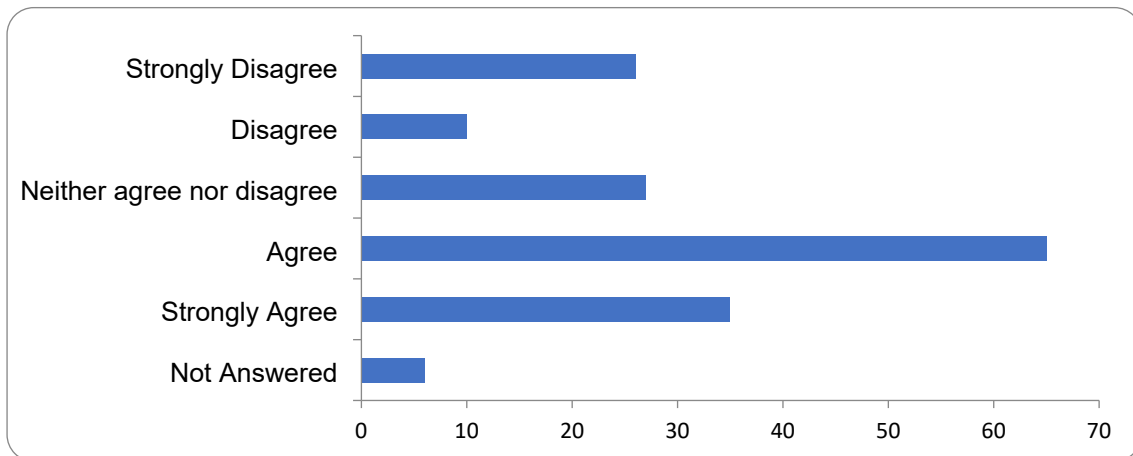
Option	Total	Percent
Strongly Disagree	27	15.98%
Disagree	12	7.10%
Neither agree nor disagree	11	6.51%
Agree	59	34.91%
Strongly Agree	56	33.14%
Not Answered	4	2.37%

Our approach: Enabling Residents and Communities



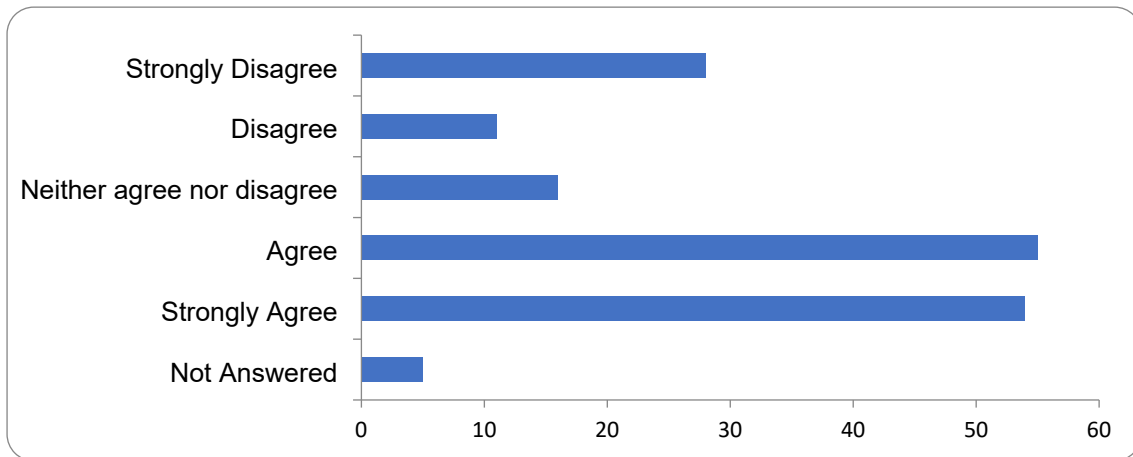
Option	Total	Percent
Strongly Disagree	27	15.98%
Disagree	13	7.69%
Neither agree nor disagree	23	13.61%
Agree	65	38.46%
Strongly Agree	37	21.89%
Not Answered	4	2.37%

Our approach: Strengthening Partnerships



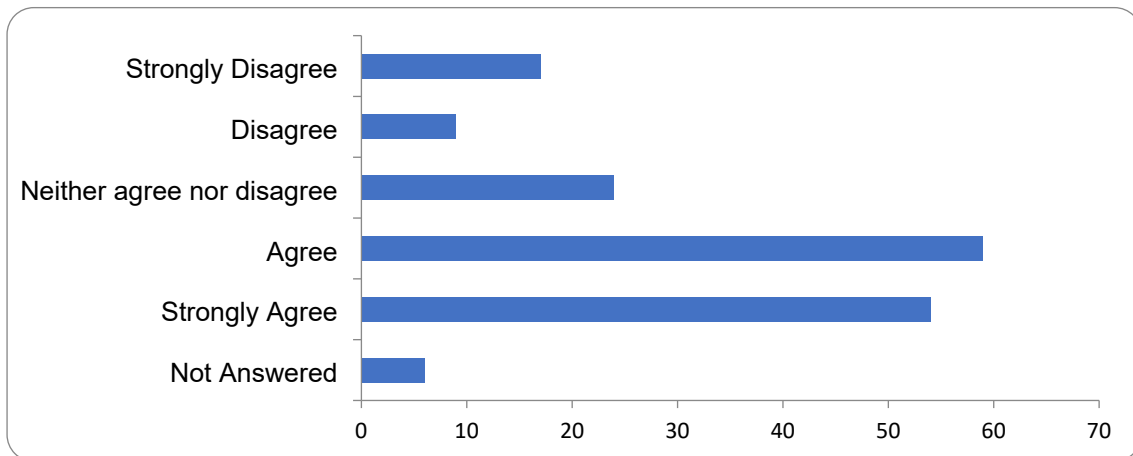
Option	Total	Percent
Strongly Disagree	26	15.38%
Disagree	10	5.92%
Neither agree nor disagree	27	15.98%
Agree	65	38.46%
Strongly Agree	35	20.71%
Not Answered	6	3.55%

Our approach: Building Trust



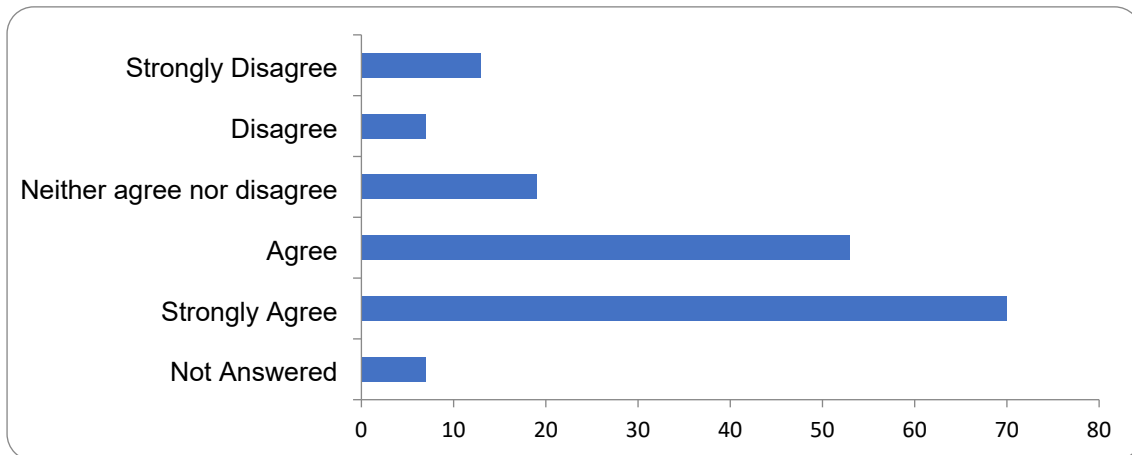
Option	Total	Percent
Strongly Disagree	28	16.57%
Disagree	11	6.51%
Neither agree nor disagree	16	9.47%
Agree	55	32.54%
Strongly Agree	54	31.95%
Not Answered	5	2.96%

Our priorities: 1. A borough for children and young people to thrive



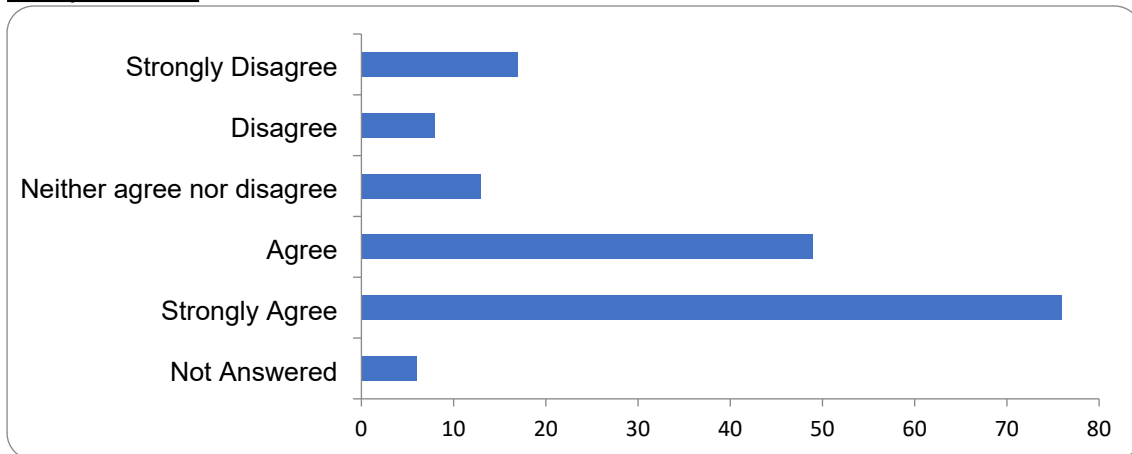
Option	Total	Percent
Strongly Disagree	17	10.06%
Disagree	9	5.33%
Neither agree nor disagree	24	14.20%
Agree	59	34.91%
Strongly Agree	54	31.95%
Not Answered	6	3.55%

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



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly Disagree	13	7.69%
Disagree	7	4.14%
Neither agree nor disagree	19	11.24%
Agree	53	31.36%
Strongly Agree	70	41.42%
Not Answered	7	4.14%

Our priorities:



Option	Total	Percent
Strongly Disagree	17	10.06%
Disagree	8	4.73%
Neither agree nor disagree	13	7.69%
Agree	49	28.99%
Strongly Agree	76	44.97%
Not Answered	6	3.55%

3a. Comments – equalities implications and limitations

The consultation was an opportunity to identify potential equalities implications arising from the corporate plan.

Due to the small sample size of groups of respondents with certain protected characteristics, extrapolating from responses to the above elements of the corporate plan is not an effective means of assessing the impact of the corporate plan on these groups – see section 4 for demographic breakdown of respondents.

Of particular note, there were only three respondents aged between 16 and 24, and no respondents aged 15 and under. This highlights the importance of the commitment within the corporate plan to ‘increasing children and young people’s participation in decisions that affect them and in shaping the future of Slough’. Further targeted engagement work will need to be carried out with young people in the development of further key strategies, such as the children and young people’s plan.

However, respondents had the opportunity to comment on the consultation in their own words, and the following equalities issues were highlighted:

Some respondents were concerned that the focus on children and young people would disadvantage elderly residents and other vulnerable residents, such as those with disabilities – see section 3b. Given the borough’s specific demographic profile, and the history of intervention in children’s services in Slough, the council feels that a specific focus on children and young people is important to addressing the challenges Slough faces.

However, the corporate plan does include a commitment to support residents to be as independent as possible, whilst providing quality services for the most vulnerable adults. Maximising independence, confidence and capacity for self-management has been demonstrated to enable people to live the life they want, stay independent at home for longer and reduce the need for emergency and statutory services.

Five respondents raised the theme of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services. The first commitment under the first strategic priority of the new corporate plan is to ‘provide quality services for vulnerable children and those with special educational needs and disabilities’, which signals the councils intent to put the needs of these children at the heart of our work.

Eight respondents raised issues relating to support for parents, this will be of importance if the council is to effectively deliver on the objectives in the corporate plan to improve outcomes for families, and will need to be factored into service planning and the development of other key strategies.

One respondent highlighted the need to tackle inequality, by tailoring services to meet the needs of different communities. Another respondent commented on specific health challenges faced by those of Asian ethnicity in Slough. This will need to be factored in by the Slough Health & Wellbeing Board in the development of its new action plan.

3b. Comments – key themes

All respondents' comments were reviewed and assigned thematic 'tags' to enable qualitative analysis of the consultation and identify issues of importance to respondents.

Where appropriate, an overarching theme has been assigned, and then also a more specific sub-theme. For example, a response might have been tagged with the overarching theme of Crime and Community Safety, and the sub-theme of Antisocial Behaviour.

The table below shows the top 10 themes raised by respondents, sub-themes and the number of residents who raised them. A brief summary of how these themes relate to the updated corporate plan is also included.

Theme, Sub-themes	SBC Updated Corporate Plan
<p>SBC culture and behaviours - 45</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust - 22 • Being active / present in community - 17 • Customer service - 8 • Respect for residents - 4 • Greater ambition - 1 	<p>The new corporate plan builds on the previous plan's commitments to improve our culture as an organisation, and the approach section sets out the type of organisation we wish to be.</p> <p>Building trust is one of the key aspects of this approach, and this section describes how we will seek to restore confidence in SBC.</p> <p>We will be active and present in the community – and the corporate plan includes commitments to build community capacity and develop platforms that allow our community to shape Slough's future.</p> <p>A further key aspect of this new approach is being resident focussed, and the updated plan now includes further commitments to improving response times and customer service.</p>

<p>Children & young people - 39</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth centres & activities - 10 • Education and school facilities - 9 • Support for parents - 8 • Children's centres - 6 • Special Educational Needs and Disabilities - 5 • Play areas - 5 • Youth participation - 3 • Children's mental health - 3 • Children's social services - 1 	<p>Children and young people are a key focus of the new corporate plan – both in the overall purpose section and the priorities.</p> <p>The council's first strategic priority is to work towards a borough where children and young people can thrive. There are further commitments to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing quality services for vulnerable children and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) • Improving outcomes for disadvantaged children and young people • Tackling high rates of child obesity • Increasing children and young people's participation in decisions that affect them and in shaping the future of Slough <p>SBC will also be working with partners to develop a Children and Young People's plan, which will provide more detail on how we will work together to improve outcomes, and address the themes raised here.</p> <p>See also section 3a.</p>
<p>Town image - 36</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleanliness & litter - 22 • Town centre / high street - 13 • Retail - 4 	<p>The updated corporate plan recognises the impact of the environmental quality and the quality of public spaces on a persons' health and wellbeing.</p> <p>The corporate plan includes a commitment under the third strategic priority to provide 'clean, quality public spaces and working with developers to deliver a modern town centre for future generations.</p>

<p>Crime and Community Safety - 27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drugs & alcohol misuse - 11 • Antisocial behaviour - 8 • Violence and knife crime - 2 	<p>The corporate plan includes a commitment to ‘improving community safety and tackling anti-social behaviour – providing a safer town to grow-up’ and recognises the impact of community safety on a person’s wellbeing.</p> <p>The Slough Wellbeing Board is currently also developing a new action plan, which will include a greater focus on substance misuse and alcohol related conditions.</p> <p>The council will also be working with partners to strengthen the Safer Slough Partnership.</p>
<p>Financial management - 24</p>	<p>The new corporate plan recognises that SBC must continue to demonstrate tangible progress towards our recovery if we are able to effectively deliver for our residents and achieve our strategic objectives for the town.</p> <p>Providing financial sustainability is a key pillar of the new ‘approach’ for the council set out in the plan, which includes commitments to live within our means, balance our budget and be honest and open about the difficult decisions that we will need to make.</p>
<p>Health & wellbeing - 20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health centres - 8 • Obesity - 7 • Mental health - 3 	<p>Improving healthy life expectancy is central to the new purpose for the council set out in the new corporate plan and is woven throughout all three strategic priorities.</p> <p>We will be working with partners on the Slough Health & Wellbeing Board to develop a new action plan, to deliver rapid progress.</p> <p>As part of this plan, we will be seeking to co-host a summit on tackling obesity, to bring partners and the community together to tackle this important issue.</p>

<p>Waste collection - 19</p>	<p>The comments in this theme primarily related to the recent change to collecting refuse and recycling waste on alternate weeks.</p> <p>[Response to summarise response to petition on waste collection also going to Full Council on 28th September]</p> <p>Please also see above on response to comments relating to the theme of 'Town image'.</p>
<p>Vulnerable adults - 19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elderly residents - 18 • Disabled residents – 3 	<p>Please see section 3a.</p>
<p>Housing - 14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing availability - 10 • Housing quality - 10 • Social housing services - 3 	<p>The corporate plan recognises the important role played by housing in determining a person's health and wellbeing.</p> <p>The plan includes a commitment prioritising 'affordable, safe and healthy homes – improving the quality of council housing stock and the private rented sector'.</p> <p>SBC is currently also developing a new Housing Strategy, which will provide further detail on the action the council will be taking in this area.</p>
<p>Growth - 9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment & skills - 8 • Local economy - 2 	<p>The corporate plan includes a commitment to 'engaging with businesses to create new employment opportunities for Slough families and routes to upskill'.</p> <p>Over the coming months the council will look to form new alliances with businesses to tackle skills gaps, and the council is currently developing a new economic development strategy, which will provide further detail on the action SBC will be taking in this area.</p>

4. Demographic breakdown of respondents

Sex

Option	Total	Percent
Male	70	41.42%
Female	82	48.52%
Prefer not to say	14	8.28%
Not Answered	3	1.78%

Gender

(Was the respondents gender the same as the sex registered at birth)

Option	Total	Percent
Yes	151	89.35%
No (please specify)	2	1.18%
Prefer not to say	14	8.28%
Not Answered	2	1.18%

Age

Option	Total	Percent
0 – 15	0	0.00%
16 – 24	3	1.78%
25 – 39	25	14.79%
40 – 49	40	23.67%
50 – 59	38	22.49%
60 – 69	33	19.53%
70 and over	14	8.28%
Prefer not to say	13	7.69%
Not Answered	3	1.78%

Ethnicity

Option	Total	Percent
White: British	60	35.50%
White: Irish	3	1.78%
White: Any other White background (please specify)	15	8.88%
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	0	0.00%
Mixed: White and Black African	0	0.00%
Mixed: White and Asian	2	1.18%
Mixed: Any other Mixed background (please specify)	2	1.18%
Asian or Asian British: Indian	27	15.98%
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	22	13.02%
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	1	0.59%
Asian or Asian British: Sikh	3	1.78%
Asian or Asian British: Kashmiri	2	1.18%
Asian or Asian British: Any other Asian background (please specify)	1	0.59%
Black or Black British: Caribbean	7	4.14%
Black or Black British: African	1	0.59%
Black or Black British: Any other Black background (please specify)	0	0.00%
Chinese or other ethnic group: Chinese	0	0.00%
Chinese or other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group (please specify)	0	0.00%
Prefer not to say	19	11.24%
Not Answered	4	2.37%

Disability

Option	Total	Percent
I do not have a disability	109	64.50%
Visual impairment	3	1.78%
Physical impairment	6	3.55%
Deaf/BSL User	0	0.00%
Hearing impairment	5	2.96%
Mental health/mental distress issues	5	2.96%
Learning difficulties	1	0.59%
Long term health condition/hidden impairment	18	10.65%
Neurodiverse	3	1.78%
Other (please specify)	2	1.18%
Prefer not to say	23	13.61%
Not Answered	5	2.96%

Disabled child group

(Whether the respondent has a child under 18 with a disability, and if so, which impairment groups apply)

Option	Total	Percent
I do not have a disability	109	64.50%
Visual impairment	3	1.78%
Physical impairment	6	3.55%
Deaf/BSL User	0	0.00%
Hearing impairment	5	2.96%
Mental health/mental distress issues	5	2.96%
Learning difficulties	1	0.59%
Long term health condition/hidden impairment	18	10.65%
Neurodiverse	3	1.78%
Other (please specify)	2	1.18%
Prefer not to say	23	13.61%
Not Answered	5	2.96%

Sexual orientation

Option	Total	Percent
Straight or Heterosexual	131	77.51%
Gay or Lesbian	3	1.78%
Bisexual	2	1.18%
Other (please specify)	0	0.00%
Prefer not to say	29	17.16%
Not Answered	4	2.37%

Religion

Option	Total	Percent
Muslim	30	17.75%
Christian	51	30.18%
Buddhist	3	1.78%
Hindu	9	5.33%
Jewish	0	0.00%
Sikh	8	4.73%
Other (please specify)	3	1.78%
None	33	19.53%
Prefer not to say	28	16.57%
Not Answered	4	2.37%

Pregnancy

Option	Total	Percent
Yes	4	2.37%
No	83	49.11%
Prefer not to say	16	9.47%
Male / Not Applicable	54	31.95%
Not Answered	12	7.10%

Maternity

(Whether, if female, the respondent had had a baby in the last 12 months)

Option	Total	Percent
Yes	0	0.00%
No	88	52.07%
Prefer not to say	17	10.06%
Male / Not applicable	51	30.18%
Not Answered	13	7.69%

Marital status

Option	Total	Percent
Single	28	16.57%
Married	96	56.80%
Co-habiting	7	4.14%
Civil Partnership	0	0.00%
Separated	2	1.18%
Divorced	5	2.96%
Widowed	2	1.18%
Prefer not to say	26	15.38%
Not Answered	3	1.78%

Armed Forces Community

(Whether the respondent was a member of the Armed Forces Community)

Option	Total	Percent
Yes	2	1.18%
No	153	90.53%
Prefer not to say	11	6.51%
Not Answered	3	1.78%

Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessment

1. Overview

The corporate plan is a strategy which encompasses everything SBC does as a council, and will therefore affect all residents, rather than any particular group.

Further equality impact assessments will need to be produced for further key strategies and programmes needed to implement the corporate plan.

However, the corporate plan has been developed to respond to the specific challenges faced by residents, drawing on data from the 2021 Census and other key sources. The evidence base used to develop the plan – the Slough Insights pack is presented alongside this report (Appendix B).

A public consultation was conducted on a draft of the corporate plan from the 26th of June to the 7th of August 2023, which enabled respondents to raise equalities issues – see Appendix C, section 3.a.

The new ‘Purpose’ for the council, and the new set of three strategic priorities, have been chosen to reflect Slough’s unique demographic profile:

Population

Slough’s population in the 2021 census was 158,500.

Age

Age groups	Number of residents	% of population
0-15	39,568	25.0%
16-24	16,587	10.5%
25-39	38,001	24.0%
40-49	24,839	15.7%
50-59	17,548	11.1%
60-69	11,754	7.4%
70 and over	10,201	6.4%

Care experience

There is no data from the 2021 census on residents who have spent time in care. Slough has higher than average rates of Children in Need and children receiving Targeted Early Help and Child Protection Plans – 145 per 10,000 people aged 0-17, compared to regional average of 125. Slough has a lower rate of Children Looked After than the England average, but is similar to the South East average.

Disability

Disability	Number of residents	% of population
Disabled	17,975	11.3%
Not disabled	140,523	88.7%

Ethnicity

Broad ethnic groups	Number of residents	% of population
Asian	74,093	46.7%
Black	11,992	7.6%
Mixed	6,311	4.0%
Other	8,970	5.7%
White	57,134	36.0%

Gender identity

Gender identity	Number of residents	% of population
Gender identity is the same as sex registered at birth	107,503	90.4%
Gender identity is different to sex registered at birth	1,081	0.9%
Not known	10,351	8.7%

This data applies only to residents aged 16 or over (118,930 residents).

Marital and civil partnership status

Marital and civil partnerships status	Number of residents	% of population
Single	41,898	35.2%
Married	60,001	50.4%
Civil partnership	158	0.1%
Separated	2,925	2.5%
Divorced or dissolved civil partnership	8,799	7.4%
Widowed or surviving civil partner	5,151	4.3%

This data applies only to residents aged 16 or over (118,930 residents).

Religion, faith, or belief

Religion, faith, or belief	Number of residents	% of population
No religion	20,726	13.1%
Christian	50,664	32.0%
Buddhist	776	0.5%
Hindu	12,343	7.8%
Jewish	85	0.1%
Muslim	46,661	29.4%
Sikh	17,985	11.3%
Other religion	716	0.5%
Not known	8,544	5.4%

Sex

Sex	Number of residents	% of population
Female	80,005	50.5%
Male	78,495	49.5%

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation	Number of residents	% of population
Straight or Heterosexual	104,943	88.2%
Gay or Lesbian	806	0.7%
Bisexual	1,095	0.9%
All other sexual orientations	412	0.3%
Not known	11,677	9.8%

The 2021 Census data applies only to residents aged 16 or over (118,930 residents).

2. Anticipated impact by protected characteristic

Age and Care experience:

The corporate plan has a clear focus on tackling health inequalities by focusing on children and young people. The first strategic priority focuses on specifically on children and young people and there are commitments in the second and third priorities aimed at improving outcomes for children and families. This is important given the youthful nature of the population – see section 1 – and Slough has the second largest proportion of children aged 15 or under in England and Wales.

For example, there are commitments in the plan to improve the quality of housing in Slough - 34% of residents aged 15 and under and 34% of residents aged 16-24 live in overcrowded households. 33% of all residents living in overcrowded households in Slough are children aged 0-15.

The corporate plan also includes measures to create new employment opportunities for Slough families and routes to upskill – 24.4% of children in Slough live in low-income households, compared to a regional average of 14.4%.

There are commitments under the first strategic priority to target child obesity - 28.4% of year 6 students in Slough are obese, compared to a regional average of 20.0%.

As noted above, Slough has higher than average rates of Children in Need and children receiving Targeted Early Help and Child Protection Plans.

Two of the commitments under the first priority have been highlighted in the corporate plan as key equality objectives:

- Providing quality services for vulnerable children and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- Improving outcomes for disadvantaged children and young people

Although the focus of the plan is primarily on children and young people, there is a commitment under the second strategic priority to support the most vulnerable adults.

Disability:

Working with partners to target health inequalities and promote wellbeing is one of the highlighted equalities objectives within the new corporate plan and is woven through all three strategic priorities.

Disabled people often suffer significantly from these inequalities. For example, the King's Fund has found that during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic in England, 60 per cent of those who died from Covid-19 were disabled. People with learning disabilities were eight times more likely to die of Covid-19 than the general population.

The first commitment under the first strategic priority of the new corporate plan is to 'provide quality services for vulnerable children and those with special educational needs and disabilities', which signals the councils intent to put the needs of these children at the heart of our work. As mentioned above, this too is highlighted as an equality objective within the corporate plan.

The second strategic priority also includes a commitment to supporting residents to be as independent as possible, whilst providing quality services for the most vulnerable adults.

Ethnicity

Slough has inequalities in health between different population groups which need to be addressed – and the new corporate plan includes a commitment to work with partners to target these, as one of SBC's highlighted equality objectives.

The new corporate plan includes a commitment to prioritise ensuring the borough has affordable, safe and healthy homes – by improving the quality of council housing stock and the private rented sector.

Overcrowding is an area where there are clear health inequalities in the proportion of people of different ethnicities who live in overcrowded households –

- 34% of residents who identified as Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African.
- 29% of residents who identified as Asian, Asian British, or Asian Welsh.
- 28% of residents who identified as being of Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups.
- 19% of residents who identified as White.

Gender Reassignment:

There is no anticipated impact relating to this protected characteristic.

Marriage and Civil Partnership:

There is no anticipated impact relating to this protected characteristic.

Pregnancy and maternity:

There is no anticipated impact relating to this protected characteristic.

Religion and Belief:

There is no anticipated impact relating to this protected characteristic.

Sex

There is not anticipated to be a significant impact dependent on residents' sex.

The new corporate plan has a key focus on improving healthy life expectancy – the number of years a person can typically expect to live in full health without disabling illness or injury.

Healthy life expectancy for men in Slough is 58.1 years– compared to a regional average of 65.5 years. Healthy life expectancy for women in Slough is 60.3 years, compared to a regional average of 65.9 years.

Sexual orientation:

There is no anticipated impact relating to this protected characteristic.

Slough Borough Council

REPORT TO:	Cabinet
DATE:	18 September 2023
SUBJECT:	Slough Adult Carers Strategy 2023-26
CHIEF OFFICER:	Marc Gadsby, Executive Director People Adults
CONTACT OFFICER:	Jane Senior, Associate Director People Strategy and Commissioning
WARD(S):	All
PORTFOLIO:	Cllr Anna Wright, Social Care and Public Health
KEY DECISION:	YES
EXEMPT:	NO
DECISION SUBJECT TO CALL IN:	YES
APPENDICES:	Appendix 1 – Equalities Impact Assessment Appendix 2 – Carers Strategy Appendix 3 – Carers Strategy Consultation

1 Summary and Recommendations

This report requests approval of the Slough Adult Carers Strategy 2023-26, to replace the existing Carers Plan. The Strategy sets out how the Council, working with its partners, will support and encourage carers to manage their own health and wellbeing, and ensure that that right support is known about and available at the right time.

The aim of the strategy is to ensure that Slough is a place where carers can balance their caring roles with achieving a desired quality of life. Importantly, the Strategy seeks to minimise the negative impacts of caring upon health and wellbeing, and prevent carer breakdown. This will be through a range of initiatives set out within the action plan.

The Strategy has been informed by engagement with carers. The engagement confirmed that the carer's voice should be central to service development. Delivery of the action plan contained within the Strategy will be overseen by a Steering Group comprising carers, the Co-production Network, Council officers and professional stakeholders including representatives from Frimley ICS.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to approve the Slough Adult Carers Strategy 2023-26 set out at Appendix 2.

Reason:

To ensure that a fit for purpose Adult Carers Strategy with a clear action plan, and deliverables is in place.

Commissioner Review

This report has been reviewed by Commissioners who wish to make no specific additional comments.

2 Report

Publishing the Adult Carers Strategy 2023-26 contributes to the following priorities:

Draft Refreshed Corporate Plan

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

- Working with partners to target health inequalities and promote wellbeing
- Supporting residents to be as independent as possible whilst providing quality services for the most vulnerable.

Slough Wellbeing Strategy 2022-25

Priority 2: Integration

- Increase the number of people living independently at home and decrease the proportion living in care homes
- Increase the number of people who are managing their own health and care needs.

Options considered

Option	Pros	Cons
<p>Option 1</p> <p>Approve and implement the Adult Carers Strategy 2023-26</p> <p>Recommended</p>	<p>Up to date Carers Strategy in place which is informed by carer engagement.</p> <p>Implementation of action plan overseen by Steering Group comprising carers, the Co-production Network, Council officers and professional stakeholders and reported through existing Council governance arrangements.</p>	<p>No clear disadvantage to approving and implementing the Strategy</p>

<p>Option 2</p> <p>Retain the existing Carers Plan.</p> <p>Not recommended</p>	<p>No clear advantage to retaining the existing Carers Plan.</p>	<p>The Carers Plan is out of date and no longer fit purpose.</p>
<p>Option 3</p> <p>Do not approve and implement the Adult Carers Strategy 2023-26</p> <p>Not recommended</p>	<p>No clear advantage to not approving and implementing the Strategy.</p>	<p>Missed opportunity to implement an effective strategy which is aligned to the draft refreshed Corporate Plan and the Slough Wellbeing Strategy and thereby supports the delivery of broader corporate objectives.</p>

Option 1 is recommended.

Background

2.0 The Adult Carers Strategy 2023-26 provides an opportunity to strengthen the Adult Carers offer within the town - based upon evidence and information obtained through engagement. The Strategy sets out 6 key priorities for Adult Carers, aligned to intended Corporate Objectives (which are currently out to consultation). The priorities are to:

- Enable carers to access information and guidance
- Identify and recognise carers at an early stage
- Promote carer awareness – including the valuable role they play and the challenges they face.
- Provide person centred support – to enable carers to manage their own health and wellbeing and to access the right support at the right time
- Ensure that carers are viewed and listened to by professionals as experts in care
- Support effective integration and partnership work – including co-production and ensuring that carer voice is central to any service development.

Further detailed information concerning each of these priorities is found in Section 8 of the Strategy.

The Strategy contains an action plan setting out a range of initiatives which will be implemented to deliver against the priorities. These include mapping the customer journey and developing a clearer operational pathway, increasing the number of carers assessments, facilitating carer-led training to promote carer awareness, and reviewing the current respite and short breaks offer for those who are eligible, and opportunities for development to prevent carer breakdown. One of the key elements of the action plan is to gather more information to support early identification of carers from particular communities (BAME, LGBT etc) to ensure that their needs can be met. Carers play an important role in the adult social care economy and their caring can prevent the cared for person moving into expensive residential care.

The Action Plan will be overseen through a Steering Group comprising carers, the Council and its partners with responsibility for delivering against the strategy resting with the People Strategy and Commissioning Team.

The Carers Service transferred in house to the ASC Operations Team in July 2023 and the Steering Group will also be responsible for overseeing the development of the Service.

The Strategy has been shaped by engagement with carers. Some of the consistent themes emerging from the engagement were the need for accessible information (not just digital), the importance of preventing carer breakdown, hearing the carers voice and being able to access the right support at the right time. Full information concerning feedback from the engagement, including cross-referencing back to the Strategy, is contained at Appendix 2 and Appendix 3.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1 Financial implications

There are no financial implications directly relating to the publication of the Carers Strategy. Any procurement activity arising out of the Action Plan will be subject to approval through the Council's Contract Procedures Rules and will only be authorised subject to the availability of budget.

The current total budget for 2023/24 for Adult Social Care & Public Health is as follows:

	£m
Gross Expenditure	52.0
Income	(35.4)
Net Expenditure	16.6

The gross expenditure budget includes £39.5m (80%) which is expended on care and support services that are commissioned externally from both private and voluntary sector providers through contractual arrangements. The remainder of the budget funds frontline services and operational employee costs.

The current expenditure on direct payments is £5.4m across the care groups. Increases in direct payments for those who are eligible including carers will need to be monitored through the usual budget management processes.

3.1 Legal implications

The Care Act Section 10 sets out duties in respect of assessment of a carer's needs and support. Assessments should include an assessment of whether the carer is able and willing to provide care alongside the outcomes that the carer wishes to achieve in day to day life and to what extent the provision of support could contribute their achievement. The assessment must involve the carer and any other person whom the carer asks the local authority to involve. A carers assessment must consider what matters other than support could enable the

delivery of identified outcomes and anything which might be available within the community. The Carers Strategy Action Plan contains an action to increase the number of carers assessments within the town.

The Care Act Section 20 places a duty on local authorities to meet a carer’s needs as well as a discretionary power to provide services even if the carer is not assessed to have eligible needs. The Council must also provide information and advice to all carers about services available in the local area. The power includes the discretion to provide support to a carer of a child who is about to transition to adult social care services.

The Care Act 2014 also contains duties in relation to actively promote wellbeing and independence and to provide services, facilities or resources to prevent, delay or reduce the need for care and support. Carers play a significant role in prevention, both in terms of the person being cared for and themselves. This prevention duty is distinct from the assessment and meeting eligible needs duties.

Whilst not a specific duty, it is recommended that a local authority develop an evidence-based local strategy for supporting carers. This will help to identify gaps in the market or at a commissioning level, ensure improvements to local services to support carers achieve appropriate outcomes. The strategy should include:

- Analysis of local needs and requirements, integrated with the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- Engagement with carers and families in the area.
- Demand and supply analysis.
- Market structure and intervention.
- Resource allocation and procurement.
- Confirmation as to how the strategy aligns with the adopted corporate plan.

3.2.3 The Carers Strategy should be produced following consultation and engagement with carers and it should be reviewed periodically to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the population and focuses limited resources in the right areas. Information consultation and engagement which has taken place is contained both within the Carers Strategy and its appendix.

3.2.4 Section 12 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 introduced a duty at Section 2B of the NHS Act 2006 for the council to take appropriate steps to improve the health of the people who live in its area. The Carers Strategy places an emphasis upon carer health and wellbeing,

3.3 Risk management implications

3.3.1 Overall, the risks associated with approving the Strategy are set out below.

Risk	Assessment of Risk	Mitigation	Residual Risk
Insufficient staffing resource to implement the	Medium	Recruitment to any vacant posts and staff retention endeavours.	Low / Medium

action plan within the strategy.		Input from Data and Insight, Communications and other functions as appropriate to support elements of action plan.	
Insufficient budget to support any commissioning intentions arising out of the Carers Strategy Action Plan.	High	<p>Budget availability to be confirmed in advance of commencement of any particular commissioning project.</p> <p>Ensuring best value considerations.</p> <p>Robust analysis as part of project of effectiveness and efficiency of any existing current supply.</p>	Medium

3.4 Environmental implications

There are no environmental implications

3.5 Equality implications

Approval and implementation of the Carers Strategy should have a positive impact in regard to protective characteristics. For example, many carers are older people caring for a loved one. It is intended that the Strategy will have a positive impact upon their lives by supporting individuals to manage their own health and wellbeing needs and to access the right support at the right time. This applies to carers of any sexual orientation, including carers who are married or in a civil partnership.

The Strategy sets out a particular commitment to understand the particular difficulties which black and minority ethnic carers can experience and to better identify carers from black and minority ethnic groups in order that their needs can be met. A full Equalities Impact Assessment is set out at Appendix 1.

3.6 Procurement implications

None

3.7 Workforce implications

None

3.8 Property implications

3.8.1 None

4. **Background Papers**

None

Appendix 1

Equality Impact Assessment

Directorate: People Strategy & Commissioning People (Adults)								
Service: Adults Carers Strategy 2023-26								
Name of Officer/s completing assessment: Jane Senior								
Date of Assessment: 3/8/23								
Name of service/function or policy being assessed: Adult Carers Strategy								
1.	<p>What are the aims, objectives, outcomes, purpose of the policy, service change, function that you are assessing?</p> <p>The Strategy sets out how the Council, working with its partners, will support and encourage carers to manage their own health and wellbeing, and ensure that that right support is known about and available at the right time.</p> <p>The aim of the Strategy is to ensure that Slough is a place where carers can balance their caring roles with achieving a desired quality of life. Importantly, the Strategy seeks to minimise the negative impacts of caring upon health and wellbeing, and prevent carer breakdown.</p>							
2.	<p>Who implements or delivers the policy, service or function? State if this is undertaken by more than one team, service, and department including any external partners.</p> <p>Delivery of the action plan contained within the Strategy will be overseen by a steering group comprising carers, the Co-production network, Council officers and other professional stakeholders including representatives from Frimley ICS. It is intended that reporting will take place into the Slough Wellbeing Board .</p>							
3.	<p>Who will be affected by this proposal? For example who are the external/internal customers, communities, partners, stakeholders, the workforce etc. Please consider all of the Protected Characteristics listed (more information is available in the background information). Bear in mind that people affected by the proposals may well have more than one protected characteristic.</p> <p>The Strategy affects Carers and indirectly the person who they care for.</p>							
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Characteristic</th> <th>Positive , Negative,</th> <th>Rationale for Assessment</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Characteristic	Positive , Negative,	Rationale for Assessment				
Characteristic	Positive , Negative,	Rationale for Assessment						

		Neutral or Unknown Impact	
	Age	Positive	Many carers are older people. It is intended that the Strategy will have a positive impact upon their lives by supporting individuals to manage their own health and wellbeing needs and to access the right support at the right time.
	Disability	Positive	Many carers support people who have a disability. The Strategy therefore indirectly benefits disabled people as it seeks to prevent carer breakdown.
	Gender Reassignment:	Positive	The Strategy will benefit all carers including those who have undertaken gender reassignment.
	Marriage and Civil Partnership:	Positive	Many carers support a partner. The Strategy is likely to have a benefit upon those who are married or in a civil partnership as it will support carers within their caring roles.
	Pregnancy and maternity:	Positive/ Neutral	The Strategy should have a positive benefit on carers who are pregnant or who have recently had a baby.
	Race:	Positive	The Strategy sets out a particular commitment to understand the particular difficulties which carers from black and minority ethnic people can experience. The Strategy should have a positive benefit.
	Religion and Belief:	Positive	People of any religion and belief who are carers should benefit from the Strategy.
	Sexual orientation:	Positive	People of any sexual orientation who are carers should benefit from the Strategy.
	Other:	Positive	
4.	<p>What are any likely positive impacts for the group/s identified in (3) above? You may wish to refer to the Equalities Duties detailed in the background information.</p> <p>Better support to individuals across all equalities categories to enable individuals to maintain their caring roles and to receive the right support at the right time.</p>		

5.	<p>What are the likely negative impacts for the group/s identified in (3) above? If so then are any particular groups affected more than others and why?</p> <p>There will be no negative impact.</p>
6.	<p>Have the impacts identified in (4) and (5) above been assessed using up to date and reliable evidence and data? Please state evidence sources and conclusions drawn (e.g. survey results, customer complaints, monitoring data etc).</p> <p>There has been extensive engagement to support the development of the Strategy including the Priorities. The Strategy contains a commitment to gather further information on the needs of carers from diverse communities in order that carer identification can be improved.</p>
7.	<p>Have you engaged or consulted with any identified groups or individuals if necessary and what were the results, e.g. have the staff forums/unions/ community groups been involved?</p> <p>The Strategy has been shaped by engagement with carers. Implementation of the Action Plan will be overseen by a Steering Group comprising carers, the co-production network, council officers, and other professional stakeholders including representatives from Frimley ICS.</p>
8.	<p>Have you considered the impact the policy might have on local community relations?</p> <p>A demonstrable commitment to delivering the strategy should have a positive impact upon community relations.</p> <p>.</p>
9.	<p>What plans do you have in place, or are developing, that will mitigate any likely identified negative impacts? For example what plans, if any, will be put in place to reduce the impact?</p> <p>There are no identified negatives.</p>
10.	<p>What plans do you have in place to monitor the impact of the proposals once they have been implemented? (The full impact of the decision may only be known after the proposals have been implemented). Please see action plan below.</p> <p>Implementation of the Action Plan Oversight by a Steering Group</p>

What course of action does this EIA suggest you take? More than one of the following may apply	✓
Outcome 1: No major change required. The EIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken	✓
Outcome 2: Adjust the policy to remove barriers identified by the EIA or better promote equality. Are you satisfied that the proposed adjustments will remove the barriers identified? (Complete action plan).	
Outcome 3: Continue the policy despite potential for adverse impact or missed opportunities to promote equality identified. You will need to ensure that the EIA clearly sets out the justifications for continuing with it. You should consider whether there are sufficient plans to reduce the negative impact and/or plans to monitor the actual impact (see questions below). (Complete action plan).	
Outcome 4: Stop and rethink the policy when the EIA shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination. (Complete action plan).	

It is also proposed that progress against the action plan is reported through the Slough Wellbeing Board.

Action Plan and

Timetable for Implementation

At this stage a timetabled Action Plan should be developed to address any concerns/issues related to equality in the existing or proposed policy/service or function. This plan will need to be integrated into the appropriate Service/Business Plan.

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Action	Target Groups	Lead Responsibility	Outcomes/Success Criteria	Monitoring & Evaluation	Target Date	Progress to Date

Name: Jane senior
Signed:(Person completing the EIA)

Name:
Signed:(Policy Lead if not same as above)

Date:

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Slough Adult Carers Strategy

2023 – 2026

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Executive Summary

This strategy sets out how Slough Borough Council, working with partners, will support and encourage carers to manage their own health and wellbeing and, together with partners build carer resilience and make the right interventions when carers are most in need. Unpaid family and friend carers are often the ones holding families and communities together, and giving the right support at the right time during a person's caring journey can make a huge difference to their lives.

The aim of the strategy is to meet the vision that Slough is a place where carers can balance their caring roles and maintain their desired quality of life. We aim to achieve this through improving the lives of carers and by enabling them to make informed choices as well as exercise choice and control about the care and support they receive. This will be through the provision of accessible information and advice for them and the person they care for, including benefits and employment rights. Carers have told us that information and advice should be accessible through a range of community points (for example libraries and shops) and not just on-line. We are committed to ensuring that carers have access to a range of services that minimise the negative impacts of caring upon their health and well-being, prevent carer breakdown, and help prevent or delay them from developing a need for care and support themselves. The importance of seeing carers as individuals with their own lives, separate from the cared for person is an important part of the approach and is also key to receiving the right support, at the right time.

This Strategy has been informed by engagement with Carers – and some examples of where feedback has shaped the Strategy are highlighted within boxes throughout the document. Further detail concerning engagement and how this has directly influenced the strategy is contained at the appendix to this strategy.

Vision and Priorities for Adult Social Care what outcomes carers want to achieve and how they can be supported to achieve these

In June 2023, Cabinet approved the development of a refreshed Corporate Plan for the town. [Report.pdf \(slough.gov.uk\)](#)

The Corporate Plan describes the purpose of the Council as:

- Closing the healthy life expectancy gap, by focussing on children

With three key strategic objectives, which are:

- Priority 1: A borough for children and young people to thrive.
- Priority 2: A town where residents can live healthier, safer and more independent lives.
- Priority 3: A cleaner, healthier and more prosperous Slough.

The plan is open to public consultation throughout Summer 2023.

People (Adults) directorate supports Priority 2 and adopts a tiered preventative approach towards the delivery of adult social care.

Key elements of the approach are to:

- Enable people to manage their health and wellbeing
- Prevent the need for take up of adult social care
- Provide access to the right level of support at the right time
- Enable people to manage their own care and support needs
- Safeguard our vulnerable population
- Progress integration between health and social care
- Embed Co-production at the heart of care and support

Our priorities for Carers

The Strategy aims to achieve the following outcomes as our refreshed priorities for 2023 – 2026. In response to legislative requirements, local strategy and knowledge and stakeholder engagement we have developed the following six priorities:

1. Enable carers to access information, advice and guidance
2. Identify and recognise carers at an early stage
3. Promote carer awareness – including the valuable role they play and challenges they face
4. Provide person-centred support – to enable carers to manage their own health and wellbeing and access to the right support at the right time
5. Ensure that Carers are viewed and listened to by professionals as experts in care
6. Support effective Integration and partnership work – including co-production and ensuring that carers voice is central to any service development.

Feedback from Engagement

A survey was undertaken in July 2023 to find out what Carers felt about the draft Carers Strategy. The Survey was distributed to all carers on the SCVS registration list, to Carer Groups and to members of the Co-production Network. As a result of the survey, the priorities have been modified to take account of views and responses received.

Further information concerning the survey, the responses and how these have shaped the Strategy can be found at the Appendix to this Strategy.

The strategy will be responsive to any future changing local and national priorities including changing legislation. Carers as expert partners will be involved in having oversight of the strategy.

Feedback from Engagement

Carers' voice is central to any service developments. The implementation of the Carers Strategy will be overseen through a steering group comprising carers, officers from the People (Adults) directorate, the co-production network, and other professional stakeholders including Frimley ICS.

1. Introduction

Slough Borough Council and our health, voluntary and independent sector partners, acknowledge the significant contribution of carers and are committed to supporting them to fulfil their caring role, whilst enabling them to have a life outside of caring, and maintaining and protecting their health and wellbeing.

Each year millions of people take on caring responsibilities as the population ages and the number of people with a limiting long-term illness increases, this means that caring will touch the lives of most people, as we either require care or provide care to loved ones, at some point in our lives. Unpaid carers make an important contribution to the overall supply of care services. As the population grows and ages, an increasing number of people are likely to continue to provide significant levels of care.

'A Carer is considered to be anyone who spends time looking after or helping a family member, friend or neighbour who, because of their health and care needs, would find it difficult to cope without this help regardless of age or whether they identify as a Carer'.¹ The concept of care includes practical or emotional support.

Caring can come about unexpectedly or can develop gradually over time; and whilst it can be rewarding, it can also be challenging. Many carers often put their own lives on hold to provide care and support to someone close to them - impacting on their own health and wellbeing, relationships, employment opportunities, finances, and social and leisure activities.

It is important that new carers are provided with early information and advice so that they understand the financial and other support which might be available to them. Good quality legal advice is also important so that carers understand their rights and legal processes which might be helpful.

Feedback from Engagement

Early information and advice covering employment, benefits and legal advice was flagged as being important in the engagement with carers. This includes information on securing Lasting Power of Attorney in case the person being cared for loses their mental capacity in future years.

¹ Carers Action Plan: Supporting Carers today 2018 - 2020
www.gov.uk/government/publications/carers-action-plan-2018-to-2020

It is critical that carers are seen as individuals, that the diversity of needs is understood, that voices are heard and that a person-centred approach is used to identify and meet needs. One size does not fit all.

According to the 2021 Census, there are now 6.5 million unpaid carers in the UK. This means that 1 in 5 adults in the UK are currently providing care. This could be a relative, partner or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or is affected by mental health or substance misuse. It includes young people under 18 who may be caring at home.

Providing care for another person can be a rewarding and fulfilling experience. But there can also be times when people who care find themselves struggling. It is estimated that the number of unpaid carers has risen to 10.6 million given the fact that some carers do not identify themselves as carers.²

Women are more likely to become carers and to provide more hours of unpaid care than men. More women than men provide high intensity care at ages when they would expect to be in paid work. 58% of unpaid carers are women.³ Between 2010 – 2020, people aged 46-65 were the largest age group to become unpaid carers. 41% of people who became unpaid carers were in this age group.⁴ One in seven carers in the UK are juggling work and care.⁵

Slough is not unique in that our carer statistics reflect the national picture. According to the 2021 census, there are 12,626 carers in Slough. The 2021 census states that 3.3% of residents (aged five years and over) reported providing up to 19 hours of unpaid care each week in 2021. This figure decreased from 6.0% in 2011. These are age-standardised proportions.

Also, in 2021, just under 1 in 50 people (1.9%) in Slough reported providing between 20 and 49 hours of unpaid care each week, compared with 1.7% in 2011. The proportion of Slough residents (aged five years and over) that provided at least 50 hours of weekly unpaid care remained at 2.5%. The percentage of people (aged five years and over) providing up to 19 hours of weekly unpaid care in Slough decreased by 2.7 percentage points.

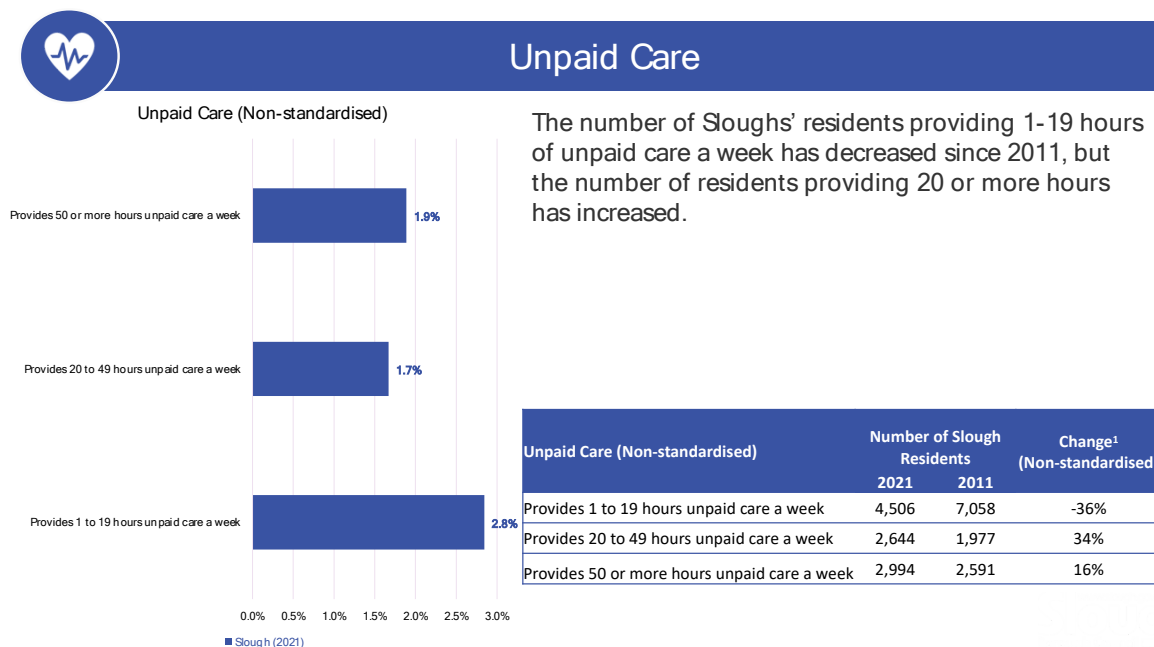
² Making Caring Visible, Valued and Supported, Carers Week 2022 Research Report
https://www.carersweek.org/media/qf0p5u4t/carers-week-2022-make-caring-visible-valued-and-supported-report_final.pdf

³ Unpaid Care, England and Wales: Census 2021
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/bulletins/unpaidcareenglandandwales/census2021>

⁴ Petrillo, M., Bennett, M.R., and Pryce, G. (2022) Cycles of caring: transitions in and out of unpaid care. London: Carers UK
<https://www.carersuk.org/media/bgolg5u2/cuk-carers-rights-day-research-report-2022-web.pdf>

⁵ Juggling Work and Care 2019. Carers UK.
<https://www.carersuk.org/media/no2lwyl/juggling-work-and-unpaid-care-report-final-web.pdf>

Figure 1: Changes in the provision of unpaid care in Slough (2011 – 2021)



In the southeast region, Slough has the lowest proportion of people (aged five years and over) providing up to 19 hours of weekly unpaid care (3.3%) when compared with Reading (3.7%) and Lewes (5.4%) which is the region's highest proportion.

The value of unpaid care was estimated at £530 million per day and £193 billion per year during the pandemic.⁶ As such, it is important to recognise the potential impact that providing many hours of care each week may have on carers' own quality of life – their physical and mental health, employment opportunities, finances, social relationships, and social and leisure activities.

Three in five people will be carers at some point in their lives and almost everyone will know family members, friends and colleagues who are carers. There is not a 'typical carer' and everyone's caring role is unique. Carers come from a range of backgrounds, situations, and age groups. Some carers move in and out of the role many times and provide various types of care, often to more than one person.

Carers are a socially and demographically diverse group and as the demand for care is projected to grow, people are increasingly likely to become providers of care at some point in their lives.

⁶ Carers UK: Unseen and undervalued. The value of unpaid care provided to date during the COVID-19 pandemic (November 2020) <https://www.carersuk.org/media/gi1b4oup/unseenandundervalued.pdf>

2. Vision

The vision for Slough's Carers Strategy 2023 – 2026 is that Slough is a place where carers can balance their caring roles and maintain their desired quality of life. We will do this by providing a carers support offer that aims to ensure:

- All carers in Slough will be assisted to identify themselves as carers at an early stage and will receive support to promote their wellbeing
- Carers are able to make informed decisions and exercise choice and control about care and support through the provision of accessible information and advice for themselves and the person they care for
- Carers will receive personalised support, both for themselves and the person they care for, enabling them to have a family and community life
- Carers will be supported to remain physically and mentally well
- Carers will be supported to access the right services, at the right time, in the right place.
- Carers will be recognised, valued, and empowered as “experts” in care.
- Carers will be supported in their carers' journey (prevention and crisis intervention).

Feedback from Engagement

The survey with carers undertaken in July 23, showed that the vast majority of respondents agreed with each of the above elements of a carers support offer. Further detail can be found at the Appendix to this Strategy.

We will deliver an outcome- focused carers support offer that will:

- Support early identification of carers
- Act as a single point of entry for Slough carers
- Ensure all carers receive an assessment of their needs (that is proportionate to their presenting needs)
- Take a holistic approach to prevention, which is solution- focused
- Ensure support is tailored to local needs, builds upon local assets
- Incorporate a range of support services that are central to carer needs and requirements – including particular needs such as for male carers.
- Support Carers through an asset-based approach, building on individual and community skills, knowledge, support networks and connections
- Empower Carers to be as independent as possible at an individual and community level
- Assist carers to maintain and/or improve their health and wellbeing
- Assist carers to continue in their caring role
- Be local and accessible to carers
- Support transition of young carers into adult services where appropriate.
- Develop an outcomes framework to align with the Slough Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF).

This strategy has been developed as an approach to supporting carers and commits us to working in partnership with carers, health and social care providers, communities and employers with the aspiration to develop a society that is carer friendly, which values and supports carers to fulfil their caring role and maintain their health and wellbeing.

3. Purpose and scope of our Strategy

The strategy sets out the types of services needed by carers in Slough and how they will be provided in the future. This strategy has been developed to strengthen early intervention and integrated support. It seeks to respond to the issues that have been highlighted locally and outline how everyone across the system can specifically work together to improve the lives of carers.

This strategy is for all unpaid adult carers supporting someone who lives in Slough, regardless of the condition of the person depending on them. It recognises that all carers have a diverse and unique range of needs, priorities, and interests. It is acknowledged that in the longer term it could be beneficial to aspire to an “all age approach to carers” to cover the entire carers pathway from children to adults. This will include particular cases where adult social care is empowered to provide support to a parent carer who is yet to transition to adult social services.

This strategy is concerned with direct support for carers and carers’ services and influencing all health and social care services and the wider community to understand and respond to the needs of carers.

The Council is committed to improving the offer for carers and the strategy sets out how we intend to do that. Further changes in government policy also means that it is necessary to reflect these changes and ensure our vision for supporting carers is fit for the future. Our refreshed priorities will inform the design of future support and developments and set out what we will concentrate our resources on promoting carers’ health and wellbeing.

We will monitor and measure the success of this strategy through the accompanying Action Plan. This makes clear who will be responsible for the work that is needed to implement the strategy and the outcomes will be tracked, monitored and reported through the Council’s performance monitoring data, Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF), Steering Group and the Slough Co-Production Network.

4. Policy Guidance: National and Local Context

National Context

The development of Slough’s Carers Strategy 2023 - 2026 is shaped by the following legislation, statutory guidance and national policy framework:

- The Care Act (2014)
- The Children and Families Act (2014)
- Care and Support (Children’s carers) Regulations 2015

- Care and Support Statutory Guidance
- State of Caring (2019)
- NHS England's Long Term Plan (2019)
- National Carers Action Plan (2018-2020)
- NHS Commitment to Carers (2014)
- NICE Guidelines
- Carers at the heart of 21st-century families and communities (DH 2008)
- Recognised, valued, and supported: Next steps for the Carers Strategy (DH 2010)
- Carers Strategy: Second National Action Plan 2014 -2016 (DH)
- NHS England's Commitment to Carers (NHS April 2014)
- Commissioning for Carers: Principles and resources to support effective commissioning for adult and young carer (NHS Dec 2014)
- RCGP Supporting Carers in General Practice
- Making it Real for Carers (TLAP May 2013)
- Hidden from view: The experiences of young carers in England (The Children's Society 2013)

Local Context

This strategy, and its delivery plan, links closely with a number of other programmes of work, and should be considered in parallel with the following:

- Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy 2020 – 2025 ⁷
- The draft refreshed Slough Borough Council Corporate Plan (open to consultation Summer 2023)
- Carers Policy
- Caring behind closed doors: Forgotten Families in the Coronavirus Outbreak, April 2020 ⁸
- Caring behind closed doors: six months on, October 2020 ⁹
- Healthwatch Slough: Covid-19 Insight Report: March to July 2020.¹⁰

Health and social care partners in Slough have agreed jointly to put strong mechanisms in place to support unpaid carers and work across the health and social care economy to minimise the impact of illness and disability on a carer's life, and support carers to balance their caring roles and maintain their desired quality of life.

To achieve the vision and the strategic objectives set out in this strategy it is vital that sustainable support solutions are in place for carers that will empower carers to be as independent as possible at an individual and community level.

⁷ Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, 2020 – 2025

<https://www.slough.gov.uk/downloads/file/866/slough-wellbeing-board-strategy-2020-2025>

⁸ Caring Behind Closed Doors: Forgotten Families in the Coronavirus Outbreak, April 2020, Carers UK <https://www.carersuk.org/news-and-campaigns/campaigns/caring-behind-closed-doors>

⁹ Caring behind closed doors: six months on, October 2020
<https://www.caringtogether.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Caring-behind-closed-doors-Oct20-Carers-UK-PDF.pdf>

¹⁰ Healthwatch Slough: Covid-19 Insight Report: March to July 2020.

<https://www.healthwatchslough.co.uk/sites/healthwatchslough.co.uk/files/HW%20Slough%20Covid%20Report%20July%202020.pdf>

Therefore, we are looking for new ways of making the best use of the money available and ways of people supporting each other in their local communities. We are looking to develop a carers' support offer that is closer to communities, in order to ensure support is tailored to local needs, builds upon local assets, and is integrated within and works in partnership with the local health and social care system.

5. How this strategy was informed

As part of the engagement with carers and professional stakeholders (see appendix 1), the issues below were identified as the top challenges carers may have (or be likely to) experience in Slough. It aligns closely with national research conclusions.

- The negative impact of caring on physical health and mental health (including loneliness and isolation)
- More carers experiencing financial hardship.
- Identification of carers, young carers, and recognition of carers' expertise by healthcare services being generally seen as haphazard or poor.
- Back-up for carers and suitable respite becoming more critical.
- The increased need for isolated and stressed carers of all ages to come together for peer support and social activities.

Feedback from Engagement

In the survey undertaken in July 23, the majority of respondents agreed that these issues represented challenges. The impact of a caring role upon physical and mental health, financial hardship and access to respite were considered to be challenges by the highest number of respondents (91%). Recognition of carers expertise by healthcare services was considered a challenge by a lower percentage of carers (67%).

We have considered what is important nationally in terms of legislation and guidance as part of our strategy. We have also aligned this strategy with the vision and values described in Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy 2020 – 2025.

This strategy sets out how we will prioritise and target our resources and activities in order to achieve the vision set out above and drive improvements in support for carers across Slough's health and social care system.

6. Caring costs and funding

Caring costs

In order to support carers, we recognise the importance of providing financial assistance, access to resources and information, and other forms of support that can help to alleviate the costs of caring. This can include access to benefits, respite care, and other forms of financial and practical assistance.

Caring can have a significant impact on economic wellbeing and can cause financial hardship due to:

- Reduced working hours or taking periods of unpaid leave
- Having to leave work or retire early
- Stress levels and its impact on physical health
- Leaving school / education early and not progressing to further and / or higher education

Caring can also incur greater costs, for example:

- Travelling regularly to care for someone where they don't live in the same house
- Having the heating on all day due to someone being elderly or unwell or disabled
- Aids and adaptations and their maintenance and repair
- Specialist childcare for a disabled child

This strategy acknowledges the financial hardship of caring and will look for solutions to reduce and mitigate the impact.

Funding

Funding future adult social care demand is a key issue across the UK. In Slough, we have brought the carers service in-house as we think this will represent better value for money and deliver improved outcomes. Further information concerning this decision can be found here: [AGENDA ITEM \(slough.gov.uk\)](https://www.slough.gov.uk/agenda-item)

The funding is used to act as a single point of entry for all carers and implementing a “triage” approach to carers assessments and provision of support. Where need is identified the in-house service will work with the carers to develop a support plan to ensure identified needs are met through access to their local community and universal and targeted services.

Services include:

- Access to Advice and Information (provided alongside other support)
- Voluntary and Community Sector Services
- Peer support/carers networks

- Access to other preventative services including the Integrated Wellbeing Service (IWS) – providing a single point of access to a range of services including smoking cessation, brief alcohol intervention, falls prevention, health checks etc
- Training: (to enable people to confidently care)
- Access to short breaks from caring and respite care – to minimise carer break down, alongside peer support groups and training
- Care and support packages
- Developing emergency and contingency plans
- Increased use of assistive technology to support carers to take a break from their caring responsibilities
- Direct payments

Further work will on data collection will help us understand the costs and impacts when the carer goes into hospital and quantify savings to acute services through provision of improved support to carers, such as respite services and night sits that prevent unnecessary hospital admissions.

Feedback from Engagement

Carers fed back that access to respite, short breaks and sitting services were important to ensure that they get a break from their caring responsibilities as these prevent carer breakdown and can prevent unnecessary hospital admissions.

The Carers Strategy Action Plan (section 11 below) includes a commitment to review the existing offer and any opportunities for developing this going forward.

Carers Assessment

Carers assessment focusses on the following:

- The care and support currently provided or intended to be provided in the future
- The sustainability of the care and support currently provided and in the future
- Carer related needs and the support required to help meet these needs
- The impact on carers health and wellbeing as a result of carrying out a caring role

The assessment questions (also completed online) have been designed to help fully identify the impact which carrying out a caring role has on a carer's day to day life and what support they need to continue carrying out this role now and in the future. It also includes a requirement when needed to take a holistic whole family approach to caring. It looks to draw upon carers strengths, capabilities and help carers explore opportunities available in the community and support networks. Ultimately, it will look to detail what is important to carers, what outcomes carers want to achieve and how they can be supported to achieve these.

Direct Payments

Direct payments for carers are designed to support carers in different aspects of their lives, and to help ease some of the extra pressures arising from their caring role. There are opportunities to extend the way they are offered.

In order to qualify for one of these payments, carers will need to have a carer’s assessment or review undertaken by the council that has identified an unmet eligible need.

We will increase the number of carers accessing Direct Payments by raising awareness of the existence of Direct Payments, and by offering training and support for some carers who may lack confidence or feel overwhelmed by the prospect of managing Direct Payments. We will also ensure there is advocacy available for people who need support. Further information is contained within the action plan below.

Table 1: Direct Payment dataset for January 2023

	No of New Direct Payment in Reporting Month (January 2023)	Total number of current ongoing Direct Payments	Total Recoups this Financial Year to date (From 1 April 2022) £
ASC	7	307	£631,165.28
CHC	N/A	N/A	To 30 August 2022 £199,741.37 (SBC £50,097.31 & CHC £149,644.06)
Totals	7	307	£830,906.59

Table 2: Total open at any point during the financial year from 1st April 2022

	Carers one off payments	Service user Direct Payments	Total
ASC	165	377	542
CHC	N/A	48 (42 IAS & 6 other) to 30 August 2022	48

Totals	165	425	590
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Table 3: Direct Payments Applications in progress as at 31st January 2023

	Service User Direct Payment Applications in progress
ASC	7
CHC	N/A
Totals	7

7. The impact of caring amongst underrepresented groups

Black, Asian and ethnic minority carers are more likely to be struggling financially. At the beginning of the pandemic, over half (58%) of unpaid carers from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups said they were worried about their finances, compared to 37% of White carers.¹¹ LGBT carers are more likely to feel lonely. 48% of bisexual carers and 45% of lesbian and gay carers often or always feel lonely, compared with 33% of heterosexual carers¹² 27% of carers who completed Carers UK State of Caring survey in 2022 said they had a disability.¹³

We will be setting out steps to strengthen the early identification of carers from Slough’s diverse community including the underrepresented groups so that their particular needs can be more fully understood and addressed. This aligns with plans to bring the Carers Service in house so that it is embedded within the wider Adult Social Care Operational Team.

Data concerning unmet need will feed into the annual grant cycle for voluntary and community sector groups where bids can be submitted for funding to address gaps in service provision. Members of the co-production network are and will continue to be engaged in assessing bids for the annual cycle of grant funding of voluntary and community sector services.

¹² Carers UK, The Experiences of Black, Asian and minority ethnic carers during the COVID-19 pandemic, 2022

¹³ State of Caring report. Carers UK. 2022
<https://www.carersuk.org/reports/state-of-caring-2022-report/>

8. Priorities and Outcomes

In response to legislative requirements, local knowledge and stakeholder engagement we have developed the following five priorities:

Priority 1 – Enabling carers to access information, advice and guidance

Access to clear, concise, accurate and relevant information is a key requirement for carers and will help to avoid, reduce or delay the need for assessment and more intensive support. Carers also want to know when changes are made to services and understand what this means for them and the people they care for. To achieve this, we will:

1. Ensure that carers are aware of the Information and Advice Services which are available in the town.
2. Ensure that sources of information (for example the Directory of Services operated by the Slough Community and Voluntary Sector) are consistent, credible, reliable, accessible and up to date which gives carers the best chance of knowing what is on offer in their communities to support them at any stage in their caring journey.
3. Provide information in a range of formats (not just digital), making sources of information, advice and guidance easy to find and navigate for those who are not confident or do not have access to on-line information.
4. Ensure that carers are able to speak to someone if they need to.
5. Support carers to understand the implications of the cared for person's diagnosis when they are diagnosed and know where to get help and support.
6. Statutory agencies shall understand their respective roles, the types of support available to carers and will keep carers up to date on changes to their operations.
7. Make information available for professionals and any agencies who come into contact with carers, including young carers easy to access and signpost to.

Priority 2 – Identify and recognise carers at an early stage

Many carers provide care within a family network and do not want or need additional support. However, some carers need support in order to prevent the escalation of their own needs, and those of the person they look after. Identifying carers early will help to ensure carers know where to go to when they require support, keeping them well for longer and helping to avoid crisis which necessitates involvement from statutory services. To achieve this, we will:

1. Train professionals including working with social prescribers, social care and other agencies to identify, value and work with carers (particularly vulnerable carers who don't self-identify) in the course of their work and ensure it is underpinned by clear knowledge on where to get information and advice.
2. Embed Community Connectors into Hospital Social Work Teams (as part of the recent recommissioning of the Voluntary and Community Sector). They will provide advice and signposting to carers, including new carers.

3. Help Primary Care GP Surgeries (particularly through social prescribers), often the starting point for a carer's journey, recognise carers and know where to signpost them for support in their communities.
4. Optimise opportunities to raise the profile of caring, to help people to self-identify, such as the Carers Week, which is an annual campaign to raise awareness of caring, highlight the challenges carers face and recognise the contribution they make to families and communities throughout the UK. It also helps people who don't think of themselves as having caring responsibilities to identify as carers and access much-needed support.

Priority 3 – Promote carer awareness – including the valuable role they play and the challenges that they face.

Promoting carer awareness will help to raise awareness of the valuable role that carers play, as well as the challenges they face. This will help to increase understanding and empathy for carers. To achieve this, we will:

1. Raise awareness of carers amongst professionals who may have contact with them across all sectors and settings.
2. Explore how statutory services can better identify and record information on carers.
3. Ensure services are designed to meet the needs of the individual which includes receiving the right treatment and care.
4. Provide education and training to healthcare professionals, employers, and the wider community can help to raise awareness of carers and their needs. This can include information on the impact of caring on carers' mental and physical health, as well as practical advice on how to support carers.
5. Run public awareness campaigns to raise awareness of carers and their needs. This can include media campaigns, social media outreach, and community events.
6. Partner with carer organisations including collaborating on educational programs, awareness-raising campaigns, and advocacy initiatives.
7. Recognise and support carers through policies and programs including providing financial support, flexible work arrangements, and respite care services.

Priority 4 – Person centred support – to enable carers to manage their own health and wellbeing and access the right support at the right time

Incorporating a person-centred approach as a priority in our strategy for carers will help to ensure that carers are recognised, supported, and empowered to continue providing the essential care that their loved ones need. To achieve this, we will:

1. Embed new carers support and coordinator role within Adult Social Care.
2. Identify the individual's needs, preferences and goals. This information can be used to develop a care plan that reflects their unique circumstances and can be used to guide the support provided to unpaid carers.
3. Provide training and education to help carers provide person-centred care. This could include learning about communication techniques, strategies for

managing challenging behaviours, and ways to support the person's independence and wellbeing.

4. Provide financial support as carers may face financial challenges due to their caring responsibilities. A person-centred approach involves identifying the carer's financial needs and providing appropriate support, such as access to financial advice, benefits, or other financial assistance as detailed in the Slough Carers Policy.
5. Ensure carers receive emotional and psychological support throughout their carers journey (including end of life of the cared for person) as caring for a loved one can be emotionally and psychologically challenging. A person-centred approach involves providing access to counselling, support groups, or other forms of emotional support that can help carers manage their own wellbeing.
6. Signpost to a range of services within the community, including the voluntary and community sector.

Priority 5 – Ensure that Carers are viewed and listened to by professionals as experts in care

Raising awareness among professionals that carers are experts in care will support professionals to have an appropriate understanding of the knowledge and practical support which carers provide to those that they care for. This will ensure that the needs of both carers and those that they care for are fully considered.

1. Work with carers as experts to provide training and briefing sessions for professionals working with carers. Incorporate into this training a clear expectation that the view of carers are listened to and responded to.
2. Ensure that the views of carers as experts in care are listened to and responded to.

Priority 6 – Integration and partnership work - – including co-production and ensuring that carers' voice is central to any service developments.

Emphasising integration and partnership work will help to ensure that carers receive comprehensive and coordinated support. To achieve this, we will:

1. Ensure there is collaboration between health and social care services which can help to ensure that carers receive coordinated support. This could involve sharing information and working together to address the carer's physical and emotional health needs.
2. Integrate our resources to support carers by providing access to information, resources, and support services in a timely manner.
3. Involve the voluntary sector to play a key role in supporting carers to provide a range of services, such as respite care, counselling, and financial support.
4. Engage with the community to raise awareness of the needs of carers and provide support at the local level. This will involve working with community groups, faith-based organisations, and other stakeholders to develop community-based support networks.
5. Ensure that service user voice is integral to service development.

6. Ensure that delivery of the Carers Strategy is overseen by a steering group comprising Carers, Council Staff and other Stakeholders.

By working together across different sectors and with different stakeholders, we will develop a range of support services that meet the diverse needs of carers.

Further information is contained within the Action Plan below.

9. How the strategy will be delivered

The Carers Steering Group (comprising carers, Council officers, members of the Co-production Forum and professional stakeholders) will oversee the implementation of this strategy and monitor progress.

Delivery of this strategy will be monitored through three levels of performance monitoring:

- Strategic level (Health and Wellbeing Board)
- Service level (People Adults DLT)
- Individual level (Strategy and Commissioning Team)

10. What we offer Carers in Slough

Update on Carers remodelling

In November 2022, a decision was made at Cabinet to bring the Carers Service in-house. [AGENDA ITEM \(slough.gov.uk\)](https://www.slough.gov.uk/agenda-item)

This transition was overseen by adult social care commissioners working closely with carers, Slough CVS, ASC and Health carers leads and operational teams to co-design the final in-house model for carers .

The approach which was taken is set out in the table below:

Table 4: Carers remodelling approach

Phase	Activity	Date of Completion
1 Understanding the current support service	Work with SCVS to understand the various ways Carers are supported	Jan 23
2 Testing the understanding	Engage with carers and other stakeholders to identify key strengths and gaps of current approach and any service improvement suggestions	Feb 23
3 Co-developing the 'to be' pathway	Work with operational teams/ reps Sharing the 'as is' approach; Sharing engagement feedback re: what works,	March / April 23

	gaps, ideals; Identifying wins; Identifying problems; Identifying roles and structure	
4 Testing the understanding	Using the combined information develop a draft approach for how the remodelled service would work: Test model with Carers, Carers groups and operational teams to ensure it will work Amend as appropriate- Promote model with wider VCS	April/May 23
5 Promoting the approach	Communication strategy Wider promotion in preparation of change	June 23
6 Implementation, oversight and monitoring	Steering group comprising carers, officers and other stakeholders to be established to monitor implementation and delivery of the Carers Strategy.	1 July 2023

Key Elements of the In-house Service (High Level)

- Key elements of the in-house service will be:
- To maintain the resilience and wellbeing of unpaid Carers, facilitating access to support, advice, and information to empower them to maintain their role whilst continuing to lead a balanced and rewarding life.
- Supporting Carers along their caring journey from early help and registration, through preventative support via the community to crisis interventions.
- Facilitating systems and partnership working.
- Co-developing the carers support offer via the Carers Steering Group and overseeing the Action Plan (below).
- Facilitating support planning and carers assessments
- Work in partnership with other Carers support roles to improve access, and a shared support offer where possible, for example shared Carers awareness and Carer training opportunities.
- Working with the statutory and voluntary sector, religious and business communities to raise the profile of carers to help increase access to support.
- Developing awareness of carers rights and promoting understanding of the caring role, including identifying ‘hidden’ carers.
- To maintain data on gaps in provision and to feed into the Voluntary and Community Sector grants programme.

11. Action Plan

Priority (See page 4)	Actions	What we will work on to achieve these actions	How we will know if we are making progress
<p>Priority 1</p> <p>Enable Carers to Access Information, Advice and Guidance</p>	<p>Information and Advice for Carers</p>	<p>Ensure that all professionals working with carers are aware of the Directory of Services operated by Slough CVS and the Information and Advice which is available locally.</p> <p>Promote information on carers webpage.</p> <p>Agree other forms of information for inclusion within community facilities such as libraries</p> <p>Promotion of the carers role within our community settings.</p>	<p>Bite size training sessions for Council Staff and other Stakeholders by Spring 2024.</p> <p>Development of information for carers.</p>
	<p>Benefit maximisation for carers</p>	<p>We will:</p> <p>Identify all available benefits: Carers should be made aware of all the benefits they may be eligible for and assisted in making applications for these.</p> <p>Help with the application process: The process of applying for benefits can be complex and time-consuming. Help carers navigate the application process.</p> <p>Advocate for carers: Carers may face challenges when accessing benefits, such</p>	<p>Carers surveys and feedback with a high carer customer satisfaction level beyond 60% from surveys each year.</p> <p>Evidence carers feel they have enough support in accessing welfare benefits</p>

		<p>as eligibility criteria or long waiting times.</p> <p>Regularly review benefits: Carers' circumstances may change over time, which can impact their eligibility for benefits. Regularly reviewing their entitlements can ensure that carers continue to receive the financial support they need</p>	
<p>Priority 2</p> <p>Identify and recognise carers at an early stage.</p>	<p>Maintain the list of carers</p>	<p>We will:</p> <p>Identify the carers such as through referrals from healthcare providers or community organisations, self-identification through surveys or questionnaires, or through outreach efforts.</p> <p>Collect information: Once carers have been identified, it's important to collect information about them. This can include basic demographic information, such as their age and gender, as well as information about their caregiving responsibilities and the support they may need.</p> <p>Update the list regularly</p> <p>Protect privacy and confidentiality</p>	<p>Updated list by 31st January 2024.</p>
<p>Priority 3</p> <p>Promote Carer Awareness</p>	<p>Gathering more information around equalities information. BAME, LGBT</p>	<p>We will be setting out steps to strengthen the early identification of carers from Slough's diverse community including the underrepresented groups so that their particular needs can be more fully understood and</p>	<p>Data / information</p> <p>Ongoing will report on progress by 31st March 2024.</p>

		addressed. This aligns with plans to bring the Carers Service in house so that it is embedded within the wider Adult Social Care Operational Team.	
	Understand more around safeguarding issues – Independent Domestic Violence Advocates for OP	<p>We will ensure that IDVAs are aware of safeguarding issues to ensure the safety and well-being of the victim and any children involved.</p> <p>IDVAs need to receive regular training on safeguarding issues and have access to appropriate resources and support. We will promote working closely with other professionals, to ensure a coordinated approach to safeguarding.</p>	<p>Feedback from carers and carers leads locally and communication with Slough Safeguarding Partnership to achieve these actions.</p> <p>Improvements to be made as suggested by 31st July 2024.</p>
	Facilitate training / briefing sessions for Adult Social Care Staff and other Professionals on the role of carers, including carers who do not self-identify as such.	Adult Social Care Staff to work with Carers to develop carer-led training / briefings to raise awareness of carers and their responsibilities and to address some of the issues and negative experiences of carers identified through the Strategy engagement,	<p>Carer feedback, staff feedback.</p> <p>Between 2 and 4 Training and Briefing Sessions facilitated by December 23.</p>
<p>Priority 4</p> <p>Provide person-centred support – to enable carers to manage their own health and wellbeing and access to the right support at the right time</p>	Increase the number of carers assessments	<p>We will:</p> <p>Make the process simple</p> <p>Provide different options: Some carers may prefer to complete their assessment online or over the phone, while others may prefer a face-to-face assessment.</p> <p>Prioritise high-risk groups: Some carers may be at higher risk of experiencing stress, mental health</p>	<p>Data monitoring and evidence that there had been an increase up to a minimum of new carers assessments per year bringing the total to 200 this year (from 130). To be reviewed at 31st July 2024.</p>

		<p>issues, or burnout as a result of their caring role</p> <p>Provide regular reminders: Carers' circumstances may change over time, which can impact their eligibility for support.</p> <p>Improving the timeliness of carer assessments and what those outcomes are.</p>	
	<p>Embed community connectors into Hospital Social Work Teams</p>	<p>We will ensure there is collaboration and communication between Hospital Social Work Teams and community connectors.</p>	<p>Feedback from carers and carers leads locally.</p> <p>Hospital Social Work Plans to demonstrate packages of support were fulfilled using the Community Connectors. An audit of this progress to be undertaken by 31st March 2024 with options for improvement.</p>
	<p>Increase the number of carers accessing Direct Payments</p>	<p>We will:</p> <p>Raise awareness: Many carers may not be aware of the existence of Direct Payments or may not know how to access them.</p> <p>Simplify the process: The process of accessing Direct Payments can be complex, which may deter some carers from applying.</p> <p>Offer training and support: Some carers may lack confidence or feel overwhelmed by the</p>	<p>Data / information</p> <p>Raise the awareness and increase the numbers of carers accessing Direct Payments by 10% by 31st July 2024</p>

		responsibility of managing Direct Payments. Ensure there is advocacy available for people who need support.	
	Promote the take up of ASC Portal for carers assessments	We will communicate these benefits to carers and their families. Highlighting the convenience, flexibility, and accuracy of the ASC Portal can help encourage more carers to use it. It may also be useful to provide training or support to carers who are less confident with technology or online portals / platforms.	Feedback from carers Data monitoring Numbers accessing the Portal to increase by 40% in the next year up to 31 st July 2024.
	Develop an operational Carers Pathway to mirror this Strategy and the transition to an in-house service.	To work with operational colleagues to ensure all referral points on the Carers customer journey are reflected in the Carers Pathway and all teams are aware of their responsibilities.	Carer feedback, staff feedback New Carer Pathway developed by February 29th 2024.
	Review current respite and short break utilisation for those who are eligible.	Scope opportunities for further development of the offer within the available budgetary envelope.	Review concluded by Autumn 2024. Any developmental work required to be scoped at the conclusion of the review.
	Ensure that the Annual VCS Grants Programme is informed by data on unmet need for carers.	Ensure that data is gathered through the in-house service to provide an evidence base for the annual VCS grants programme.	Data gathered on an ongoing basis and reported into the Steering Group
Priority 5	Facilitate training / briefing	Adult Social Care Staff to work with Carers to	Carer feedback, staff feedback.

<p>Ensure that carers are viewed as experts in care</p>	<p>sessions for Adult Social Care Staff and other Professionals on the role of carers, including carers who do not self-identify as such and carers as experts in care.</p>	<p>develop carer-led training / briefings to raise awareness of carers and their responsibilities and to address some of the issues and negative experiences of carers identified through the Strategy engagement,</p>	<p>Between 2 and 4 Training and Briefing Sessions facilitated by August 23.</p>
<p>Priority 6</p> <p>Support effective Integration and partnership work – including co-production and ensuring that carers voice is central to any service development</p>	<p>Further develop the in-house carers service.</p>	<p>We will continue with our work plan and we brought this service in house on 1st of July 2023. There will be a continuation of the development of the new in-house model.</p> <p>We need to agree the KPIs with the ICB to report back to the BCF.</p> <p>Looking at increasing the reach into more diverse communities by linking in with faith groups.</p> <p>Increasing the numbers of carers registered for preventative support by 40% by 31st July 2024.</p> <p>Improved User satisfaction, carers feeling they have more say in service development.</p> <p>Increasing the hits to our carer webpage.</p> <p>Introduce an annual wellbeing survey/user satisfaction survey.</p>	<p>Changes to the current carers service provision</p> <p>KPIs and Outcome</p> <p>A new Carers Co-ordinator in place by December 2023.</p> <p>Develop the SBC carers webpage by March 31st 2024.</p> <p>Review and report progress with these developments and the new model by 31st March 2024.</p>
	<p>Re-establish the carers forum and a new Careers Steering Group</p>	<p>We will engage with the providers and with carers via the Co-production Network.</p> <p>We will engage all carers through the Co-production</p>	<p>Start date and drafting of a Terms of Reference for both the forum and for the new Carers Steering</p>

		<p>Network and wider Carers Groups and Carers Lead to set up the new Carers Steering Group which will be co-produced and be the monitor of this Carers Action Plan. The Away Day and Survey feedback are cross referred in this Strategy</p>	<p>Group to be in place by 30th November 2023.</p>
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APPENDIX TO ADULT CARERS STRATEGY

CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

SBC Away Day for People (Adults) Strategy and Commissioning Team and Members of the Co-production Network 26th July 2023

An Away Day for the People (Adults) Strategy and Commissioning Team and Members of the Co-production Network was held on 26 July 2023. The following views were obtained, through consultation, to inform this Carers Strategy:

Theme	Feedback	Minimum Inclusion in Strategy (Page Number)
Advice and Information	Accessible information – community points of information and not just digital	3
	Different media to engage with not just digital, not just hardcopies	3
	We need better communication	3
	Advice, information and guidance communication is key. A timely response from social work team is needed.	3
	Information about lasting power of attorney is good advice in a timely way. How do you support the family what support is available what are your rights as a worker if you're a carer we need a name to contact either in the social work team or the carers coordinator we need support for resilience via social and family networks also emotional support. Need to understand how advocacy can support there is a lack of male carers needs being addressed.	3
	If we are working what are our employment rights, how do we help people understand those rights?	3
	How to support your career through the change of life in your life, changing into a carer	3
	Making the information easier to access information stands at supermarkets and shops, more leaflets	3
	Avoid digital exclusion ?	3
	Information and improving carers awareness of their entitlement, their role demand and getting support?	3
	Information is power – e.g Lasting Power of Attorney or Deputyship –	3

	how do we help Carers navigate this early in the process in case their loved one loses Capacity down track	
Carer Support	The need to socialise.	3
	Support groups and socialising – making sure that other members of the family are involved.	3
Carer Resilience	Carer Resilience – how do we build up confidence and resilience in Carers.	3
Meeting individual need / Seeing the carer as an individual in their own right	Need to see carers as individuals one size does not fit all	5
	We need individual needs to be met, needs to be responsive and to include needs and wants voices need to be heard	5
	Diversity of Carers – recognising some live perfectly well with their own with their own circle of support so are not looking for support or networks at one end of the scale. Whilst at the other end of the scale some carers of people with dementia will feel totally alone and isolated and be hoping for support	5
	Right support at the right time	5
	Information is power – e.g Lasting Power of Attorney or Deputyship – how do we help Carers navigate this early in the process in case their loved one loses Capacity down track	5
	Understanding the role and demands as a carer, understanding the responsibilities and how to identify as a carer	5
	Seeing carers as individuals with their own lives, separate from the cared for person	5
	How to access support and pathways and groups	5
	The need for male carers lead ?	8
	What should we put in place for male Carers in Slough	8
	Integration	Integrated approach to Carers – how do we get Carers to be identified by GPs and other clinicians, can we share Carer information/advice in GP/NHS settings? Can we have a single carer pathway across NHS and Social Care? Might be useful to

	explore as part of the Care Co-ordinator role?	
	How do we ensure early intervention at the front door of ASC hopefully through e.g voluntary sector service directory – what ideas have we to help carers self manage.	8
Respite / Carer Break-down	Recognising the role of a Carer. As we know unpaid carers make an important contribution to the overall supply of care services. What if there was more carer breakdown, where would ASC go in securing extra carers?	8
Asset Based Approach	How do we use an asset-based approach to ensure Carers have a “life outside of caring”?	8
	We need activities and events that occur, a friendly and offer peer support	10
Direct Payments	Direct payments and carers allowance and benefits	11
Respite / Carer Breakdown	What support is there for carers as individuals and what respite or brakes are there?	13
	Lack of short breaks	13
	Carers short breaks – opportunity for development	13
	Recognising the role of a Carer. As we know unpaid carers make an important contribution to the overall supply of care services. What if there was more carer breakdown, where would ASC go in securing extra carers?	13
	Carers Support, Network and Friendship Networks are Needed	12
	We need support groups, face-to-face with help support individuals	12
	Social worker carers assessment should use the feedback from those	12
	We need emotional support	16
	What if the Carer becomes seriously ill –we need plans to avoid the s/user having to be admitted to hospital or a care home	18
	We need to understand the Life Journey different entry points to caring accessible pathways. We need to	25

	understand hospital discharge and who else needs looking after.	
	We need to create spaces provided information and provide at advocates	Action Plan
	We have a kitty to buy food and drink so that it doesn't fall to the same person.	Noted
	Millions of people take on caring responsibilities as the population ages. What would we want as a Carer? Many of us have had that lived experience from which to draw on	Noted
	Many carers often put their own lives on hold to provide care and support to someone close to them. How as an employer could SBC and other Slough employers be empathetic to this? HR policy?	Noted

Consultation through a Carer Survey in July 2023

Slough Carers Strategy Survey

A survey was developed to find out what Carers felt about the new Carers Strategy. The Strategy was distributed to all carers on SVCS registration list, to Carer Groups as well as members of the Co-Production Network. Themes match the approach in this strategy and the anonymised results are shown below.

43 responses

‘ Slough is a place where carers can balance their caring roles and maintain their desired quality of life’.

We want to ensure that Carers can influence the way they are supported in Slough. To help us achieve this, we have two sets of statements that we would like your views on:

Critical problems facing carers today: Questions 1 to 9

The issues in questions 1 to 9 listed below were named as the top challenges facing Carers in Slough. This was the feedback from recent engagement with both carers and professionals. These issues match closely the experiences of Carers across the country.

Strategic Priorities – to support development over the next 3 years: Question 11 to 17

We believe the priorities in questions 11 to 17 listed below are important in achieving Slough’s vision for Carers, and for tackling the critical issues carers are facing.

To help us understand whether these are the right issues and priorities, the

statements below ask you to tick whether you agree or disagree with them. There is space to add any other critical issues you experience as a Carer (question 9) or any priorities you want to add (question 17).

The results of this consultation will be anonymous and will be shared with Slough Borough Council's Cabinet to support future work with Carers. This will establish a long-term partnership approach overseen by a Carers Steering group, making sure Carers voices are central to any service developments.

Please submit your answers by Wednesday 26th July 2023.

1. The caring role has a negative impact on physical health and mental health (including loneliness and isolation)

[More Details](#) [Insights](#)

- Yes I agree with this statement 39
- No I don't agree with this state... 4
- I am unsure 0



2. More Carers are experiencing financial hardship.

[More Details](#) [Insights](#)

- Yes I agree with this statement 39
- No I disagree with this statment 2
- I am unsure 2



3. Health and Care Services have a poor or haphazard understanding of the need to identify Carers, including Young Carers.

[More Details](#) [Insights](#)

- Yes I agree with this statement 28
- No I don't agree with this state... 5
- I am unsure 10



4. Health and Care Services do not recognise Carers' expertise in care.

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

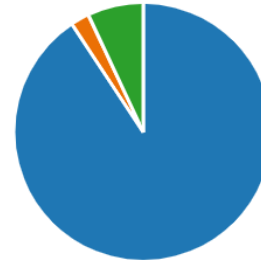
- Yes I agree with this statement 29
- No I don't agree with this state... 10
- I am unsure 4



5. Back-up for carers and suitable respite is becoming more critical.

[More Details](#)

- Yes I agree with this statement 39
- No I don't agree with this state... 1
- I am unsure 3

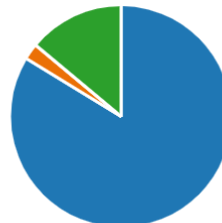


6. There is an increased need for isolated and stressed Carers of all ages to come together for peer support and social activities.

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

- Yes I agree with this statement 36
- No I don't agree with this state... 1
- I am unsure 6



7. Educational establishments have a poor understanding of the lived experience and support needs of Young Carers.

[More Details](#)


[Insights](#)

- Yes I agree with this statement 30
- No I don't agree with this state... 1
- I am unsure 12

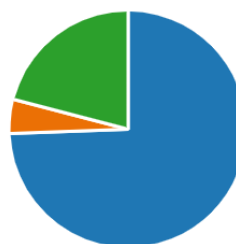


8. Young Carers are increasingly stressed and isolated and in more urgent need of social activities.

[More Details](#)

 Insights

- Yes I agree with this statement 32
- No I disagree with this statement 2
- I am unsure 9



Anonymised survey answers follow below:

There were opportunities within the survey for additional comments to be made.

Theme	Response	Addressed in Strategy Page No
Advice and Information	With more services only accessed via online portals or online forms the older generation are finding it less accessible to access vital support	3
Carers Support	There is no help for carer mentally, physically, emotionally and financially everything is very very hard for carers.	3
Seeing the Carer in their own right	Being a carer is for me a lifelong duty of care. I'm never asked by any health experts on my opinion and if I do offer feedback to the health service it is met with defence. I'd say what I've noticed most is that what should be happening is often not, the communication that is needed between departments / teams isn't happening. For instance, the psychiatrist doesn't know when the patient has had an episode requiring hospital	5

	<p>treatment, no follow ups are made. The psychiatrist writes to the doctor to request lowering a medication dosage, this doesn't happen. All care is handed over to the health team from the GP, so the patient is seen once or twice a year if lucky and then for a short amount of time</p>	
	<p>Accessing appropriate medical support for the cared for has been my most difficult issue and having my needs met as a carer in facilitating this has been non-existent. Respite care for the carer has to be appropriate, too often things are at the very time when the demands on me as the carer are greatest.</p>	5
Short Breaks / Respite	Need more respite	8
	Older carers also are at risk of increasing isolation due to lack of respite	8
	More respite care needed or carer who can come into home to offer respite care overnight	8
	Biggest problem is finding someone to be present for the patient when the carer has to go somewhere	8
	Provision of a sitting service for carers (or advice on agencies etc who do this) would be of great benefit. There is no point providing social events for carers when they cannot leave home as there is no one else to care for their family member. Most agencies will only provide short	8

	visits (15-30 minutes) for personal care and those that do tend to be more expensive and / or still have difficulties because of a shortage of staff.	
	There should be respite in your home town not miles away	8
Understanding of the role of carers	Slough Parent Carers are not recognised by Carers groups in Slough, which is discriminatory practice. Carers groups should not ostracise parent carers. We are lifelong carers and need access to the same support services and just because we are a parent, we are still carers. Parent carers are not fully recognised in Slough and often completely overlooked for the sacrifices and valid contributions we make. The mindset and attitude of those leading Carers groups needs to change to welcome all.	8
Other	I would like a carers card posted to me have tried unsuccessfully for 5 years. No time to come and collect in person	Noted
	Young carers need to be identified and assessed and provide the support they need.	Noted
	Getting out and about in Slough with a cared for person who is elderly but is not specifically entitled to a blue parking badge is almost impossible, resulting in extra costs for	Noted

	<p>the carer and stress for both.</p>	
	<p>The shortage of any real help and support. It's a massive problem nationally and often people go without help and support. Trying to start up again to offer help and best practice is too late . Like everything else offered by the local authority or the Government the actual intentions are never really achieved. Improvements on paper do not provide really meaningful results</p>	<p>Noted</p>
	<p>SBC are in poor standard understanding the direct needs of carers and their cared for, delays in processing requests, answering emails or concerns, no respite options offered and carers assessment are at a very disgraceful and poor standard at SBC and by social workers. No named allocated worker for months and then the service has been from Slough Carers Support which was working so well to now be disrupted mid year and we go back to square</p>	<p>Noted</p>
	<p>I feel that CQC and council authorities are the ones that seem to be out of touch with what is the status in the communities. They should be the ones offering support and help but they are the ones that are not providing this</p>	<p>Noted</p>

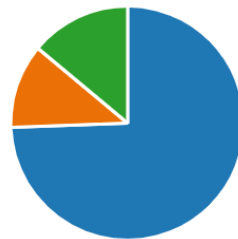
	Staff Retention; Increase in Pay; Need for Increase in Package Demand	Noted
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10. All Carers in Slough will be helped to identify themselves as carers at an early stage and will receive support to promote their wellbeing

[More Details](#)

 Insights

- Yes I agree with this priority 32
- No I don't agree with this priority 5
- I am unsure 6

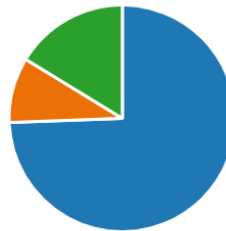


11. Carers can make informed decisions and exercise choice and control about care and support through accessible information and advice for themselves and the people they care for.

[More Details](#)


 Insights

- Yes I agree with this priority 32
- No I don't agree with this priority 4
- I am unsure 7

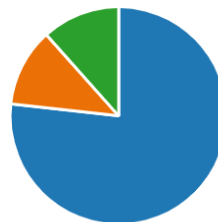


12. Carers will receive personalised support, both for themselves and the person they care for, enabling them to have a family and community life

[More Details](#)

 Insights

- Yes I agree with this priority 33
- No I don't agree with this priority 5
- I am unsure 5



13. Carers will be supported to remain physically and mentally well

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

- Yes I agree with this priority 35
- No I don't agree with this priority 6
- I am unsure 2

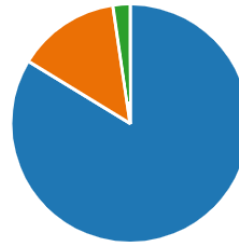


14. Carers will be supported to access the right services, at the right time, in the right place.

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

- Yes I agree with this priority 36
- No I don't agree with this priority 6
- I am unsure 1



15. Carers will be recognised, valued, and empowered as "experts" in care

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

- Yes I agree with this priority 34
- No I don't agree with this priority 6
- I am unsure 3



16. Carers will be supported in their carers journey (promoting Carer wellbeing, preventing Carer 'breakdown' and crisis intervention).

[More Details](#)


[Insights](#)

- Yes I agree with this priority 35
- No I don't agree with this priority 6
- I am unsure 2



17. What other priorities should be included?

[More Details](#)

 Insights

21

Responses

"Easy"

What other priorities should be included?

Theme	Comment	Page Number
Advice and Information	Help and information support by dedicated phone and online is needed. Emergency care plans are important	3
	A help desk phone line for queries	Noted
Carers Support	More social group for adults who need care.	3
	Making sure that carers have the means/ability to access all available help.	3
	If a carer is dealing with the fallout from an episode there is no one for them to turn to, no helpline, no one to talk to. This causes severe mental health issues. I've tried Crisis and been told its for the patient, and Samaritans is not suitable for carers.	3
	Try to provide the support they need based on their care needs . This need to be assessed.	3
	Dedicated resources such as a hotline	3
Seeing carers in their own right		5

Respite / Short Breaks others	Respite	8
	Respite	8
	Asked for help ref respite for mother. Still waiting 6 years on. Now to late as RIP	8
	Urgent care for the person cared for in emergencies i.e. if a carer needs hospitalisation, experiences a bereavement etc	8
	The person they care for need day-care Centre which would really help . They should do a lot more activities with them taking them out into the community day outs	8
Carers Voice	involved in decision making	4
	1Although I agree in principle with all of the above , in reality the truth is quite different and I myself have found it to not be the case and in fact I have been treated like I'm stupid and know nothing when dealing with SBC and it's social services department on many occasions, so I personally think that ALL staff should be retrained to respect and listen to carers as they are the single most important part of dealing with patients and their needs However I feel that regardless how many forms or how many meetings etc are had nothing will change as SBC are not interested in spending money on anything or anyone other than themselves and their own pockets , and history	4

	has proven this many many times over	
Other	Easier access to GP appointments	Noted
	Fast track services in hospital specially ENE, surgery, shopping, parks. Disable person outing places	Noted
	ask how many times must all the above be stated . These Ideas have be highlighted numerous times but priorities have not been met . I see news letters and read about achievements but in reality there is still very little to offer and as usual volunteers are used to try to meet some of the criteria.. I have been involved in various initiatives but unfortunately I am now being cared for by a loving husband. He is struggling to get help for his own health and well-being issues but the queue is far too long .	Noted
	try and get your systems right first before visualising something that wont be achieved	Noted
	The support services to companies so non existent and that's where help is needed.	Noted
	Transportation for carers in certain zones; Parking Permit for carers Easy access to transportation for carers, free parking permits for	Noted

	carers in all areas in Slough.	
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Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Cabinet
Date	Monday 18 th September 2023
Subject:	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Update
Lead Member:	Paul Kelly – Lead Member for Education, Children’s Services and Lifelong Learning
Chief Officer:	Sue Butcher – Executive Director for People – Children
Contact Officer:	Neil Hoskinson – Associate Director of Education
Ward(s):	<u>All</u>
Key Decision:	NO
Exempt:	NO
Decision Subject To Call In:	YES
	<u>Appendix 1</u> –Draft SEND Improvement Action Plan Summary of Key Actions
Appendices:	<u>Appendix 2</u> - July Position Statement Report
	<u>Appendix 3</u> – <u>Department for Education Statutory Direction</u>

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 In Autumn 2021 Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) services in Slough were inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). As a result of weaknesses identified in the local area, it was determined that a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) was required to address these. As part of the oversight of the SEND improvement journey, the Department of Education holds quarterly monitoring visits. Since the last report to Cabinet in January 2023 year, the DfE has undertaken a further visit in February and one in July.
- 1.2 The WSoA was presented to Cabinet in February 2022 and members requested regular progress reports. Updates were submitted in September 2022 and January 2023.
- 1.3 When DfE officials visited in February it was judged that, despite the length of time since the inspection and the high level of support provided to Slough, there had been a failure to make sufficient progress against any of the areas of significant weaknesses identified in the WSoA. As a result, Minister Coutinho stated that a Statutory Direction would be issued to Slough in relation to its SEND 0-25 functions

under section 497A(4B) of the Education Act 1996. This was published on 4 August 2023 and is contained in Appendix 3.

1.4 The individual actions in the WSoA have been reorganised into a new Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Improvement Action Plan appended at Appendix 1. Additional budget monitoring reporting actions relating to monitoring of the High Needs Block and the Safety Valve Agreement have also been agreed. This report shares the key aspects of the plan, and the budget monitoring actions to ensure that Cabinet members are fully informed.

1.5 **Recommendations:**

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Note the statutory direction made by the Secretary of State for Education set out at Appendix 3.
2. Note the progress made to date, including the position as at July 2023 contained in Appendix 2.
3. Note the draft SEND Improvement Action Plan at Appendix 1.
4. Receive a report setting out the full financial implications of the proposed actions at the November cabinet meeting.
5. Receive SEND update reports on a quarterly basis.

1.6 **Reason:**

- To seek approval for the action plan to deliver improvements to the service in accordance with the requirements of the WSoA, the safety valve agreement and the statutory direction.
- To ensure that Cabinet is proactively informed and involved in securing necessary improvements in SEND services.

1.7 **Commissioner Review**

Commissioners note the focus on this area and the implications of the new DfE directions. They look forward to seeing the completed action plan and the detailed financial implications when they are shortly produced.

2. Report

Introductory paragraph

- 2.1 In Autumn 2021 Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) services in Slough were inspected by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). As a result of weaknesses identified in the local area, it was determined that a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) was required to address them. As part of the oversight of the SEND improvement journey, the DfE undertakes quarterly monitoring visits. Since the last report to Cabinet in January this year, there have been two further visits in February and in July.
- 2.2 A new SEND Improvement Action Plan has been drafted in partnership with the DfE advisor and overseen by the Strategic SEND Inclusion Partnership Board. This plan aligns to the priority areas and the 94 separate actions within the WSoA to give greater pace and rigour to our improvement journey. This report shares the five new SEND workstreams within the draft improvement plan that align the WSoA actions into more coherent areas to support monitoring and reporting. There are also several budget monitoring reporting actions relating to monitoring of the High Needs Block and the Safety Valve Agreement.

2.3 Options considered:

- Option 1 Continue with the existing WSoA as originally approved – this is not recommended. Whilst the WSoA published in February 2022 and reported to Cabinet on 21st of the same month, contained details of the improvements required, there is a lack of detail and focus on the improvement activity and progress against this has not always happened at pace.
- Option 2 Agree a new Improvement Action Plan to sit alongside the existing WSoA. This is recommended. The plan will contain the same 94 individual actions in the WSoA document with the same impact measures. The Improvement Action plan is in draft and capable of amendment to take account of any member concerns. This action plan will be kept under review and can form the basis of a regular reporting mechanism to Cabinet.

Background

- 2.4 The Autumn 2021 Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) inspection report by Ofsted and the CQC recognised several strengths, however inspectors identified seven areas of weakness and determined that a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) was required to address them.
- 2.5 The WSoA document was co-produced with social care colleagues, health partners, families and school leaders and was “underpinned by our common purpose and shared values and principles, which are embedded in our desire to reduce inequality, remove barriers to learning and enable children and young people to flourish” (Introduction to the Slough WSoA document). It set out a shared ambition to secure real change through the concerted and combined efforts of all our partners across the local area to improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

- 2.6 Unfortunately, despite the inspection taking place in Autumn 2021 and the results of the inspection being sent to the Council on 9 November 2021, the WSoA was submitted without formal member approval and a report was only taken to Cabinet on 21 February 2022. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) commissioners commented that it was unfortunate that the report was not brought to Cabinet sooner given the severity of the weaknesses identified and the vulnerability of the children supported by the service. Cabinet agreed that a detailed action plan was incorporated into the Council's wider Recovery and Improvement Plan and that regular update reports were provided.

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Safety Valve Agreement

- 2.7 Slough Council has entered into a DSG Safety Valve Agreement with the Department for Education covering the financial years from 2022-23 to 2026-27. The authority undertakes to control and reduce the cumulative deficit on its Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) reaching a positive in-year balance account by the end of 2025-26 and in each subsequent year. Slough Council must also work with schools and other education providers to ensure best value and, where necessary, review and renegotiate funding agreements through improved joint commissioning processes.

Department for Education (DFE) February Monitoring Visit and Statutory Direction

- 2.8 DFE officials visited Slough at the end of February 2023 to carry out a full review of the improvements made. It was rightly judged that the area had failed to make the expected progress against any of the areas of significant weaknesses identified during the initial inspection. This was despite the length of time that had passed since the inspection and the high level of support that has been provided to Slough. As a result, Minister Coutinho stated that a Statutory Direction would be issued to Slough in relation to its SEND 0-25 functions under section 497A(4B) of the Education Act 1996 which was subsequently published on 4 August 2023 and is appended at Appendix 3. This requires the Council to work with Paul Moffat, as the DfE's appointed SEND 0-25 Commissioner, who is also the commissioner for social care services in Slough Children First.
- 2.9 The Minister has acknowledged that the new leadership team in Slough has changed significantly since the start of 2023 and, whilst it was too soon to see real impact from the work carried out since the February DfE Monitoring Visit, the "new leaders are determined and motivated to bring positive change".

Department for Education (DfE) Monitoring Visit July 2023

- 2.10 The feedback from the DFE officials attending the latest monitoring visit acknowledged the hard work that has been put into improving SEND in Slough since the start of March. Whilst it would not be expected to have made a significant difference to the quality of SEND 0-25 service provided to our children and young people with SEND, together with their families, there were clear signs of improvement.

2.11 The Strategic SEND Inclusion Partnership Board uses the new data dashboard to ensure that they have a good understanding of the improvements in frontline practice. This ensures a solid understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their workforce and the needs and quality of the services being provided.

2.12 Several key actions had been taken that were shared with the DfE officials which are summarised below:

- New Terms of Reference have been agreed for the Strategic SEND Inclusion Partnership Board to ensure partnership working with health and social care including regular risks workshops and a data dashboard aligned with the Frimley ICB dashboard.
- A draft live cases dashboard will help triage the SEND 0-25 process and identify barriers and blockages in the system to inform and then action good decision making.
- The Place Planning Board has been refreshed with a clearer focus on SEND 0-25. The remit of the Board has not been changed but a number of supporting working groups have been agreed to improve information gathering and decision making. These include a group looking at SEND Sufficiency and another looking at Inclusion in Mainstream Settings.
- A Head of SEND, two experienced managers, a Resolutions Officer, a SEND Consultant, a Principal Educational Psychologist, a Lead for Inclusion, a Participation Officer and additional locum psychologists have been appointed. Work is ongoing on the first draft of a SEND 0-25 Handbook following a review of all statutory SEND services.
- A Working Together Charter has been drafted following 8 events held in person or online where over 190 people took part (including 40 young people). Co-production sessions and other events have gathered stakeholder views to ensure that the lived experiences of children and young people with SEND inform the improvement journey and day-to-day practice. The service and the SEND Partnership Board receive regular survey results on the experience of families from the Parent Carer Forum, Special Voices, who are represented on the Board.
- An external company, Open Objects, have been commissioned to develop a new Local Offer website. They have produced three different iterations of the website using feedback from a working party of key partners and focus sessions with groups of parents facilitated by Special Voices. The final iteration of the new Local Offer website has been completed and is now ready for formal approval.
- Initial planning for an Autumn Inclusion Conference has taken place and has informed the questionnaires that will be sent to headteachers before the Autumn Term Capacity and Risk Visits to schools. The visits will identify best practice locally that will then be shared at the conference.

- Commissioning work is ongoing across East Berkshire to agree a new contract for integrated therapies and a Dysphagia Service. Occupational Therapy triage waiting times have reduced to no greater than five weeks for occupational therapy triage and the delay in SALT assessments is reducing. A Special Voices workshop with a focus on CAMHS has been scheduled to better understand parent/carer concerns about support for social and emotional mental health.

Draft SEND Improvement Action Plan

- 2.13 The updated reporting and monitoring systems implemented by the Strategic SEND 0-25 Partnership Board, including the SEND 0-25 Self -Evaluation Framework and Data Dashboard, have identified inconsistency in the progress made across the 7 WSoA Priority Areas and the 94 individual actions they contain. It is a requirement of the WSoA for the local authority to report against these priority areas but, because they cut across a number of different workstreams, this makes internal monitoring and reporting complicated.
- 2.14 A new SEND 0-25 Improvement Plan was therefore drafted to give impetus to the improvement journey. However, initial feedback on the first draft of the plan was not uniformly positive and there was felt to be a lack of clarity and clear workstreams to give a focus to the work. This was exacerbated by the number of different workstreams and overlap between the different priorities in the WSoA document.
- 2.15 The August SEND Partnership Board was therefore an opportunity to refresh the SEND 0-25 Improvement Plan and a second draft of the improvement plan was shared at the August meeting. The updated plan allocates all the remaining 74 WSoA actions into 5 separate workstreams. Each workstream has its own separate section in the overall which will allow more coherent reporting and monitoring of progress. (see Appendix 1 for more detail). The draft plan also includes a section setting out the principles of effective SEND leadership.
- 2.16 The individual actions and impact measures in the new draft plan have not changed from the original WSoA document and, whilst we will report internally to the new workstreams, the DfE will still receive reports in line with the original seven Priority Areas. The new baseline date for completion of each action will be different from the original WSoA document but this is unavoidable due to the lack of progress previously. The change in completion date has been approved by the Partnership Board which includes DfE representation. It has been made clear that any further delay, slippage in completion of actions will be immediately escalated to the Partnership Board to ensure pace and urgency to our improvement journey.
- 2.17 The draft has been approved by the Partnership Board and is now being brought to Cabinet for agreement. In the meantime, officers are being identified to lead on actions and to oversee each workstream. Links to working parties and other key groups, such as Special Voices, is being added. We have identified 21 actions that will be completed by the end of September to ensure that there are no delays while the plan is being agreed.

2.18 Once the plan is agreed an additional section will be added which will set out the migration of WSoA improvement work into business-as-usual SEND 0-25 work. This will mean that, as the WSoA targets are achieved, a longer-term plan for continuous SEND 0-25 improvement will emerge.

New Workstreams Within the SEND Partnership Board

2.19 The draft SEND 0-25 Improvement Action Plan includes five new workstreams sub-divided into smaller workstreams as set out below. There are 74 WSoA actions that are still ongoing so the number of remaining WSoA actions included in each area are shown in brackets (more detail is included in Appendix 1):

1. Governance & Strategy (14)

- a) Budget Project Management (2)
- b) Capita Review / Use of Data (6)
- c) Improvement Action Plan Monitoring (6)

2. Working Together (18)

- a) Children and Young People Lived Experiences (6)
- b) Local Offer Review (4)
- c) Participation (8)

3. Strong SEND Team and EHCNA Processes (17)

- a) Preparation for Adulthood (5)
- b) Recruitment & Retention Strategy (3)
- c) SEND Statutory Processes Quality & Timeliness (9)

4. Inclusion in Mainstream Settings (9)

- a) Graduated Approach (4)
- b) Promoting the Inclusion Agenda (5)

5. Sufficiency & Commissioning (16)

- a) Integrated Therapies Contract (7)
- b) Joint Commissioning Strategy (7)
- c) SEND Sufficiency (2)

High Needs Block (Special Educational Needs) and Safety Valve Agreement Budget Monitoring

2.20 The authority is required to report to the DfE tri-annually on its performance in fulfilling the Safety Valve Agreement sharing any unforeseen difficulties or impacts. The SEND team have therefore worked with colleagues in finance to agree a Budget Monitoring Project Plan to ensure greater oversight of the DSG position and to ensure that financial implications are fully embedded in SEND service day-to-day decision-making processes. The key actions sitting within this action plan are:

- Agreeing a rapid program to cleanse the Capita One case management data so that better internal data will allow more accurate predictions of spending.
- Aligning case management, panel processes and budget forecasting to ensure that budget reporting includes all up to date financial decision and future forecasting.
- Agreeing a programme for clearing the backlog of requests for Education Health and Care plans and estimating projected costs whilst also prioritising completing new plans within the twenty-week statutory timescale.
- Reviewing the current data trends from January 2023 to date and project forward the expected number of EHC plans together with estimated financial costs and placement requests for the different types of need.
- Projecting future demand patterns including future phase transfers and projected number of plans to be ceased over the next five years.
- Agreeing the number of special and resource provision places by capacity including current vacancies, potential increases in places and opportunities for capital programmes.
- Agreeing a joint commissioning approach required to address any identified gaps between available places and projected demand. This action is to agree an approach, but a full Joint Commissioning Strategy will follow and will be brought to Cabinet for agreement in the future.
- Analysing current High Needs Block spending including comparison to similar local authority and national benchmarks. This will include identifying areas for potential savings, opportunities for spend to save approaches and financial business as usual comparisons such as funding levels provided to schools.
- Budget management and placement decisions to be in-built into statutory processes including triangulation to predicted figures for new EHC plans and annual reviews.
- Opportunities for best practice learning from other LAs and expected impact of White Paper to inform decision making.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1. Financial implications

- 3.1.1. The Council has worked hard to reduce the pressure of the DSG deficit position. The movement during the year was as follows:

	£m
Opening deficit as at 1/04/22	25.470
Less DfE write off	-10.800
In year overspend	0.097
Closing deficit as at 31/03/23	14.767

3.1.2. Officers are working closely with colleagues from the DfE on quarterly budget management reports to monitor the progress of the DSG safety valve management plan. Where any cost reduction proposals deviate from the plan mitigation action will be taken.

3.1.3. The SEND Improvement Plan needs to align to the High Needs Block recovery and Safety Valve monitoring programme and work is ongoing to ensure that this happens before the plan is finalised.

3.2 *Legal implications*

3.2.1. The Council and partner agencies have a number of key statutory responsibilities to children and young people with SEND. These include duties set out in the Children and Families Act 2014, the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004, the Care Act 2014 and the Childcare Act 2006. Partner agencies include health agencies, Slough Children First and early years providers, schools and colleges.

3.2.2. The SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years provides statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities. This is a substantial code setting out guidance on the principles of the legislative framework under the Children and Families Act 2014, the requirements around information, advice and support, the need for joint working to deliver outcomes, the requirements for a Local Offer (being a list of services available to children and young people with SEND and their families). The Code also provides guidance to early years providers, schools, and further education providers, as well as providing guidance on preparing for adulthood. Detailed guidance is given on the processes for assessing, identifying, and meeting needs in education, health and care plans and the needs of children and young people in specific circumstances, including looked after children, care leavers, children educated at home and children in youth custody.

3.2.3. The Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015 state that the Chief Inspector of Schools must make a written report where a review has been completed. The Chief Inspection of Schools must determine whether it is appropriate for a written statement of proposed action to be made in light of the report and if so, determine the person or body who must make that statement. In response to a requirement to produce a written statement of action, the Council

prepared a statement and submitted this to the Department for Education and Ofsted in February 2022.

3.2.4. On 4 August 2023, the Secretary of State made a direction in accordance with powers under s.497 of the Education Act 1996. This was on the basis the Council had made a lack of progress towards the WSoA since it was approved in March 2022 and the Secretary of State was satisfied that the Council was failing to perform to an adequate standard in some of all of the functions conferred on it under Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014. The direction extends the remit of the existing DfE commissioner.

3.3. *Risk management implications*

3.3.1. Failure to meet the requirements of the WSoA have already led to the DfE issuing a statutory direction. Failure to meet the requirements of the statutory direction will result in further intervention by the DfE.

3.3.2. This risk is on the Corporate Risk Register and as such is subject to regular review. The mitigating actions are contained in the appended improvement plan.

3.4. *Environmental implications*

3.4.1. None noted

3.5. *Equality implications*

3.5.1. The SEND Code of Practice makes clear that many children and young people who have SEN may have a disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010 and whilst some children and young people with a disability will not have SEN, there is a significant overlap between disabled children and young people and those with SEN.

3.5.2. The Equality Act 2010 contains the public sector equality duty at s.149, which requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those with a protected characteristic, such as a disability, and those without. There are also specific statutory duties including not directly or indirectly discriminating against an individual due to their disability, making reasonable adjustments to remove disadvantage arising from a disability and not discriminating in school admissions and exclusion arrangements.

4. **Background Papers**

4.1. None

Appendix 1 - Draft SEND 0-25 Improvement Action Plan

Workstream One – Governance and Strategy

a) Budget Project Management

WSOA	ACTION	IMPACT MEASURES	New Baseline
3.2.1	Ensure performance data is captured specifically to support equitable and transparent decision-making on funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability of plentiful, systematically analysed performance data supports equitable funding decisions In feedback, stakeholders understand and welcome consistency and transparency in data-informed decision-making about funding 	Sep-23
7.8.1	Ensure robust DSG management plan in place to oversee High Needs Block spending and ensure value for money approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More effective use of finance and distribution within the High Needs Block 	Sep-23

b) Capita Review / Use of Data

WSOA	ACTION	IMPACT MEASURES	New Baseline ¹¹
3.3.1	Review and develop systems to allow data about pupils with an EHCP who are persistently absent to be gathered, analysed and insights shared.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better understanding of why some CYP are missing school 	Dec-23
3.3.3	Investigate the increase in CYP and CYP electively home educated (EHE) to understand the SEND needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all CYP who are EHE are monitored effectively 	Dec-23
5.1.5	Implement and embed new operating model for processing and completing EHCNAs, incorporating an electronic SEND Portal platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EHCNAs completed within 20-week timescales in line with targets in 5.1.1 CYP, parents/ carers and professionals are able to contribute to and check progress of EHCNA process online Stakeholders report improvements in levels of responsiveness, transparency and co-production 	Apr-24
5.1.6	Develop use of data platforms to ensure EHCNA and Annual Review data is used to fullest capacity to identify trends and manage performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data provides a detailed overview of each step of the 20-week process, and all agencies who contribute to EHCNAs work together to improve performance regarding timely completion of EHCPs 	Apr-24
5.2.3	Implement and embed an operating model for processing/completing annual reviews and updating EHCPs, incorporating an electronic 'portal'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual reviews and updating of EHCPs completed within statutory timescales CYP, parents/ carers/professionals able to contribute to and check progress of annual review online Stakeholders report improvements in levels of responsiveness, transparency and co-production 	Apr-24
5.2.4	Develop use of data platforms to ensure annual review data is used to fullest capacity to identify trends and manage performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data provides a detailed overview of annual review process and is used to improve performance with regard to timely completion and identification of next steps (i.e., amendments, decisions, consultations) 	Apr-24

c) Improvement Action Plan Monitoring

WSOA	ACTION	IMPACT MEASURES	New Baseline
1.1.2	Review and develop SEND and Inclusion Strategic Board to ensure joint oversight and accountability for the area on a systematic basis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular meetings. Notes of meetings demonstrate progress in all areas of WSOA. All partners understand their roles and responsibilities and are demonstrating evidence of oversight and accountability 	Sep-23
3.1.2	Ensure SEF includes wider data and overall performance indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data is used as key driver for all strategies with targets and KPIs created 	Sep-23
3.5.1	Develop and implement a comprehensive performance dashboard to drive improvement, set priorities and inform strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy informed by data Stakeholders have laser-sharp understanding of the local area in order to be able to prioritise and drive improvement KPIs and actions plans created 	Sep-23
3.5.2	Ensure effective management information system (MIS) is in place to extract specific data in order to inform current and future strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved understanding of the cohort of CYP with an EHCP in order to drive strategy 	Dec-23
1.1.1	Co-produce a new SEND and Inclusion Strategy that clearly lays out roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New co-produced SEND and Inclusion strategy document produced and distributed. The implementation of the strategy is analysed, evaluated and acted upon with regular feedback at each board meeting from parents/carers and CYP. Feedback includes emphasis on the lived experiences of parents/carers and CYP with SEND 	Apr-24
3.1.3	Ensure SEF includes specific data and reference to the lived experiences of CYP and CYP with SEND and their parents/carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better understanding of experience and feedback from parents/carers and CYP 	Apr-24

Workstream Two – Working Together

a) Children and Young People / Family Lived Experiences

WSOA	ACTION	IMPACT MEASURES	New Baseline
2.3.2	Ensure surveys capture the views of parents/carers/CYP and other stakeholders and that it is analysed and acted upon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of stakeholders' issues Parents/carers report back positive experiences 	Sep-23
3.2.3	Develop and review complaints system in order to capture and act more quickly and increase transparency in the whole process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More transparency and understanding of complaints process Majority of complaints resolved to completion in a timely manner 	Sep-23
2.1.1	Review systems and processes for stakeholder communication with SEND services around communication and timeliness of response.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transparency and accountability in all processes Positive interaction with SENDIASS and positive survey feedback from partners and parents/carers 	Dec-23
2.1.3	Ensure a way to capture case studies is used in order to celebrate the positives as well as act on areas for development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SEND Service has a deeper understanding of lived experiences and acts on specific feedback where required to improve processes and communication (details of any such actions taken are fed back to all stakeholders) 	Dec-23

2.3.1	Review and develop systems to ensure appropriate access to case workers with clear expectations around communication and timeliness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transparency and accountability in the process 	Dec-23
4.4.1	Gather the views of parents/carers to improve services (including SEMH). Ensure the SEF includes lived experiences of CYP and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parents/carers report that they are satisfied that their views have been listened to and acted upon ▪ Concerns are being addressed via service transformation with parents/carers contributing as equal partners ▪ Reduction in complaints (about both services and EHCPs) 	Apr-24

b) Local Offer Review

WSoA	ACTION	IMPACT MEASURES	New Baseline
2.4.1	Review and redesign the local offer with CYP/parent/carers/partners to ensure it is helpful and accessible so that they understand what is on offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stakeholders report back positive experience of use of local offer ▪ Stakeholders can access resources and information to help them 	Sep-23
2.4.2	Ensure that the local offer website is well publicised to parents/ carers, CYP, CYP and professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stakeholders report back positive experience of use of local offer ▪ Baseline established and SEND board agreed ambition for % increased visits to local offer website in 6 months' time and in 12 months' time (recent data: 5,375 unique page visits from 1 Feb 2020 to 31 Jan 2021; 7,156 unique page visits from 1 Feb 2021 to 1 Feb 2022) 	Sep-23
4.1.2	Ensure that every parent/carer of a child with SEND knows about local support services such as SENDIASS and Special Voices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Links to Local Offer ▪ Baseline established and SEND board agreed ambition for increase in number of parents/ carers supported by SENDIASS and Special Voices in 6 months' time and in 12 months' time 	Sep-23
2.4.3	Review all content and information on the local offer to ensure it is up to date, useful and updated systematically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stakeholders report all content is up to date and a positive user experience 	Dec-23

c) Participation

WSoA	ACTION	IMPACT MEASURES	New Baseline
4.3.1	Implement a commitment to participation, including the participation of CYP and parents/carers individually, operationally and strategically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parents/carers and CYP are key partners in service transformation and meaningfully contributing to different types of decisions, e.g., planning, service delivery, evaluation, communications ▪ Increased representation at universal forums and/or creation of SEND participation group 	Sep-23
4.2.1	Ensure a wide range of opportunities are on offer for CYP and parents/carers to participate both individually and strategically.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased representation on existing forums that reflect the local population, such as Slough Youth Parliament, Reach Out Group, Young Health Champions ▪ Participation groups have improved links to SEND-specific forums and parent/carer forums 	Dec-23
3.2.4	Develop and implement a system to capture and collate a wide representation of parent/carer views available to area leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Area leaders possess a clear understanding of parent/carer views and proactive steps are taken to address any concerns 	Dec-23

3.4.1	Develop an action plan to increase participation in education for CYP with SEND and no EHCP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased participation for CYP at least in line with statistical neighbours 	Dec-23
3.4.2	Use data to track, monitor and assess participation in order to measure success, draw out insights about the effectiveness of the action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing cycle of increased participation for CYP 	Apr-24
4.2.2	Ensure CYP and parents/ carers have access to information about engagement opportunities and understand how they can get involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation groups are supported to be more inclusive and are more representative, with increased representation at universal groups such as Youth Parliament and Young Health Champions 	Apr-24
4.2.3	Ensure CYP and CYP with SEND and their parent/carers are effectively supported to participate meaningfully	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants report they receive the required support to access engagement opportunities and understand how their contributions will be used Participants report that they are satisfied that their views have been listened to and acted upon Participants report that they have gained something (skills, confidence, new experiences) from their involvement Participants are rewarded and recognised for their contributions % of staff receiving disability equality training Increased staff across MDTs attending participation training Service transformation in areas such as design, service delivery, evaluation and communications is planned and/or in implementation with the involvement of parents/ carers and CYP as equal partners Engagement takes place at operational and strategic levels (e.g., through representation on implementation groups, task and finish sub groups and/or strategic boards), as well as at an individual level' 	Apr-24
6.1.3	Find mechanisms to actively listen to families and school staff re social care concerns and an ensure an approach to Early Help is followed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CYP's needs are identified earlier and provision in place 	Apr-24

Statutory SEND Team and EHCNA Quality and Timeliness

a) Preparation for Adulthood

WSOA	ACTION	IMPACT MEASURES	New Baseline
1.8.2	Work with post 16 providers to ensure breath, quality and sustainability of provision allowing CYP to achieve appropriate outcomes and ambitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CYP and their families report increased levels of satisfaction with the local offer. CYP and their families are confident that the post-16 offer meets the needs of SEND students and that their views are heard and considered 	Dec-23
6.1.4	Develop and review travel training for CYP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CYP able to access transport more independently 	Dec-23

6.2.1	Review current transitions process for all CYP and CYP open to SCF to ensure effective preparation for life as an adult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CYP have opportunity to prepare for adulthood and to live independently if appropriate 	Dec-23
1.8.1	Review and strengthen access to work experience, supported internship and employment opportunities from Yr10 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduction in NEET figures. ▪ Targets for increasing number of adults with SEND and disabilities in paid employment are met 	Apr-24
1.8.3	Establish a multi- agency Transition Pathways Group to enable effective joint commissioning and strategic implementation of the PfA Toolkit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CYP and families report increased confidence and satisfaction in the transition process ▪ There is an increase in the number of supported internships and apprenticeships that lead to employment for CYP with SEND, linked to the strategic targets to be identified through Action 1.8.1 	Apr-24

b) Recruitment and Retention

WSOA	ACTION	IMPACT MEASURES	New Baseline
1.2.2	Review and develop SEND team structure to ensure it is fit for purpose and has capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Capacity of staff increased ▪ More efficiency and better completion of EHCPs within statutory timelines ▪ Working practices required to meet statutory obligations are widely understood and consistently and coherently implemented and adhered to ▪ Show upward trend towards national average of 68% of EHCNAs completed within the statutory timeframe and exceeding this figure 	Sep-23
5.1.3	Address current vacancies in Educational Psychology service to increase capacity for statutory EHCNA work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Psychological advice for EHCNA completed within statutory 6-week timescale, reducing pressure on SEND team around 20-week process 	Dec-23
5.1.4	Develop a local recruitment and retention strategy for SEND and Educational Psychology to attract and retain high quality staff within Slough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Level of ongoing vacancies is minimised, and staff report benefits of improved stability and morale 	Dec-23

c) Statutory EHCNA Process

WSOA	ACTION	IMPACT MEASURES	New Baseline
2.1.2 / 2.2.1	Review the governance and develop documentation that clearly lays out to professionals the scope of all panels and review of panels themselves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parents/carers report back they receive good communication and feel effectively supported by the SEND Service 	Sep-23
5.1.1	Complete review of current operating model and capacity within statutory SEND team, with focus on caseload and statutory EHCNA responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sufficient officers in post to ensure caseloads are set at a level that consistently produces EHCPs within statutory timescales, in line with following targets: ▪ After 3 months, at least 30% within 20 weeks, After 6 months, at least 45%, After 9 months, at least 60% 	Sep-23

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sufficient SEND manager capacity in place to ensure compliance and monitor delivery of new model 	
5.2.1	Review current operating model and capacity within SEND team, with focus on caseload and compliance with annual review and phase transfers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sufficient SEND officers in post to ensure caseloads are set at a level that consistently processes annual reviews to update EHCPs within statutory timescales ▪ Sufficient SEND manager capacity in place to ensure compliance and monitor delivery of new model 	Sep-23
5.3.4	Review and strengthen supervision of casework for SEND officers and establish KPIs against which to identify and address performance issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Systems are embedded to monitor individual/team performance and the quality of EHCP delivery ▪ Practitioners feel supported and quality of practice improves ▪ Stakeholder satisfaction has increased, and complaints have reduced 	Sep-23
3.3.2	Based on the analysis and understanding of reasons for the absence, draw up and implement and action plan to reduce absences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase in school attendance 	Dec-23
5.3.1	Establish a multi-agency Quality Assurance Framework for EHCPs to evaluate quality as well as compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Multi-agency QA framework and all activities linked to it are embedded ▪ Stakeholders report improvements in levels of satisfaction, quality, consistency and co-production 	Dec-23
5.3.2	Develop more effective joint working between social care practitioners and SEND officers, to ensure consistency of contribution to EHCNA process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consistency of social care contribution to EHCPs improves ▪ CYP and families report improvements in the experience of how assessments are co-ordinated to produce a holistic EHCP 	Dec-23
5.3.3	Develop more effective joint working between health practitioners and SEND officers, to ensure consistency of contribution to EHCNA process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consistency of health contribution to EHCPs improves ▪ CYP and families report improvements in the experience of how assessments are co-ordinated to produce a holistic EHCP 	Dec-23
5.3.5	Review and strengthen transition review processes to ensure consistency of contribution, co-production and quality of amended plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stakeholders report improvements in levels of satisfaction, quality, consistency and co-production ▪ CYP and families report improvements in the experience of how transition reviews are co-ordinated to produce a holistic amended EHCP 	Dec-23

Workstream Four – Inclusion in Mainstream Schools

a) Graduated Approach

WSOA	ACTION	IMPACT MEASURES	New Baseline
2.2.2	Review and ensure a system for coordinating and sharing information about the 'graduated response' is in place and understood by all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stakeholders understand the 'graduated response' (GA) and are clear as to its purpose ▪ Parents/carers have a clear understanding of their roles with regards to the GA ▪ More effective use of the GA in practice 	Dec-23

7.6.3	Deliver universal/targeted training to schools in the current contract to support implementation of the Graduated Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fewer CYP will be referred for an EHCA as their needs will have been met at a universal and targeted level 	Dec-23
1.3.3	Review and facilitate school-to-school support on effective practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective practice seen and evidenced in schools 	Apr-24
1.7.1	Work with schools to ensure the 'graduated response' is understood and implemented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More effective partnership work to identify, assess and meet needs with particular focus on access to therapies 	Apr-24

b) Promoting Inclusion

WSoA	ACTION	IMPACT MEASURES	New Baseline
1.3.2	Hold seminars and workshops on SEND for schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective practice seen and evidenced in schools through feedback, sharing of effective practice and surveys (facilitated by the LA) 	Dec-23
1.4.1	Review induction paperwork with partners across all areas to ensure consistency of approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent approach achieved to improve information gathering and sharing which allows for more strategic analysis and action 	Dec-23
1.3.4	Work with schools to ensure they fully understand the SEND code of practice and statutory responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better understanding of the legal framework and processes of the SEND code of practice for schools, including the EHCNA process CYP's needs are met by schools and SEND team without additional support being required from external resources 	Apr-24
1.3.5	Work with schools to understand how they prioritise and raise the profile of SEND and inclusion in their schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collection informs strategic approach which is then published and clear 	Apr-24
1.6.1	Work in partnership with schools through the Slough School Effectiveness Strategy to promote the inclusion agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More positive parental engagement with schools, as evidenced by surveys More effective practice in schools Staff value CPD and become more skilled at understanding and supporting CYP with SEND 	Apr-24

Workstream Five – SEND Sufficiency and Joint Commissioning

a) Integrated Therapies Contract

WSoA	ACTION	IMPACT MEASURES	New Baseline
7.2.2	BHFT, Frimley ICB and the East Berkshire LAs to work in partnership to review and agree the joint commissioning of integrated therapies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successful development and implementation of the Village Model approach 	Sep-23

7.3.2	Ensure all CYP in Slough with eating and drinking needs are able to access timely specialist support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in number of CYP presenting at A&E because they are experiencing a severe difficulty in swallowing 	Sep-23
7.5.1	Implement OT action plan in place aimed at reducing waiting times for assessment for routine referrals to a maximum wait of 12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data available on number of CYP waiting for assessment, average wait, longest wait, % tracking of CYP waiting longer than 53 weeks and % tracking of CYP waiting 52 weeks or less Fewer CYP are waiting more than 12 months for assessment for a routine referral 	Dec-23
7.5.2	Improve compliance with EHCA 6-week target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current backlog of EHCA requests that have breached the 6-week target is cleared 95% of all EHCA requests are completed within the 6-week target 	Dec-23
7.6.1	Ensure all CYP with EHCPs in the 17 schools covered by the contract with BHFT are seen for a review/up-to-date assessment of their needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in number of CYP with identified speech and language therapy needs on EHCPs not yet seen by the CYPIT service CYP in Slough attending one of the 17 schools will have the speech and language therapy needs identified on their EHCPs met 	Dec-23
7.6.2	Ensure all CYP who attend Arbour Vale School with identified SALT needs are seen and have their needs reviewed/reassessed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in number of CYP at the school with identified speech and language therapy on EHCPs not yet seen by the CYPIT service CYP in Slough attending one of 17 schools will have the speech and language therapy needs identified on their EHCPs met 	Dec-23
7.7.5	Implement quality improvement projects to ensure service operating at optimal efficiency with the aim of reaching a maximum wait of 12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service operating at optimal efficiency Waiting times for ASD or attention deficit disorder assessments are reduced 	Dec-23

b) Joint Commissioning Strategy

WSOA	ACTION	IMPACT MEASURES	New Baseline
6.4.1	Review the current provision of quality, cost-effective short breaks that promote CYP's outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Options for delivery will be shared formally within a business case by March 2022 Regular contract monitoring of commissioned services improves data and analysis Programme of consultation to include CYP and their families by June 2022 to inform new commissioned arrangements by April 23 (see action 4.3.2 for more details) 	Sep-23
6.4.5	Review direct payments arrangements including options for pre-payment cards and more flexible parameters (with adult services and CCG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents and carers have flexibility in support and opportunities and increased personalisation of arrangements Compliant use of DP Reduced challenge/complaints and increased parent/carer satisfaction Take-up of personal budgets increased by 20%, reducing more expensive options 	Sep-23
4.3.2	Ensure the current programme to redesign commissioned short breaks and arrangements for direct payments is coproduced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved satisfaction in the way DP can be used Increased transparency in access Offer is influenced by stakeholder opinion and choices 	Dec-23

6.4.4	Develop local sufficiency: residential respite.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision in local school and at home so that contact with family/community is maintained and promoted 	Dec-23
7.1 1	We will have a joint commissioning strategy which all partners will be aware of and can adhere to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There will be clear evidence of effective joint commissioning which will be supported by clear feedback 	Dec-23
1.4.2	Share 9–12-month and 2-year review data where early identification suggests support is required to meet developmental milestones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early intervention through delivery of services to support child development, reducing the number of CYP requiring SEND support in settings/school Settings are aware of the needs of CYP from the outset, enabling the required support to be put in place in a timely way that supports CYP's progress 	Apr-24
6.5.1	Develop sufficient accommodation and support arrangements for CYP with SEND aged 16–25 in Slough.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CYP requiring additional support to build independence skills can transition between Plans for a 'curriculum based' training package from age 16 are being developed across the whole offer to enable skill enhancement, resilience building and tenancy sustainability, reducing eviction/arrears Levels of NEET reduced to statistical neighbours and best-practice levels (baseline and target to be set by implementation working group) 	Apr-24

c) SEND Sufficiency

WSOA	ACTION	IMPACT MEASURES	New Baseline
1.5.2	Update place planning strategy and include SEND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic approach to SEND place planning and ensuring CYP have access to the provision best suited to their needs 	Sep-23
1.5.1	Conduct review of all places and identify gaps in provision to ensure a strategic approach to placing CYP in the most appropriate setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document informs strategic approach, both short and long term Develop resources to place CYP in the most appropriate specialist provision 	Apr-24

Appendix 2 - Special Educational Needs Position Statement

July 2023

Leadership

We need to ensure that progress against the weaknesses identified in the local area inspection is increased rapidly and there are strong arrangements for joint leadership and accountability, self-evaluation and improvement planning at a strategic level.

- A Strategic Inclusion Partnership Board is in place ensuring partnership working with health and social care. The Board has reviewed the Written Statement of Action and new project reporting to ensure that progress is accurately reflected, and key priorities are clear. Regular Risks workshops now take place before every Partnership Board meeting to inform management action.
- The SEND and Inclusion Strategy 21-24 is in place and co-produced work has begun to develop it further. The School Effectiveness Strategy has been signed off and Autumn term support and challenge visits focus on identifying and sharing best inclusive practice with Schools. Evidence of this work in Slough is to be shared by a Best Practice Conference held in Slough.
- The first draft of an Improvement Action Plan and a Self-Evaluation Framework, using feedback from the DfE Advisor, with evidence from the SEND 0-25 Head of Service and Group Manager for Data & Insight who will inform business as usual, in addition to our data dashboard and Operational KPI Tracker. This aligns to the new SEND Inspection Framework and learning from other local areas.
- Slough Schools Placing Strategy and the Place Planning Board has been refreshed with a clearer focus on SEND 0-25 including Alternative Provision and Post 16 sufficiency.
- Work is underway on a joint commissioning strategy with a Commissioning and Transformation consultant appointed to lead on this work. Initial scoping meetings have taken place to identify opportunities for wider delivery with Arbour Vale School. Capacity analysis of current SRP provision has been conducted and detailed SLAs agreed for each setting will be issued.
- A new Workforce Development Plan is being shared with partners and stakeholders.

The SEND Service

Not enough EHC plans have been completed and rapid action is needed to improve SEND processes to improve timeliness and quality assurance.

- A Head of SEND 0-25, two experienced managers, a Resolutions Officer and a Commissioning Transformation consultant have been recruited. A new Principal Educational Psychologist and Team Manager for Inclusion have also been appointed.
- Additional locum EPs have been sourced and a contract has been approved with an external company to complete all the remaining referrals for EP assessments. A new

recruitment and retention strategy is being devised to establish a permanent team to meet ongoing demand.

- It has been decided, in consultation with the SEND teams, to retain the separate Pre-14 and Post-14 teams until further training has taken place. Training on the Code of Practice and CAMHs has taken place with additional sessions every two weeks. Following the general staff training, all case officers will undertake a skills audit to identify individual CPD needs.
- The new Send 0-25 Leadership Team have already updated SEND processes and completed a review of all current cases to identify possible quick resolutions.
- All education settings /provisions have a dedicated SEND Link Officer to improve communication and working together.
- A Capita Working Party will explore key features and future options such as the Portal. All case officers are being trained and refreshed in using the Capita system.

Data, Information Gathering and SEND 0-25 and AP Place Planning

A new data dashboard will ensure that meaningful performance information is consistently used to inform area strategy and planning and to evaluate its effectiveness.

- The new Data Dashboard will embed change and enhance sub-sets of management information to measure the impact of changes. Key SEND 0-25 returns have been reconciled to improve the robustness of the insight received at operational and strategic level into the EHC plan cohort.
- The Dashboard has been mapped against Green Paper requirements, so it is likely to remain relevant giving insights in line with Government priorities and the Ofsted Framework. The Dashboard will be aligned with the Frimley ICS Data Dashboard to support/inform partnership working. The NHS Dashboard will include Slough only data. All internal data is being reviewed to ensure accuracy. The Dashboard will include real time data from an operational KPI tracker, to ensure officers are responding to children's and family's needs and tracking their performance at the right time with the right support to inform the right educational placement. A draft Live Cases Dashboard will, in a timely way, inform the SEND process and identify barriers and blockages in the system to swiftly inform and then action good decision making.

Co-Production and Family Engagement

The established system of gathering the views of pupils with SEND and their families has not been used to plan and review SEND processes and local area services.

- Co-production sessions / Special Voices events (including online and paper surveys) have gathered stakeholder views on inclusive practice and preparation for adulthood [PfA] to inform best practice.

- A Working Together Charter will inform and underpin all the WSoA work as well as the business-as-usual service delivery from the SEND0-25 team. Recently, with more planned there were eight events held in person / online where over 190 people took part (including 40 young people) alongside parents, carers and professionals generating over 400 ideas. This included online / hard copy surveys, facilitated discussions, focus groups & activity sheets.
- Communication Service standards have been drafted and will be shared in September 2023 which include good practice for dealing with concerns and an Escalation Policy.
- Work is being carried out to complete and share the first draft of the SEND 025 Handbook once it has been evaluated by the SEND service to ensure functionality / alignment with our SEND systems. Initial focus has been on a set of agreed letters using accessible language and next steps planning.
- A SEND Participation Officer has been recruited and will be visiting schools to consult with CYP with SEND on what a SEND Youth Voice Group should look like so that a new group can be launched in January 2024 and a joint, all reaching participation strategy agreed.
- The second iteration of the new Local Offer website has been designed using feedback from young people with SEND and their families as well as with partners. Improvements in the 'look' of the Website, functionality, accessibility, and useability will be improved and it will include a "Get Involved" section. Students with SEND have been involved presenting the Local Offer.

Engagement with Schools

It is important that transformation work is informed by the day-to-day experiences of pupils with SEND and that school staff are strong partners in the process.

- SEND 0-25 Information Sharing sessions ensure that our education partners are provided regular updates on our transformation actions, while newly established working parties will ensure and assure that they participate in key pieces of work such as inclusion in mainstream schools, SEND 0-25 sufficiency, Early Years, post 16 and capital programmes.
- A key focus of support and challenge visits in the Autumn will be inclusive support including the graduated offer, ordinarily available provision, and interventions. Best practice identified across Slough, together with wider areas, will be shared at an Inclusion Conference and documented.
- Participation training with the local workforce in February considered best inclusive practices and a Neurodiversity Network has been launched.
- The Place Planning Board has been refreshed and will now be supported by working parties that will include headteachers, senior leaders, SENDCos and young people.

Partnership Work with Social Care

Current processes do not ensure that social care needs are included in EHC plans.

- Work is ongoing to align EHC plan audit and quality assurance processes into wider Childrens' Services processes and a working group is developing a Joint Participation Strategy.
- A strategic group meets quarterly to support and oversee transition to adulthood, co-chaired by the Directors for Adult Social Care and Childrens Social Care Group.
- Work is ongoing to ensure that SEND 0-25 services work collaboratively with our social care partners to ensure a coordinated single plan approach to SEND pupils known to social care.
- A working party is developing new multi-agency processes involving social work, early help, the Virtual School, NHS, and other partners including identification of educational provision.
- Staff from the Children with Disabilities team and an appropriately trained Virtual School representative now attend the SEND0-25 triage and panel meetings to ensure good joint decision making and that all information is considered.
- A significant operational development is that members of the SEND 0-25 team now have read only access to Liquid Logica (social care ICS), to access information to inform the assessment process. This has been a new jointly agreed ask and actioned between services swiftly.

Health Support

More equitable access to health services and a new dysphagia service is required.

- The Frimley ICS SEND board has been launched which will oversee the progress on the Integrated Therapies Project and the Written Statement of Action.
- Commissioning work is ongoing across East Berkshire to agree a new contract for integrated therapies, a Mental Health Steering Group has been formed and a school survey has been conducted regarding a dysphagia service. Another workstream is considering the impact of therapies provided in a special school via termly check in sessions and drop-in clinics.
- OT triage waiting times have reduced to no greater than five weeks for occupational therapy triage. Although the delay in SALT assessments is still far too high, it is reducing, and the Communications Passport is having a positive impact.
- A Special Voices workshop with a focus on CAMHS has been scheduled to better understand parent/carer concerns about support for social and emotional mental health.

Key Updates Since June Position Statement

Leadership

- Regular Risks workshops now take place before every Partnership Board meeting.
- Initial planning for the Autumn Inclusion Conference have taken place based on identifying best practice and peer-to-peer activities.
- New Place Planning Board arrangements have been agreed and shared with education settings.
- Initial scoping meetings have taken place to identify opportunities for wider delivery with Arbour Vale School.
- Capacity analysis of current SRP provision has been conducted and detailed SLAs produced for each setting.

The SEND 0-25 Service

- A new Principal Educational Psychologist and Team Manager for Inclusion have also been appointed.
- A contract has been approved with an external company to complete all the remaining referrals for EP assessments.
- It has been decided, in consultation with the SEND teams, to retain the separate Pre-14 and Post-14 teams until further training has taken place.
- All education settings /provisions now have a dedicated link officer to improve communication.

Data, Information Gathering and SEND Place Planning

- Key SEND returns have been reconciled to improve the robustness of the insight received at operational and strategic level into the EHC plan cohort.

Co-Production and Family Engagement

- A Working Together Charter will inform and underpin all the WSoA work as well as the business-as-usual service delivery from the SEND team. There were eight events held in person / online where over 190 people took part (including forty young people) alongside parents, carers and professionals generating over 400 ideas. This included online / hard copy surveys, facilitated discussions, focus groups & activity sheets.
- Communication Service standards have been drafted and will be shared in September which include good practice for dealing with concerns and an escalation policy.
- Work being carried out on a set of agreed letters using accessible language and next steps planning.
- The second iteration of the new Local Offer website has been designed using feedback from young people with SEND 0-25 and their families as well as with

partners. The real involvement of young people can be seen in the new draft of the Local Offer e.g., introducing sections and giving explanations. This helps to improve the look of the website with real people and its functionality, accessibility and useability will be continually improved. It will include a “Get Involved” section.

Engagement with Schools

- The Place Planning Board has been refreshed and will now be supported by working parties that will include headteachers, senior leaders, SENCOs and young people. Volunteers have been provided for each of the working parties.

Partnership Work with Social Care

- Staff from the Children with Disabilities team and an appropriately trained Virtual School representative now attend the SEND triage and panel meetings to ensure good joint decision making and that all information is considered.
- Members of the SEND team have been given read only access to Liquid Logica (social care ICS), to enable officers to access information to inform the SEND assessment process.

Health Support

- Commissioning work has continued across East Berkshire to agree a new contract for integrated therapies, a mental health steering group has been formed and a school survey has been conducted regarding a dysphagia service.

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STATUTORY DIRECTION TO SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL IN RELATION TO ITS SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY (SEND) SERVICE PROVISION, UNDER SECTION 497A(4B) OF THE EDUCATION ACT 1996

WHEREAS:

1. The Secretary of State for Education (“the Secretary of State”) has carefully considered the Joint Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Report in respect of Slough Borough Council (“the Council”) of its initial inspection carried out between 27 September and 1 October 2021. The inspection report outlined that a Written Statement of Action was required because of 7 significant areas of weakness in the local area’s practice in relation to its Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) service provision.
2. The Secretary of State has also carefully considered reports from the Department for Education appointed Commissioner (“The Children’s Services Commissioner”) and Department for Education Professional SEND Adviser (“DfE SEND Adviser”). These reports evidence the lack of progress to date towards the Written Statement of Action since it was approved in March 2022.
3. The Secretary of State is therefore satisfied that the Council is failing to perform to an adequate standard in some or all of the functions conferred upon the Council under Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 (“the 2014 Act”) (“the SEND functions”) to which s.497A of the Education Act 1996 (“the 1996 Act”) applies.
4. The Secretary of State will be extending the remit of the Children’s Services Commissioner in accordance with, and for the purposes of, the terms of reference (“the Terms of Reference”) set out in the Annex to this direction.
5. The Secretary of State, having considered representations made by the Council, considers it expedient, in accordance with his powers under section 497A(4B) of the 1996 Act, to direct the Council as set out below to ensure that all of the Council’s SEND functions are performed to an adequate standard.

NOW THEREFORE:

6. Pursuant to her powers under section 497A(4B) of the 1996 Act, the Secretary of State directs the Council as follows:
 - a. To comply with any instructions of the Secretary of State or the Children’s Services Commissioner in relation to the improvement of the Council’s exercise of its SEND functions and provide such assistance as either the Secretary of State or the SEND Commissioner may require;

- b. To co-operate with the Children's Services Commissioner, including, on request, allowing him at all reasonable times access to:
 - i. any premises of the Council;
 - ii. any document of, or relating to, the Council; and
 - iii. any employee or member of the Council,

which appear to him to be necessary for achieving the purposes of and carrying out the responsibilities set out in the Terms of Reference.

- c. To provide the Children's Services Commissioner with such amenities, services, and administrative support as he may reasonably require from time to time for the carrying out of his responsibilities in accordance with the Terms of Reference, including:
 - i. providing officers' time or support;
 - ii. providing office space, meeting rooms or computer facilities.
7. To engage with the Department who will undertake reviews of progress against the Written Statement of Action at least every four months, and more regularly where appropriate. These reviews may cover but are not exclusive to: culture; performance; leadership, management, and governance; quality of workforce training and support; multi-agency arrangements – including the role and contribution of health providers; joint commissioning; and the timeliness and quality of Education, Health and Care plans.
8. This direction will remain in force until it is revoked by the Secretary of State and does not affect the Direction to Slough Borough Council in relation to Children's Services dated 04 August 2023.

Signed on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education

Dr Helen Brayley-Morris, Deputy Director, South East Regions Group

A Senior Civil Servant in the Department for Education

Dated: 04 August 2023

Non-Executive Commissioner for SEND

Slough Borough Council

Terms of Reference

The Secretary of State for Education (“the Secretary of State”) has carefully considered the Joint Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Report in respect of Slough Borough Council (“the Council”) of its initial inspection carried out between 27 September and 1 October 2021. The inspection report outlined that a Written Statement of Action was required because of 7 significant areas of weakness in the local area’s practice in relation to its Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) service provision.

The Secretary of State has also carefully considered reports from the Department for Education appointed Children’s Services Commissioner (“The Children’s Services Commissioner”) and the Department for Education Professional SEND Adviser (“DfE SEND Adviser”). These reports evidence the lack of progress to date towards the Written Statement of Action since it was approved in March 2022.

The Secretary of State is satisfied, therefore, that the Council’s SEND functions are not being performed to an adequate standard as required by s.497A of the Education Act 1996.

In line with the recommendations set out in the Joint Ofsted and Care Quality (CQC) report of SEND Service Provision published 17 November 2021, and reports from the DfE SEND Adviser and the Children’s Services Commissioner, the Children’s Services Commissioner is expected to take the following steps:

1. To issue any necessary instructions to the Council for the purpose of securing immediate improvement in the delivery of SEND services; working with other appropriate experts and stakeholders to identify ongoing improvement requirements; and to recommend any additional support required to deliver those improvements.
2. To bring together evidence to assess the Council’s capacity and capability to improve itself, in a reasonable timeframe, and recommend whether this evidence is sufficiently strong to suggest that long-term sustainable improvement to SEND services can be achieved.
3. To advise on relevant delivery and governance arrangements for SEND services, taking account of local circumstances and the views of the Council and key partners.
4. To report to the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State by 19 March 2024 followed by further progress reports within timescales to be agreed.

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Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Cabinet
Date:	18 th September 2023
Subject:	UPDATE: Re-commissioning of Berkshire East Specialist Integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health Service
Lead Member:	Cllr Anna Wright, Lead Member for Social Care and Public Health
Chief Officer:	Marc Gadsby, Executive Director People - Adults
Contact Officer:	Kelly Evans, Deputy Director of Public Health, Slough Borough Council Kelly.Evans@slough.gov.uk Rebecca Willans, Consultant in Public Health for Berkshire East and Consultant Lead for Sexual and Reproductive Health Rebecca.willans@bracknell-forest.gov.uk
Ward(s):	All
Key Decision:	YES
Exempt:	Public with exempt appendices. The appendices are exempt under paragraph 3 and paragraph 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 because they contain confidential information relating to the financial and business affairs of Slough Borough Council and information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
Decision Subject To Call In:	YES
Appendices (all exempt):	<u>Appendix 1: Contract Financial Information</u> <u>Appendix 2: Options Appraisal</u> <u>Appendix 3: Legal and Procurement Implications</u>

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 On the 17th April 2023, Cabinet approved recommendations regarding the re-procurement of the Berkshire East Specialist Integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Service.
- 1.2 Due to a number of commercial and market issues identified during the market engagement undertaken since April 2023 by the joint commissioning authorities, the joint commissioning authorities wish to enter into a short term contract for 2 years to undertake further, more robust, market engagement. This will enable the joint commissioning authorities to develop a longer term procurement strategy and process that will enable the procurement and award of a longer term, redesigned sexual and reproductive health service that better meets the future needs of the joint commissioning authorities and local communities. This strategy for the recommissioning process is likely to be impacted by the Provider Selection Regime (PSR) which is likely to be in place before July 2026 and is expected to offer increased flexibility to the joint commissioning authorities when arranging healthcare services.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to brief Cabinet on the work undertaken since the April 2023 Cabinet resolution to secure continuation of Specialist Integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services and to seek approval for the revised process needed to achieve this.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to.

- a) Approve a maximum if a two-year contract award from 1 July 2024 to an eligible provider of Specialist Integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) service provision as an interim continuation of joint commissioning arrangements across Berkshire East.
- b) Delegate authority to the Executive Director People - Adults in consultation with the Executive Director of Finance and Commercial and the Lead Member for Social Care and Public Health, to sign all related legal and contractual documentation to enter into the interim contractual arrangement referred to at (a) above.
- c) Agree that Slough Borough Council in consultation with Bracknell Forest Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, commence procurement for future sexual and reproductive health services that better meet the future needs of local communities.

Reason:

- 1.4 The contract for the specialist SRH service for residents in the local authorities across Berkshire East is due to expire on the 30th June 2024.
- 1.5 The recommended approach agreed by all local authorities was to retender under the light touch regime of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (the Regulations). However for the reasons set out in Appendix 2, there is a need for a short term arrangement pending a longer term procurement process. Authority is sought to enter into a short term contract, maximum of 2 years, in accordance with the

confidential appendices and to commence procurement, led by Bracknell Forest Council, for a longer term solution to meet the needs of the local community.

Commissioner Review

Commissioners have reviewed this report and have no specific additional comments.

2. Report

Introductory paragraph

2.1 Background:

- 2.1.1 In England, SRH services are commissioned to reduce harm caused by sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV and provide access to contraceptive advice and services. Services also act as safeguarding and supportive points of contact to help protect those experiencing or at risk of abuse and help people manage their sexual and reproductive wellbeing.
- 2.1.2 Responsibility for commissioning most SRH services is mandated to local authorities, although some SRH commissioning is held by NHS commissioners (Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and NHS England).
- 2.1.3 Nationally most SRH service models deliver the bulk of the local authority commissioned elements through specialist SRH service providers. These providers have the facilities and staff mix needed to deliver services such as Genitourinary Medicine “GUM” (including diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infections) and specialist elements of reproductive health care (RHC). These are intricately linked to wider structures and services that address SRH needs such as contraceptive services in primary care.
- 2.1.4 An effective specialist SRH service will assist the Council in its strategic commitments to deliver the best value for taxpayers and service users and helping residents live more independent, healthier, and safer lives.
- 2.1.5 The Council has commissioned its integrated specialist SRH services through joint arrangements in Berkshire for over ten years, the local authorities in the area commissioned a single provider through a joint commissioning process. Following the change in public health governance arrangements for Berkshire in 2019, this continued but, on a Berkshire East, and Berkshire West arrangement, mirroring the Clinical Commissioning Group geographies at the time. The current commissioning geography for the service is coterminous with the Berkshire East geographies of the Frimley Integrated Care Board boundaries.
- 2.1.6 The contract with the current specialist SRH provider has been in place since the 1st July 2019 and the contract is managed by the Berkshire East Shared Public Health team. The contract expires on the 30th June 2024. Despite efforts by officers, it has not been possible to procure a longer term contract to run from June 2024 and therefore it is recommended that a short term arrangement is entered into pending the longer term procurement strategy. This contract will be for a maximum term of 2 years.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1 Financial implications

- 3.1.1 The specialist SRH service will be funded through use of Slough Borough Council's public health grant; this is appropriate and necessary since SRH services are one of a few prescribed functions for use of the public health grant money.
- 3.1.2 The proposed contract value is forecast based on maintaining the current contract value with a maximum uplift of 5% per annum or the Consumer Price Index (whichever is the lower of the two values at the time; i.e. 5% will be the maximum annual increase if the Consumer Price Index is higher than 5%).
- 3.1.3 The full details of the contract value (including total maximum value and Slough Borough Council's share) are included in Paper II as this includes commercially sensitive information.

3.2 Legal implications

- 3.2.1 The procurement of Sexual and Reproductive Health Services enables Slough Borough Council to meet the following Public Health statutory duties under the Health and Social Care Act 2013: The mandatory provision of Open Access Sexual and Reproductive Health services by all Local Authorities – Health and Social Care Act 2013.
- 3.2.2 As this service falls under the light touch regime, the joint commissioning authorities have more flexibility and under Regulation 76(8) PCR they may take into account any relevant considerations in relation to the award of contracts, including the need to ensure quality, continuity, accessibility, affordability, availability and comprehensiveness of the services, the specific needs of different categories of users, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, the involvement and empowerment of users, and innovation. In addition, the new Provider Selection Regime (PSR) is expected to come into force before July 2026 which is expected to offer increased flexibility for the procurement of healthcare services.
- 3.2.3 The full legal implications are contained in Exempt Appendix 3.

3.3 Risk management implications

- 3.3.1 There is a risk of legal challenge to the procurement process or any contract award. The likelihood of such a risk is low, due to the prior market engagement that has been carried out, and procurement and legal advice has been followed which will mitigate the risk of any challenge.

3.4 Environmental implications

- 3.4.1 During the procurement process, potential suppliers will be requested to provide a copy of their environmental impact assessment and impact management measures.
- 3.4.2. Environmental Impact Management Measures
 - i. Carbon emissions from staff travelling will be minimised due to work being delivered on site, and with staff in a fixed base.

- ii. Recruitment is centred on specialist provision, but where possible will be locally resident.
- iii. Hazardous Waste management, including i.e., sharps and clinical waste will be the responsibility of the provider and the process for undertaking this will be a part of the model along with requested information on process during the tender. (Other services such as pathology etc. will also be considered).
- iv. Infection control policies and procedures. Staff will be required to be trained in infection control not least to manage local outbreaks of STIs and infectious disease and its management.
- v. Office and equipment waste management – this will be considered as part of the management process and requests will be made to ascertain the corporate policy on waste, disposal, management, and carbon footprint both of the service and the organisation as a whole.

3.5 Equality implications

- 3.5.1 The Council has a duty under The Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to need for equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between protected groups and other groups.
- 3.5.2 The Health Needs Assessment has been drafted and identifies Slough has relatively higher need with respect to both engaging the population in STI testing and contraception to improve SRH outcomes. In particular and across Berkshire East, people from certain ethnic minority populations have poorer SRH related health outcomes and these have been included in the new specialist SRH service specification to ensure services are targeted to the needs of the subgroups within these populations, based on an engagement strategy that is to form part of the public health approach.
- 3.5.3 People with a learning disability and children and young people have been identified as priority groups who will require more targeted intervention than the previous service specification identified. The process to secure a new contract by 1st July 2024 will require the provider to work with commissioners to demonstrate change, monitoring, and response to the needs of these population characteristics.

3.6 Procurement implications

- 3.6.1 As set out under the legal implications section of this report and Exempt Appendix 3.

3.7 Workforce implications

- 3.7.1 Staffing– including TUPE

The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE) will apply as a matter of law with a service provision change, where certain conditions are satisfied.

The mobilisation phase will give an incoming provider time to complete TUPE for any employees of an outgoing provider wishing to transfer to a new provider. Where TUPE does not apply, the mobilisation phase allows sufficient time for recruiting and training new (or and existing) staff.

3.7.2 There is no anticipated impact for staff employed by any of the Berkshire East local authorities.

3.7.3 Employee liability information about the employees of the current specialist SRH provider will be sought for inclusion in the tender pack, in line with legal advice provided.

3.8 ***Property implications***

3.8.1 Not applicable.

4 **Background Papers**

[Cabinet Report template 2022.23 \(slough.gov.uk\)](https://www.slough.gov.uk/cabinet-reports/cabinet-report-template-2022-23)

Slough Borough Council

REPORT TO:	Cabinet
DATE:	18 th September 2023
SUBJECT:	Update on the procurement forward plan for services in excess of £180,000 and works in excess of £1 million in 2023/24
CHIEF OFFICER:	Adele Taylor – Director of Finance/Section 151
CONTACT OFFICER:	Clare Priest – Head of Commercial services
WARD(S):	All
PORTFOLIO:	Lead Member for Financial Oversight, Council Assets, Procurement and Revenues & Benefits – Councillor Chahal
KEY DECISION:	Yes
EXEMPT:	No
DECISION SUBJECT TO CALL IN:	Yes
APPENDICES:	'A' - List of services to be procured in 2023/24 in excess of £180k (services) and £1m (works) – updated and new contracts

1 Summary and Recommendation

- 1.1 To seek authority from Cabinet for commencement of procurement for contracts of an estimated value of over £180,000 (services) and £1 million (works), that are proposed to be let in the 2023/24 financial year detailed in Appendix A, this includes:
- the forward plan for services or works to be procured for the remainder of the financial year or before the cabinet meeting in April 2024, that were not identified in early 2023 when the April Cabinet report was written.
 - updates to contracts reported at April Cabinet where there have been significant changes, such as revised procurement start dates or contract values.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- (a) authorise commencement of procurement for the list of goods, works or services set out in Appendix A;

- (b) delegate authority to the Executive Director of Strategy and Improvement following consultation with the Lead Member for Public Protection, Customer Service, IT and Young Futures to the award contract, to the best value bidder, for the Mobile Telephony and Cloud Hosting of IT Systems Contracts as indicated in Appendix A, as requiring delegated authority to award contracts due to tight timescales involved.
- (c) delegate authority to the Executive Director of People (Children) following consultation with the Lead Member for Education, Children's Services, Lifelong Skills and Governance to direct award the contract for the Education Management System as indicated in Appendix A, as requiring delegated authority to award contracts due to tight timescales involved.

Reason

- 1.2 To ensure that Cabinet has proper oversight of planned procurement activity.

Commissioner Review

The Council needs to consider the value for money implications of its decisions and to secure best value in the provision of all its services. Procurement is an essential tool to deliver the Councils wider social, economic, and environmental aims and as such there is a need to ensure effective elected member engagement in the pre-procurement and decision-making process.

In an era when the Council must increasingly depend on suppliers for lower costs, improve quality, drive innovation and cope with external uncertainty, a range of contracting approaches will need to be considered. All contract spend should be carried out within resources identified and savings should be identified where possible to improve value for money and contribute to the medium term financial planning efficiencies.

The report provides high level visibility of planned procurement activity and the opportunity for cabinet members to be engaged in advance of the procurement cycle and identify any individual contracts about which separate briefings or reports relating either to contracting strategy or to contract award will be required before proceeding.

2 Report

Introduction

- 2.1 The Council has reviewed its contracts register to identify those contracts that are due for renewal or require a new procurement. This has enabled the Council to establish a procurement programme for 2023-24 and the forward plan was approved at April cabinet. Further service plans have been developed, which have identified 10 additional contracts and 3 revised ones, and it is therefore necessary to bring an updated plan to Cabinet.

Options considered

Option 1:

- 2.2 Approval of the updated procurement forward plan. The Council's contract procedure rules require cabinet authority for procurements with a total value of over £180,000 (services) and £1 million (works). This demonstrates good governance and allows

Cabinet to consider whether it wants further oversight of any specific proposals. **This is the recommended option.**

Option 2:

- 1.1 To authorise each new procurement not reported at April Cabinet or since amended on a case-by-case basis. This would require separate cabinet reports setting out details of each procurement. Whilst this would allow more detail to be provided, this would result in a high number of individual reports. This is not an efficient use of Cabinet time and is not recommended. It should be noted that contracts for services valued over £500,000 and for works valued over £1million require a separate cabinet approval prior to award of contract.

Background

- 2.3 The Council's Contract Procedure Rules require that each procurement project over £180,000 (services) and £1 million (works) must be on the forward plan approved by Cabinet to authorise commencement of procurement. For projects with a total value under £500,000 (services) or £1 million (works), the award of contract following procurement is delegated to an executive director. For any contract over these sums, a separate report will be presented to Cabinet seeking authority to award the contract, or approval of award will be delegated where specifically set out in the Forward Plan.
- 2.4 The scope of some procurement exercises stated in Appendix A has changed significantly from that in the April cabinet report, and this is a supplementary report to cabinet that contains further details for approval.
- 2.5 Cabinet is reminded that to aid the Council in its improvement of contract management and visibility of procurement projects to cabinet, detail on the deliverables and outcomes for each procurement, expected contract duration and timescales is included in the procurement activity data of contracts over £180,000 (services) and £ 1 million (works).

3 Implications of the Recommendation

3.1 Financial implications

- 3.1.1 The planned procurements set out in the Appendix will need to be contained within approved revenue budgets. For capital funded projects, the funding is included in the capital programme.

3.2 Legal implications

- 3.2.1 In accordance with the Procurement Application and Authorisation Table set out in the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, all Service Contracts over £180,000 and Works Contracts over £1 million must be on the Forward Plan presented to Cabinet each year in order to authorise commencement of procurement. A report was presented in April 2023, however not all intended procurements were included on the procurement forward plan at that point. Appendix A sets out the new procurements

that require approval. This plan may need to be updated and approved throughout the year.

3.2.2 Full business cases should be reviewed by the Council's internal procurement review board. IT projects should also be reviewed by the Council's internal Information Governance Group. Any project funded by capital should be reviewed by the Council's Cabinet Monitoring board and included in quarterly reporting of the capital programme.

3.2.3 All service contracts over £100,000 should be sealed and the council's legal advisors (currently HB Public Law) should advise on contract documentation. For works contracts, an appropriate model form contract such as JCT or NEC should be used and advice should be sought from HB Public Law.

3.2.4 As well as compliance with internal procurement rules, the Council must ensure compliance with procurement law. The procurement review board will consider this on a case-by-case basis.

3.2.5 The Council should also consider and build the following into procurement processes:

- stakeholder engagement
- efficient commissioning and sourcing arrangements
- best value considerations, including social and environmental value, as well as economic
- contract management.

3.3 Risk management implications

3.3.1 There are no specific issues arising directly from this report, however good forward planning will ensure that procurement activity is done in a timely way, which will lead to better value for money.

3.4 Environmental implications

3.4.1 There are no specific environmental implications arising directly from this report.

3.5 Equality implications

3.5.1 The equality implications will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The revised best value statutory guidance confirms that authorities should avoid imposing onerous contractual requirements on private and voluntary sector contractor, over and above those necessary to comply with the Equality Act 2010, as this can become a barrier to entry to the market for small and medium size firms and the voluntary sector. As part of commissioning arrangements, authorities are also expected to take steps to avoid commissioning services from individuals or organisations which actively or vocally oppose fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs; or which call for the death of members of British armed forces.

3.6 Procurement implications

3.6.1 A business case for each procurement project will be developed which will consider the most appropriate procurement route according to the Council's contract

procedure rules, UK Procurement regulations and will need to follow public procurement principles of value for money, equality of treatment, transparency and proportionality.

3.7 Workforce implications

3.7.1 Workforce implications will be considered upon the letting of each contract.

3.8 Property implications

3.8.1 Property implications will be considered upon the letting of each contract.

4 Background Papers

None

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Housing and Property

No new or updates to existing contracts on the forward plan

Finance and Commercial

No new or updates to existing contracts on the forward plan

Place and Community

No updates to existing contracts on the forward plan

New schemes to be added to the forward plan:

	Contract Title	Description, including deliverables and outcomes	Status update	Current or new contract	If current contract, state end date	Estimated value of new contract	Capital or revenue	Intended procurement start date	Expected contract term	Planned return date for cabinet authority	Intended start date of contract	
Page 425, 2	1	Street lighting Maintenance (Works)	Maintenance, Repairs and renewal of Street lighting infrastructure and illuminated infrastructure	N/A	Current	May 2022	£250K £150k Capital DfT Grant £100K revenue	Capital and Revenue	Sept23	2 years + 1	Mid Oct23	Jan24
		Road Markings (Works)	Renewal and new road markings for the public highway to support lane markings and parking restrictions	N/A – new contract	New	N/a	£210K (£70K per annum) £60K capital DfT grant £150K revenue	Capital and Revenue	September 23	1+1+1	Mid Oct23	Jan24
	3	Professional Services Contract (Services)	Place Directorate Professional Services Contract Lot 1 (Multidisciplinary Services) and Lot2(Lot2 Specialist /Technical Services)	N/A – new contract	New	N/A	Lot 1 £2m and Lot 2 £1m (Capital/Revenue split	Capital and Revenue	September 2023	4 years	November 2023	April 2024

	Contract Title	Description, including deliverables and outcomes	Status update	Current or new contract	If current contract, state end date	Estimated value of new contract	Capital or revenue	Intended procurement start date	Expected contract term	Planned return date for cabinet authority	Intended start date of contract
						to be determined when framework is in use)					
4	Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Scheme (Works and services)	<p>Installation of EV Charging Infrastructure, primarily focused on on-street provision for residents without off-street parking, but with a minority of charge points at Council assets</p> <p>Contract likely to be subdivided into lots:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New Charge points at Council assets 2. On-street charge points <p>Renewal/ extension of existing Council charge points</p>	Not yet started	New	N/a	£2.233m capital grant funding allocation, with expectation by grant funder (Office for Zero Emission Vehicles) of leveraging >50% commercial match funding	Capital	January 2023	10-15 years	<p>December 2023 for approval of EV Strategy and procurement commencement</p> <p>Spring 2024 for appointment of preferred supplier</p>	Spring 2024

Total value >£4.5m

Strategy and Improvement

No new or updates to existing contracts on the forward plan

Strategy and Improvement - IT contracts

New schemes to be added to the forward plan:

	Contract Title	Description, including deliverables and outcomes	Status update	Current or new contract	If current contract, state end date	Estimated value of new contract	Capital or revenue	Intended procurement start date	Expected contract term	Planned return date for cabinet authority	Intended start date of contract
1	Social care finance system (Services)	<p><u>Description</u></p> <p>Recontract for the Council's ContrOCC application.</p> <p><u>Deliverable:</u></p> <p>New 3-year direct award contract with Oxford Computing Consultants (currently on a rolling contract)</p>	Procurement options appraisal underway	Current	31/03/23	£250,000	Revenue	September 2023	3 Years	N/A	October 2023
	Security information and event management Platform and Managed Service	<p><u>Description:</u></p> <p>Implementation of a managed service for a cloud-based security information and event management solution</p> <p><u>Deliverable:</u></p> <p>Implementation of event logging and alert on the Council's IT systems</p>	Scoping Exercise underway	New Contract	N/A	£400,000	Revenue	September	3 Years+ option to extend for 1 year	N/A	01/04/2024

Updates to contracts on the forward plan:

	Contract Title	Description, including deliverables and outcomes	Status update	Current or new contract	If current contract, state end date	Estimated value of new contract	Capital or revenue	Intended procurement start date	Expected contract term	Planned return date for cabinet authority	Intended start date of contract
1	Mobile Telephony Contract (Services)	<p><u>Description</u> Procurement of a new mobile telephony contract for the Council</p> <p><u>Deliverables:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New 4 year (2 + 1 + 1) (previously 5 years 3+2) mobile telephony contract Migration of Council's mobile connections to new provider 	Procurement complete. Contract award in progress, completing delegated governance	Current contract	22/09/23	£1M	Revenue	Apr/May 23	4 years (2 + 1 + 1) (previously stated as 5 years 3+2)	Delegate authority to executive director - strategy and improvement	23/09/23
2	Website & Digital Platform (Services)	<p><u>Description</u> Recontract for the Council's website and digital platform.</p> <p><u>Deliverable:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New 4-year contract with JADU 	Scoping Exercise underway	Current contract	28/02/2024	£425K (previously stated as £325k)	Revenue	Sep/Oct 23	4 Years (2+1+1)	N/A	01/03/24
3	Cloud Hosting of IT Systems (Services)	<p><u>Description</u> Provision of public cloud services to host the Council's IT systems – rolling programme</p> <p><u>Deliverables:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hosting of the Council's IT systems in the cloud 	Scoping Exercise underway	New contract	N/A	Up to £4m (Previously stated as Between £537K - £1.1M for 1 year)	Revenue	Rolling programme commenced June/July 2023	5 years Previously stated as 1 year)	Delegate authority to executive director - strategy and improvement	From September 23

People (Adults)

No updates to existing contracts on the forward plan

New schemes to be added to the forward plan:

	Contract Title	Description, including deliverables and outcomes	Status update	Current or new contract	If current contract, state end date	Estimated value of new contract	Capital or revenue	Intended procurement start date	Expected contract term	Planned return date for cabinet authority	Intended start date of contract
1	DFG – stair lifts (Works)	Supply and installation of Stair Lifts		New contract	N/A	£1m (£200k per annum)	Capital	October 23	3+1+1	November 23	December 23
2	Mental health Accommodation based care and support (Services)	Provide care and support to mental health service users – 16 people (low/ med mental health support needs)	Planned procurement in 2023	Current	31 May 24	£1,467,557 (£209,651 per annum)	Revenue	December 23	5+1+1	November 23	June 2024
3	Mental health Accommodation based care and support (Services)	Provide care and support to mental health service users – 10 people (complex and high mental health support needs)	Planned procurement in 2023	Current	May 2024	£2,580,935 (£368,705 per annum)	Revenue	December 23	5+1+1	November 24	June 2024
4	Small block contract arrangements with nursing and residential suppliers (Services)	Multiple Supplier contracts to deliver residential and nursing accommodation in the local care market to ensure sufficiency of supply.	ASC Transformation Programme - Care home market review in progress - identification of bed volume per supplier, contract terms	New and current	End of September 23 Dates dependent on possible extension of ASC Discharge Grant and	£14.9m over 5 years. Average £2.98m per annum	Revenue	September 23	Contract duration dependent on external and internal funding arrangements, from	As provision is identified – reports to be submitted on a staggered basis through usual	Various

	Contract Title	Description, including deliverables and outcomes	Status update	Current or new contract	If current contract, state end date	Estimated value of new contract	Capital or revenue	Intended procurement start date	Expected contract term	Planned return date for cabinet authority	Intended start date of contract
			and funding requirements, both internal and external, as and when identified in the work programme.		ICB Discharge Fund allocations				1 year up to 3 +1+1 years.	internal governance procedures.	

People (Children)

New schemes to be added to the forward plan:

	Contract Title	Description, including deliverables and outcomes	Status update	Current or new contract	If current contract, state end date	Estimated value of new contract	Capital or revenue	Intended procurement start date	Expected contract term	Planned return date for cabinet authority	Intended start date of contract
1	Education Management System Direct award (Services)	Slough Borough Council is seeking to direct award to Capita for 3 years with an option to extend for 2 additional 12 months for education management software to enable the Education Services to fulfil its statutory and safeguarding duties. For example, school admissions, attendance, exclusion, SEND Educational Health Care Plan process, Early Years two-year-old funding, home to school transport and children in entertainment licensing. The system offers users portals online which are public facing access to apply for school places, home to school transport, Early Years funding applications and SEND Educational Health Care Plan Assessments requests (in process of implementation).Slough		Current	Current contract ended in March 2023 – currently in an evergreen contract	£1.34m	Revenue	September 2023	3 + 1+1 years	Delegate authority to award	September 2023 To be backdated to 1 st April 2023

	Contract Title	Description, including deliverables and outcomes	Status update	Current or new contract	If current contract, state end date	Estimated value of new contract	Capital or revenue	Intended procurement start date	Expected contract term	Planned return date for cabinet authority	Intended start date of contract
Page 433		<p>Schools children's data is fed into the system daily from schools which supports safeguarding duties. The system is used for end-to-end case management by LA's various Education teams for processing applications for school places, EHCP assessments and monitoring, CME, Attendance, home to school transport, Exclusions and Fair Access, Early Funding applications, Early Years providers payments and processing, Issuing applications for Chaperone Licensing and processing and recording children entertainment and employment licenses. The educational software system would also deliver data in the correct format for statutory returns such as the Alternative Provision, School Preference Return Primary and Secondary, Early Years Census and</p>									

	Contract Title	Description, including deliverables and outcomes	Status update	Current or new contract	If current contract, state end date	Estimated value of new contract	Capital or revenue	Intended procurement start date	Expected contract term	Planned return date for cabinet authority	Intended start date of contract
Page 434		<p>the SEN 2 Person Leve Return. The Education system also generates files in a format that can be exchanged with other LA's relating to school applications and school place offers to children. The school portal allows the LA and Slough schools to share details in real time of children's allocation to their schools. Business Intelligence reporting with the option to create insights would be part of the package as this allows the services to move away from holding Excel spreadsheet and notice gaps in the system. The education software would hold the overall data of each child allowing various services a better overview and meet statutory requirements.</p> <p>A direct award is the right decision from an operational and best value approach, but it</p>									

	Contract Title	Description, including deliverables and outcomes	Status update	Current or new contract	If current contract, state end date	Estimated value of new contract	Capital or revenue	Intended procurement start date	Expected contract term	Planned return date for cabinet authority	Intended start date of contract
		should be noted that a timetable for a procurement exercise for the next contract has been agreed (see item 2 below). This allows enough time to successfully migrate to a new platform.									
2 Page 435	Education Management System (Services)	Slough Borough Council is seeking permission to procure an education management software to enable the Education Services to fulfil its statutory and safeguarding duties. For example, school admissions, attendance, exclusion, SEND Educational Health Care Plan process, Early Years two-year-old funding, home to school transport and children in entertainment licensing. The system offers users portals online which are public facing access to apply for school places, home to school transport, Early Years funding applications and SEND Educational Health Care		Current	Current	£1m	Revenue	September 2023	3 years	February 2025	March 2026

	Contract Title	Description, including deliverables and outcomes	Status update	Current or new contract	If current contract, state end date	Estimated value of new contract	Capital or revenue	Intended procurement start date	Expected contract term	Planned return date for cabinet authority	Intended start date of contract
Page 436		<p>Plan Assessments requests (in process of implementation).Slough Schools children's data is fed into the system daily from schools which supports safeguarding duties. The system is used for end-to-end case management by LA's various Education teams for processing applications for school places, EHCP assessments and monitoring, CME, Attendance, home to school transport, Exclusions and Fair Access, Early Funding applications, Early Years providers payments and processing, Issuing applications for Chaperone Licensing and processing and recording children entertainment and employment licenses. The educational software system would also deliver data in the correct format for statutory returns such as the Alternative Provision,</p>									

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Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Cabinet
Date:	18 September 2023
Subject:	Observatory House – Strategic Business Case
Lead Member:	Councillor Chahal, Deputy Leader of the Council – Financial Oversight, Council Assets, Procurement and Revenue & Benefits
Chief Officer:	Pat Hayes, Executive Director Property & Housing
Contact Officer:	Mark Halligan – Assistant Director (Property)
Ward(s):	Central
Key Decision:	<u>YES</u>
Exempt:	NO, except Appendices 1 and 2 – Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 – contain financial and business information of the Council.
Decision Subject To Call In:	<u>YES</u>
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Confidential Montagu Evans report – Optimising the value for money benefits of Observatory House Appendix 2 – Confidential Strategic Outline Business Case

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report assesses options for the future use of Observatory House to optimise benefits and value for money. It recommends developing the business case, to enable a robust recommendation to be made, based on further evidence

Recommendations:

- 1.2 Cabinet is recommended to:
- a) Approve the strategic outline business case attached at Appendix 2 and agree to the preparation of a full business case including all six of the identified options.
 - b) Note that a report will be brought back to Cabinet in Spring 2024 to agree a further developed business case on the future use of Observatory House.

Reason

- 1.3 Clarifying the future of Observatory House is critical to the Council's recovery, as it enables other decisions to be made, which have wide reaching impacts; such as in the development of the Digital Strategy and Customer Access Strategy.
- 1.4 The Council's financial position means that it has to be clear about the future use of its assets as a number of these need to be disposed of to stabilise its budget and meet the requirements of the Capitalisation Direction agreed with DLUHC.
- 1.5 The ultimate decision on the future use of Observatory House is a significant one and needs a robust business case to support it.

Commissioner Review

- Given the strategic importance of the future decisions on the use of Observatory House, challenges facing the Councils over the coming years to ensure limited resources are targeted effectively and achieve financial sustainability, it is necessary to ensure the recommendations are underpinned by good evidence.
- All of the options outlined in this report would meet the Councils success criteria and it is therefore necessary to demonstrate that the Council has selected the option which best meets its existing and future needs and optimises value for money. As such, the options need to be evaluated with more detailed work on the costs, financial and non-financial benefits, to provide a value for money assessment and identification of delivery risks. This can be undertaken in the outline / full business case stage but must be prior to narrowing the list to a preferred way forward and the comprehensive analysis and recommendation for transition to implementation phase.

2. Report

Introduction

- 2.1 Members are aware the Council received a formal direction from DLUHC made under s.15(5) and (6) of the Local Government Act 1999, including a direction that prescribed functions are to be exercised by Commissioners; and the appointment of Commissioners from 1 December 2021.
- 2.2 A key component of the Directions is the need for the Council to demonstrate it is able to achieve financial sustainability.

- 2.3 A review of the Council's assets has been undertaken so that decisions are able to be made on their future. Separate reports have been submitted to Cabinet on the development of an Estates Strategy and for the second phase of the Asset Disposal Programme. The future of Observatory House needs to be considered in this context.

3 Options considered

- 3.1 A Strategic Outline Business Case (Appendix 2) outlines potential options for the future use of Observatory House. These can be summarised as:
- Option 1 – Do nothing
 - Option 2 – Sell the freehold and exit to another Council building
 - Option 3 – Sell the freehold and exit to another building, via a freehold or leasehold acquisition
 - Option 4 – Sell the freehold and leaseback three floors only
 - Option 5 – Sell the freehold and leaseback the whole building, but only occupy three floors
 - Option 6 – Retain the freehold interest and reduce the Council's occupation down to three floors
- 3.2 Appendix 2 sets out the market considerations associated with the options that involve selling Observatory House.
- 3.3 In addition to the financial aspect, any decision on the future use of Observatory House needs to be considered against the potential non-financial benefits that could be realised. These are outlined in Appendix 2, which includes:
- Better engagement with residents
 - A better, more efficient working environment
 - Integration of services
- 3.4 Any final decision needs to be subject to due diligence and a more detailed business case. At this stage it is proposed to limit the full business case to Options 4, 5 and 6 for the reasons set out in Appendix 2.

Background

- 3.5 The Council acquired Observatory House in July 2018 and it became fully operational as the Council's new headquarters in September 2019. The majority of staff moved from the council's previous offices at St Martins Place.
- 3.6 The building has 6 floors currently allocated as follows –
- Ground Floor – reception, Council Chamber, political offices, customer call centre, office space for Slough Children First Ltd.
 - First, Second and Third Floors – SBC staff
 - Fourth Floor – Slough Children First
 - Fifth Floor - vacant
- 3.7 The original intention had been to sub-let two floors. However, in March 2020 the national lockdown was implemented and the vast majority of Council staff worked from home alongside other office workers. The office market has been significantly impacted by the changes to working arrangements resulting from the Covid 19 pandemic and many businesses have increased the amount of hybrid working offered to their staff.
- 3.8 The council is planning to consult with its workforce on a review of the current hybrid working arrangements to bring the council in line with the approach of many other organisations to more of a balance between home and office based working. As the largest of the council's buildings, Observatory House provides the most capacity to accommodate a significant proportion of the workforce.
- 3.9 The central location of the building and proximity to the rail station and motorways is a key benefit for council staff as well as prospective tenants and purchasers.
- 3.10 The local office market is also considered in Appendix 1. Businesses are looking for quality office space as part of their hybrid working arrangements and details of the local and national market for such spaces is considered in this appendix.

4 Implications of the Recommendation

Financial implications

- 4.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report. The cost of developing the full business case will be funded from within existing resources and has been subject to the internal expenditure control panel process to ensure that funding is available and that the proposed approach is compliant with appropriate procurement processes.

4.2 The outcome arising from the development of a full business case will have significant implications for the financial recovery plan of Slough Borough Council, recognising that the potential spectrum of outcomes range from the retention of Observatory House as a wholly owned asset through to the realisation of a significant capital receipt.

4.3 Finance officers will continue to work closely with Housing, Property & Planning colleagues to ensure that the full business case and the covering report fully reflects the financial implications of the recommended approach, in relation to capital and revenue accounts and the best value that such outcomes represent.

Legal implications

4.4 The Council requires suitable accommodation to deliver its services and to host member level meetings. There is no requirement for the Council to own these buildings or that they are all in one place and many other authorities have services and civic functions delivered across a range of buildings.

4.5 In February 2023, Grant Thornton, the Council's external auditors, issued a statutory recommendation report to the Council in respect of its decision to purchase Observatory House. This followed an objection to the statement of accounts for the relevant financial year. Grant Thornton decided not to uphold the objection or issue a public interest report, however it did raise concerns in the way the decision to acquire the property was taken and in particular the limited information made available to members at the Cabinet meeting. The auditors confirmed their expectation that a more detailed business case should have been prepared and provided to elected members given the value and strategic importance of the project. This should have included the specification and quantification of the benefits of the acquisition, consideration of alternatives, greater sensitivity analysis and clarification on financial assumptions, including VAT and letting of floors. There was also a lack of clarity on the Council's own occupancy needs and the interaction with the development of neighbourhood hubs.

4.6 The Council fully accepted Grant Thornton's recommendations and it is imperative that future decisions on the use of Observatory House are made on the basis of detailed business cases considered and approved by elected members at critical stages in the project. At this stage, members are being advised to limit the options, based on professional advice and an outline business case. This allows the preferred options to be explored in more detail at final business case stage.

4.7 The Council has a best value duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Under this duty, the current best value guidance confirms that economic, environmental and social value should be considered. The Government has consulted on draft guidance on best value standards and intervention and the draft guidance sets out best value themes, including one on use of resources. This confirms that a well-functioning

authority should have human resources and fixed assets that are managed efficiently and effectively.

4.8 If the Council has surplus physical assets, it can dispose of these or manage them in a different way. Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides a power of disposal, which includes sale of freehold interest, granting a lease or assigning any unexpired term of a lease. In general, any disposal must be for the best consideration reasonably obtainable, except in the case of short tenancies, unless the Secretary of State has consented to the disposal. Some of the options to be considered include sale of the freehold and leasehold back. This will be a disposal and the Council must satisfy itself that it meets its duties under s.123.

Risk management implications

4.9 The table below sets the key risks

Risk	Summary	Mitigations
Financial	Achieving Best Value	The full business case will contain a comprehensive cost benefit analysis of the options presented. This will underpin the recommendations made regarding Member decisions.
Legal	The Council does not meet its statutory duties or misused its powers when making decisions on the future of Observatory House.	. Professional advice is sought, including from external advisors, on the full range of options, sufficient information is provided to members, including in a comprehensive business case and an independent opinion is sought to inform any proposal disposal.
Reputational	The Council has been criticised for the manner in which the original decision to purchase the building was taken and the cost of purchase and fitting out	A more comprehensive and transparent approach to the decision about the future use of the building

Environmental Implications

4.10 Consolidating around Observatory House provides opportunities to further reduce the Council's property portfolio, which creates environment benefits, such as a reduced energy consumption. Investing in Observatory House also provides the opportunity to improve its environmental performance as part of the initial capital works..

Equality implications

4.11 The Council has a duty contained in section 149 of the Equality Act to have due regard to the need to:

(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

(b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day-to-day business and to keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services.

Procurement implications

4.12 One of the Directions includes specific reference to the procurement and contract management function. Any element of this project that requires procurement will be subject to compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and procurement law.

Workforce implications

4.13 The key implication for the workforce is the extent to which the decision on the future use of Observatory House is retained as the council's headquarters. With the lifting of lockdown rules and reviews of hybrid working there is more of a shift towards staff spending more time in the office.

4.14 A consultation with staff is planned to agree the principles and refresh approach to hybrid working.

Property implications

4.15 The decision on the future of Observatory House is a key decision to be taken in the wider context of our Estates Strategy and Asset Disposals plan which are also presented to Cabinet in separate reports.

5 Background Papers - None

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_Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Cabinet
Date:	18 September 2023
Subject:	Estate Strategy Update
Lead Member:	Councillor Chahal, Deputy Leader of the Council – Financial Oversight, Council Assets, Procurement and Revenue & Benefits
Chief Officer:	Pat Hayes, Executive Director Property & Housing
Contact Officer:	Mark Halligan - Assistant Director (Property)
Ward(s):	Central
Key Decision:	<u>YES</u>
Exempt:	No, with the exception of Appendix 1 which is exempt by virtue of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972
Decision Subject To Call In:	<u>YES</u>
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – CONFIDENTIAL - Estate Strategy Baseline Review

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report sets out the current position in developing a Phase I Estate Strategy, the purpose of which is to enable decisions to be made about the future use and management of the Council's operational property portfolio, within the General Fund.

Recommendations:

- 1.2 Cabinet is recommended to:
- a) Approve the guiding principles set out below and in the appendix, to inform the proposed future Estate Strategy.
 - b) Note that a report will be brought back to Cabinet in December 2023 with a recommended strategy document.

Reason

- 1.3 The Council's financial position means that it has to be clear about the future use of its assets as a number of these need to be disposed of to stabilise its budget and meet the requirements of the Capitalisation Direction agreed with DLUHC.
- 1.4 Best practice in local authority property asset management, includes having an Estate Strategy, which drives decision making on the management of the property portfolio. This will provide greater assurance that assets are safe, comply with statutory requirements and provide opportunities to enable high quality and value for money services to be delivered. A future strategy will ensure there are systems in place for record keeping and processes and procedures for strong governance and evidence based decision-making.
- 1.5 Having clear guiding principles to steer the completion of this strategy will enable Members to provide early input to this document.

Commissioner Review

- An operational Estate Strategy is required to provide a clear vision, key principles and core objectives that will result in the improved strategic management of the buildings needed to deliver public sector services, improve financial planning and making difficult decisions under the Best Value Duty over the medium to long term.
- The commissioners welcome the commencement of the development of the Estate Strategy and are content with this report.

2. Report

Introduction

- 2.1 Members are aware the Council received a formal direction from DLUHC made under s.15(5) and (6) of the Local Government Act 1999, including a direction that prescribed functions are to be exercised by Commissioners; and the appointment of Commissioners from 1 December 2021.
- 2.2 A key component of the Directions is the need for the Council to demonstrate it is able to achieve financial sustainability.
- 2.3 An initial review of the council's assets has been undertaken so that decisions are able to be made on their future. This review focused on the 'Development' and 'Investment' assets within the property portfolio, which formed the starting point for the Asset Disposal Programme. A subsequent Estate Strategy is now being developed that focuses on the 'Operational' assets within the property portfolio. This Strategy is a critical part of the Council's financial and service planning, contributing to savings in the medium term, as well as ensuring the cost of assets is understood and that they are used to support effective service delivery. The Strategy should ensure that assets that are retained by the

Council are properly managed and meet regulatory standards. Record keeping and data is a key part of governance and decision-making and the Strategy will underpin how decisions are made. This will include future decisions on whether assets are surplus to Council requirements, whether there is an alternative use and whether they should be disposed of. All decisions on disposal will be made in accordance with the Asset Disposal Strategy.

3 Options considered

3.1 The following options have been considered:

- Option 1 – attempt to manage the property portfolio without an Estate Strategy. The keys risks with this option is that poor decisions are made and opportunities are missed. This would lead to decisions about property assets being made in a non-strategic, reactive and uncoordinated manner. It would limit opportunities for efficiencies as well as expose the Council to risks and increased costs. **This is not recommended.**
- Option 2 – develop an Estate Strategy to enable the Council to drive the greatest level of benefit from the property portfolio and associated property service. Financial benefits will be a key objective, but not the only objective. The overall aim is to maximise the contribution that Property can make in delivering the Corporate Plan. Unlocking social value, by ‘enabling residents and communities’ is likely to be another key objective. **This is the RECOMMENDED option**

3.2 Any final decision on the disposal of individual assets needs to be subject to due diligence.

Background

3.3 The Council has not had a comprehensive Estates Strategy for some time. This is despite the Council holding a significant number of property assets and investing in land and buildings. Following the s.114 report and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) direction, the focus has been on disposing of surplus assets to raise capital. With good progress having been made in delivering the first phase of the Asset Disposal Programme and robust arrangements in place for completing it, there now needs to be a focus on developing an effective asset management strategy, by adopting a comprehensive Estates Strategy. The proposed Estate Strategy is a key enabler for delivery of Council services and for medium term financial health. The Strategy should focus on ensuring the Council’s property estate is safe, sustainable, provides social value, cost effective and that use of property assets are regularly reviewed taking account of robust data, records and value for money.

3.4 The development of the Phase I Estate Strategy started with the identification and analysis of key operational property assets. These are the assets that comprise the Operational Portfolio, which are the properties that have been held for operational reasons (e.g. to deliver Council services from) as opposed to the

assets that are held for 'Development/Regeneration' or those that are held for 'Investment' reasons (i.e. to generate a revenue return). The appendix sets out outline details for the Operational portfolio that have been identified through the initial Discovery element of the work.

- 3.5 The emerging Corporate Plan, together with other key documents and emerging documents (e.g. Digital Strategy, Customer Access Strategy) have been reviewed to begin to establish the impact that these will have on the Council's requirement for property in the future.
- 3.6 The activities and timescales associated with completing the development of the Phase I Estate Strategy are set out in the appendix. The following Guiding Principles (or Operational Estate Objectives) are proposed to inform the future Estates Strategy:
- IN OPTIMUM LOCATIONS. Planned to support the needs of our children, young people, residents and communities - and staff delivering services who must be active and present in core locations.
 - RIGHT-SIZED. Without impacting service delivery, the estate is to be 'right-sized' (consolidated) to 'centres of excellence' (where possible to do so) and unlock revenue savings and maximise capital and revenue income in support of the £400m savings target.
 - MULTI-FUNCTIONAL. Where possible, the estate is to optimise the breadth and depth of activities undertaken to enable a move away from a one dimensional use of an asset. Value for money colocation and co-production with Partners will be enabled– and the estate will support us to strengthen partnerships.
 - COMMUNITY FOCUSSED. The community/social value that can be derived from assets should be optimised. There should not be an automatic 'open market disposal' approach. A Community Asset Transfer approach should be considered on a case-by-case basis, informed by a proposed Community Asset Transfer Policy (to be developed).
 - FUTURE PROOFED. Fit for purpose buildings with flexibility so the Council can adapt services to meet future resident needs.
 - INVESTED IN. Where it is proven value for money and financially sustainable to do so (via a robust business case).
 - LEVERAGED. Whether surplus to requirements, or in operational use, our assets will support the delivery of regeneration priorities.
 - SUPPORTING NET ZERO. Estate must be deployed, adapted or delivered to meet the Council's support to a carbon zero Slough.
 - STRATEGICALLY MANAGED. To create a more efficient asset management model that enables the above objectives and drives further benefits from the Operational Estate portfolio whilst mitigating liabilities.

4 Implications of the Recommendation

Financial implications

- 4.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report, however the implementation of an Estate Strategy will support the improvement of financial management best practice and an effective system of internal financial control, as such it is seen as a positive development.
- 4.2 The implementation of an effective Estate Strategy will complement the data held within Slough Borough Council's asset register, which in turn supports the effective and appropriate recognition of the value of assets within the Statement of Accounts. Finance officers are actively working with Housing, Property & Planning colleagues to validate the financial aspects of the Estate Strategy, which will be reflected within the final version.
- 4.3 The funding and budgetary implications arising from the strategy, both in the short-term and on an on-going basis will be reflected as part of any report that recommends a strategy and its implementation.

Legal implications

- 4.4 Whilst there is no statutory requirement to have an Estates Strategy, many other public and private sector bodies have such a strategy to inform decision-making and service delivery. The use and location of property assets has a direct impact on residents and service users and as such the quality of service delivery. The Council has a best value duty which requires it to continuously improve its services and this includes how its property assets support service delivery. The introduction of digital technology has changed the way some services are accessed and how staff deliver services, which requires an ongoing review to ensure that any property holdings remain fit for purpose.
- 4.5 DLUHC has consulted on draft best value guidance and the emerging guidance refers to the best value principle around use of resources. This requires that fixed assets are managed efficiently and effectively. It also confirms an indicator of possible failure is an underinvestment in back-office services and a high dependency on high-risk commercial income for service delivery and balancing budgets. In relation to service delivery, the emerging guidance refers to well-functioning authorities taking an innovative approach when considering how services will be designed and delivered in the future and evidence of failure as opportunities for efficiency savings and improvements not being assessed in any meaningful way. Understanding the cost and value of physical assets and keeping their use under constant review to ensure they remain efficient and best placed to support service delivery is a key part of compliance with the best value duty.
- 4.6 The Council has regulatory responsibilities in relation to its property assets, including health and safety duties. An Estates Strategy should assist the Council

to ensure its property assets are safe, suitable, support service delivery and are sustainable.

4.7 When making decisions, the Council must ensure these are supported by evidence and relevant information. The Council has had issues in the past with record keeping and the quality of its data. In order to make informed decisions, the Council must have good quality information on the cost of maintaining buildings, future maintenance programmes and any statutory or other legal restrictions on the use of property assets. As a local authority, the Council is not in the same position as a private sector property owner. It holds many of its property assets for specific purposes and must follow proper due diligence and processes before making decisions to change its use or dispose of it.

Risk management implications

4.8 The table below sets the key risks

Risk	Summary	Mitigations
Financial	To summarise 4.1	
Legal	To summarise 4.2	.
Reputational	The Council has been criticised for the manner in which decisions to acquire and dispose of assets has been taken	A more comprehensive and transparent approach to future decisions

Environmental Implications

4.9 There are no direct environmental implications as a result of the recommendations contained in this report.

Equality implications

4.10 The Council has a duty contained in section 149 of the Equality Act to have due regard to the need to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability;

- gender reassignment;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day-to-day business and to keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services.

Procurement implications

- 4.11 One of the Directions includes specific reference to the procurement and contract management function. Any element of this project that requires procurement will be subject to our usual procedures.

Workforce implications

- 4.12 The key implication for the workforce is the extent to which decisions on the future use of assets impact on their place of work. A separate report is submitted to Cabinet on the future of Observatory House and whether this is retained as the council's headquarters. A consultation with staff is planned to agree the principles and refresh approach to hybrid working.

Property implications

- 4.13 The Estate Strategy is key to establishing the future of the council's operational estate.

5 Background Papers

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